



THE WESTERN HOME MONTHLY

Vol. VII. No. 3.

WINNIPEG, CANADA, MARCH, 1906.

PRICE { 5c. per copy.
50c. per year

The Angel of Murphy's Gulch.

By Clarence Herbert New.

Young Bob Ames came out of the East with a School of Mines education, eighty dollars in cash and a servicable suit of clothes—likewise a large amount of inexperience. When the Union Pacific express left him standing on the platform at Green River, looking up at Pilot Butte, his only definite idea was to get breakfast somewhere; after that to look for a mining camp where he might locate a claim and proceed with the digging out of his fortune. His graduation as a mining engineer seemed to guarantee that this would be merely a matter of detail.

The breakfast materialized—rather more of a consideration than he would have thought exorbitant at an Eastern hotel—and the few "leisure class" citizens about the railroad station "reckoned that Murphy's Gulch might be ez likely a place ez enny fer him tu start in;" so he sat on the Wells-Fargo boxes and smoked until Hank Stebbins sang out to him that the stage was ready to leave.

Long before they crossed the line into Colorado, Ames felt so braced by the glorious atmosphere that life seemed one big vacation. The effect of the air on his appetite had suggested a serious financial problem at the start, but this was soon forgotten—a man could live out of doors and pick up his meals wherever he happened to find them.

Hank told him all he wanted to know about Western life as they rode along—and a good deal more. Among other things, he learned that hotels were scarce in the mining country, and that he would be lucky to get a loft over the Lone Dog saloon, even if he had to share it with strangers. This prospect wasn't exactly in line of Bob's previous experience, but having made up his mind to take things as he found them, he said nothing.

It was after dark when Hank pulled up in front of the Lone Dog, but the light which shone from the doorway was sufficient for his brief introduction to the miners, who crowded out at sound of the wheels and hoof-beats: "Boys, this hyar's Mister Ames from Nu-York. He's calc'latin' tu prospect er little 'round these hyar diggin's."

The loft over the bar happened to be unoccupied and Ames was told that he could sleep there when he got ready. There was nothing resembling a dining-room about the premises, but a card-table at the back of the saloon was wined off and an appetizing dish of ham and eggs placed for Hank and himself. While they were eating, the stage-driver muttered bits of information concerning the "boys" who had meanwhile returned to their faro, poker and drinking in various parts of the room. The tall, lean chap in the new shirt, for instance, was Bill Ainsworth—"frum down Arzony way, whar he was on the shoot." The powerfully built, handsome man with the dark beard, who had just sauntered in, was Sandy McIntyre—"the man who

bringed Jim Furman's Christmas butes frum Cayuse Bar, ez er fayvor to 'Angel,' an' got plugged doin' it. He married 'Angel' las' spring, an' they war runnin' the Ned Rodney claim over on the edge uv the canyoun—diggin' pay dirt, too;" and so on until Bob knew something about each man in the crowd.

When they had finished supper, Hank went out to look after his horses, and Ames wondered how he should put in the evening. Gambling was against his principles, so he stood for a while watching the faro players.

"Why, I don't know but what I might. That is, if the man it belongs to has no objections. Seems like a pretty good violin."

"Oh, he won't car"—go ahead pardner. She belongs tu thet thar little greaser, Juan, 'n he kin rastle her purty slick when he's full, but he's down the canyoun this evenin'."

Now Juan's playing had seemed grand opera to the citizens of Murphy's Gulch, for those who had ever heard better had forgotten the fact years before. The first clear, sweet note that Ames drew from the strings, after putting the instrument in perfect tune, stopped even poker players in the middle of an exciting jack-pot. As his fingers began to lumber up, he gradually forgot his surroundings, forgot the pang of real homesickness

had been raised. They could smell the New England orchards and the scent of the new mown hay. Waving fields of Illinois wheat and corn, cotton-piled Mississippi steamers, Ohio villages, and even the slums of the great cities came and went before their eyes. At the sound of "Money-musk," "Arkansas Traveler" and "The White Cockade," booted feet commenced shuffling and stamping until the walls shook and the noise almost drowned the music. When "Home, Sweet Home" floated out, into the night, it planted a stab in many a heart under its red flannel shirt and started little rivulets down bronzed and leathery faces. Some even sneaked away to write a letter or two by candle light—letters which should have been written long ago, but which had been forgotten—or shirked—by hands more familiar with pick and cradle than the pen.

It was during the ballad portion of Ames' program that a swarthy, diminutive creature in Mexican costume had silently slipped into the room behind the player, who was entirely unconscious of his presence. This was Juan, the owner of the violin. At first, the pure love of music held him spellbound. He had not believed the fiddle capable of producing such sounds. In fact, as he had stolen it from the original owner after cutting his throat, he was entirely unaware of the instrument's value. But his appreciation soon gave way to a deadly jealousy of the man who understood it so much better than himself, and right in the middle of "Old Kentucky Home" he snatched it violently from Bob's hands, muttering a string of Spanish curses as he did so.

For a second or two the saloon was so still that one could hear the leather creak in the revolver holsters, as the men breathed. Then there was a howl of rage and protest. Horny, hairy fists were shaken under the Mexican's nose and a chorus of epithets were hurled at him: "What ails ye, yer durned little apoldigy fer a coyote?" "What'n hellenblazes did ye do thet fer, Juan? yer pizen little greaser yu!" "Look hyar, yu greaser, if yer don't ask thet stranger's pardin an' giv' back thet fiddle, yu'll find Murphy's Gulch tu blamed warm ter live in. Sabe?"

Ames had been at first so taken by surprise that he couldn't understand the situation; but when it finally dawned upon him, he held out his hand to Juan and said: "Your instrument is a very fine one; we thought you wouldn't mind my trying it a little. You see I haven't hurt it in the least. I—" But here the crowd broke in upon him with protests against anything in the shape of conciliatory language to the Mexican. Bill Ainsworth jumped upon a chair and held up his hand for silence; then he said: "Boys, this hyar sort o' thing ez what hurts ther repytashun uv enny camp. Ef er peaceable stranger, like Mister Ames hyar, cyant kem among us an' play music like his'n—jes' ter entertane us an' show thar's no hard feelin', with-out er measly little cuss like Juan hyar insultin' him. I say lets appint er committee ter regylate sich things! An' feller citizens, ef yu'll 'low me ter

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Presently his eye fell upon a table in one corner, upon which lay a fiddle and a bow; and merely from curiosity as to the kind of instrument which had penetrated to such a remote corner of the country, he walked over and picked it up. The sounding board was covered covered with rosin dust and the bridge was almost black from the handling of dirty fingers; but to his amazement he saw that it was of a famous Italian make, and gently picked one of the strings to assure himself of the fact.

The other men were so absorbed in their gambling and story-telling that they paid no attention to his movements, but when he drew the bow across the strings the sound was so entirely different from what they had been accustomed to hear that several looked up. Then some one said: "Cudn't you rastle her jest er little fer us, stranger?"

that had come with his arrival in a strange and friendless camp. His earlier days had been spent in luxurious living, and the memory of the good music, the society of cultured women, and the various things that make life worth living, seemed as fresh as though they had been but yesterday. Arias from the operas, Chopin waltzes, and Schumann Lieder floated out into the darkness, drawing dusky figures from their cabins to join the breathless crowd of listeners.

The crowd knew nothing of classic harmony, but no Eastern audience could have been more thoroughly appreciative; they scarcely dared breathe for fear of interrupting the player; and when the old melodies which they had known and loved as boys came from the violin, they lost control of themselves. They could see, in the dim haze of tobacco smoke picture after picture of the farms where they