

Dr. Carniff

# PURE GOLD

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### PURE GOLD

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### Tales and Sketches

From HEARTH AND HOME.

#### The Mystery OF METROPOLISVILLE.

BY EDWARD EGGLESTON,

Author of "The Hoosier School-Master," "The End of the World," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XV.

AN EPISODE.

I FIND it convenient to turn aside at this point to mention Dave Sawney; for how could I relate the events which are to follow to readers who had not the happiness to know Katy's third lover—or thirteenth—the aforesaid Dave? You are surprised, doubtless, that Katy should have so many lovers as three; you have not then lived in a new country where there are generally half-a-dozen marriageable men to every marriageable woman, and where, since the law of demand and supply has no application, every girl finds herself beset with more beaux than a heartless flirt could wish for. Dave was large, lymphatic, and conceited; he "came from Southern Elinoy," as he expressed it, and he had a comfortable conviction that the fertile Illinois Egypt had produced nothing more creditable than his own slouching figure and self-complaisant soul. Dave Sawney had a certain vividness of imagination that served to exalt everything pertaining to himself; he never in his life made a bargain to do anything—he always cawntacked to do it. He cawntacked to set out three trees, and then he cawntacked to dig six post-holes, and when he gave his occupation to the census-taker, he set himself down as a "cawntactor."

He had laid siege to Katy in his fashion, slouching in an evening, and boasting of his exploits until Smith Westcott would come and chirrup and joke, and walk Katy right away from him to take a walk or a boat-ride. Then he would finish the yarn which Westcott had broken in the middle, to Mrs. Plausaby or Miss Marlay, and get up and remark that he thought maybe he mout be a-gittin' on.

In the county-seat war, which had raged about the time Albert had left for Glenfield, Dave Sawney had become to be a man of importance. His own clam lay equidistant from the two rival towns. He had considerable influence with a knot of a dozen settlers in his neighborhood, who were, like himself, without any personal interest in the matter. It became evident that a dozen or a half-dozen votes might tip the scale after Plausaby, Esq., had turned the enemy's flank by getting some local politician to persuade the citizens of Westville, who would naturally have supported the claims of Perritaut, that their own village stood the ghost of a chance, or at least that their interests would be served by the notoriety which the contest would give, and perhaps also by defeating Perritaut, which, from proximity, was more of a rival than Metropolisville. After this diversion had weakened Perritaut, it became of great consequence to secure even so small an influence as that of Dave Sawney. Plausaby persuaded Dave to cawntack for the delivery of his influence, and Dave was not a little delighted to be flattered and paid at the same time. He explained to the enlightened people in his neighbor-

hood that Squire Plausaby was a-going to do big things fer the kyounty; that the village of Metropolisville would erect a brick court-house and donate it; that Plausaby had already cawntacked to donate it to the kyounty free gratis.

The ardent support of Dave, who saw not only the price which the squire had cawntacked to pay him, but a furtherance of his suit with little Katy, as rewards of his zeal, would have turned the balance in favor of Metropolisville, had it not been for a woman. Was there ever a war, since the days of the Greek hobby-horse, since the days of Rahab's basket indeed, in which a woman did not have some part? It is said that a woman should not vote, because she could not make war; but that is just what a woman can do; she can make war, and she can often decide it. There came into this contest between Metropolisville and its rival, not a Helen certainly, but a woman. Perritaut was named for an old French trader, who had made his fortune by selling goods to the Indians on its site, and who had taken him an Indian wife—it helped trade to wed an Indian—and reared a family of children who were dusky, and spoke both the Dakota and the French a la Canadian. M. Perritaut had become rich, and yet his riches could not remove a particle of the material complexion from those who were to inherit the name of the old trader. If they should marry other half-breeds, the line of dusky Perritauts might stretch out the memory of savage maternity to the crack of doom. *Que vous voulez!* They must not marry half-breeds. Each generation must make advancement toward a Caucasian whiteness in a geometric ratio, until the Indian element should be reduced by an infinite progression toward nothing. But how? It did not take long for Perritaut *pere* to settle that question. *Viola tout.* The young men should seek white wives. They had money. They might marry poor girls, but white ones. But the girls? *Eh bien!* Money shall wash them also, or at least money shall bleach their descendants. For money is the Great Stain-eraser, the Mighty Detergent, the Magic cleanser. And the stain of race is not the only one that money makes white as snow. So the old gentleman one day remarked to some friends who drank wine with him, that he would geeve one ten tousand tollare, be gare, to te man tat maree his oldest daughtare, Mathilde. *Eh bien,* te man must vary surelee pe w'ite and respect-able. Of course this confidential remark soon spread abroad, as it was meant to spread abroad. It came to many ears. The most utterly worthless white men, on hearing it, generally drew themselves up in pride and vowed they'd see the ole frog-eatin' Frenchman hung afore they'd marry his Injun. They'd ruther marry a Injin than a nigger, but they couldn't be bought with no money to trust their skelp with an Injin.

Not so our friend Dave. He wur'n't afear'd of no Injun he said; sartainly not of one of one what had been weakened down to half the strength. Ef any man dared him to marry a Injin and backed the dare by ten thousand dollars, blamed if he wouldn't take the dare. He wouldn't be dared by no Frenchman to marry his daughter. He wouldn't. He wur'n't afear'd to marry a Injin. He'd cawntack to do it for ten thousand.

The first effect of this thought on Dave's mind was to change his view of the county-seat question. He shook his head now when Plausaby's brick court-house was spoken of. The squire was awful 'cute; too 'cute to live, he said ominously.

Dave concluded that ten thousand dollars could be made more easily by foregoing his preferences for a white wife in favor of a red one, than by cawntacking to set out shade-trees, dig post-holes, or drive oxen. So he lost no time in visiting the old trader.

He walked in, in his slouching fashion, shook hands with M. Perritaut, gave his name as David Sawney, cawntactor, and after talking a little about the county-seat question, he broached the question of marriage with Mathilde Perritaut.

"I hearn tel that you are willin' to do somethin' han'some fer a son-in-law."

"Varee good, Mistare Sonce. You air a man of biness, perhaps, maybe. You undairstand tesse tings. Eh? *Tres bien*—

I mean vary well, you see. I want that my daughtare zhoule maree one respect-able man. Vare good. You air one, maybe. I weel find out. *Tres bien,* you see my daughtare weel maree the man I zay. You weel come over here next week. Eef I find you air respect-able, I weel then get my lawyare to make a marriage contract."

"A cawntack?" said Dave, starting at the sound of his favorite word. "Very well, musheer, I sign a cawntack and live up to it."

"Vare good. Weel you have one leetle pench of snuff?" said the old man, politely opening his box.

"Yes, I'm obleeged, musheer," said Dave. "Don't keer ef I do." And by way of showing his good-will and ingratiating himself with the Frenchman, Dave helped himself to an amazingly large pinch. Indeed, not being accustomed to take snuff, he helped himself, as he did to chewing tobacco when it was offered free, with the utmost liberality. The result did not add to the dignity of his bearing, for he was seized with a succession of convulsions of sneering. Dave habitually did everything in the noblest way possible, and he wound up each successive fit of sneering with a whoop that gave him the semblance of practising an Indian war-song, by way of fitting himself to wed a half-breed wife.

"I declare," said he, when the sneering had subsided, I never did see no sech snuff."

"Vare Good," resumed M. Perritaut. "I weel promcees in the contract to give you one ten tousand dollars—*deux mille*—two tousand averse yare for life yare. *Tres bien.* My daughtare is educate; she stooody fife, seex yare in te convent at Montreal. Zhe play on piano evere so many tunc. *Bien.* You come Monday. We weel zee. Adieu. I mean good-by, Mistare Sonce." "Adoo, musheer," said Dave, taking his hat and leaving. He boasted afterwards that he had spoke to the ole man in French when he was comin' away. Thought it mought kinder tackle him, you know. And he said he didn't mind a brown complexion a bit. Fer his part, seemed to him 'twas kinder purty for variety. Wouldn't want all women reddish, but for variety 'twas sorter nice, you know. He always did like sopmin' odd.

#### A NIGHT OF TERRORS.

(Founded on fact.)

BY DR. D. CLARK, PRINCETON.

IT was customary, about twenty years ago, in Highland districts, to carry the bodies of deceased persons on bearers of wood, instead of on wheeled vehicles. This was necessary in many places on account of the rocky and precipitous character of the roads. The bearers were usually kept in the church or vestry for convenience.

It was a clear frosty October day, in the year 1839, when John McLeod, the parish school master of Temintoul, died. He had taught, and flogged, and scolded the growing urchins of that locality for nearly half a century, and many of his early pupils had distinguished themselves in the navy, and on bloody battle-fields, in the forum, and among the literati of their country. Would that I could wax eloquent on their behalf! His dominical sway was benignant and patriarchal, and there was always a radiancy of graciousness about his countenance which cheered the faltering toiling up the hill of science, but as yet, not far from its foot. Well, his race was run, and his coffined body must be hid from sight. James Murdock, his assistant and successor, was deputed to go over to the "Auld Kirk" for the bearers. His eagerness to go was explained by the gossips at the wake, who stoutly asserted he was sure to pay a visit to the manse near by, and have a short *levo a tele* with Flora, the minister's daughter. He sped on his way and mission with all the alacrity of one whose breast was filled with 'love's young hopes.' Night overtook him on the hills, but the full moon was high in the heavens, and benignantly shed silvery pencils of glory over the heathy slopes of the looming mountains, and along the scarcely beaten track on which he trod.

When he reached the minister's house he saw a light shining through the sitting-room window, and curiosity getting the better of his sense of propriety, he peeped through the lattice, and saw Flora stitching swiftly one of the white collars which he so often admired upon her snowy neck. A gentle tap brought her to the door. It is not our intention to chronicle the sayings of the lovers, for who wishes such love scenes depicted to the ignoble vulgar? The hours of night were fast wearing away, and the "wee short 'oor ayont the twal,"—which some body sings about—was numbered with the past, when he was found scrambling over the stone wall which separated the garden of the manse from the grave-yard, in which stood a spectre white. (These gentry never appear in any other color, for some good reason of their own.) It appeared to him of monstrous dimensions and of uncouth appearance. It moved and moaned and sighed in apparent unquiet, so that it could not be a white monument made grotesque by the light of the moon. Superstitious by inheritance, his blood froze within him at the sight, for all the ghosts, wraiths, dead-candles and horrid apparitions, nestling in some nook or cranny of his brain, came vividly to his remembrance; and now was living evidence of their existence, for what else could it be? Sliding back over the wall, he hastened to Flora, and told the wonderful tale, with shaking knees, dilated eyes, and fierce gesticulation.

"Now, Murdock," said the tidy maid, "what a silly 'gouk' you are to be sure, it is only my father's white horse, which has jumped the stiles to feed in the yard."

Murdock, ashamed of his cowardice, especially at such a time, mustered courage to march with firm steps towards the author of his fears, yet, he had been startled, and his nerves had not fully received their quietus. He was now among the dead, and with the living—horse. It was haunted ground. Here was the mound of McTavish, the miser, who drove his only daughter from his door, because he begrudged her the food she eat and the room she occupied, and afterwards froze himself to death, for want of fuel to warm his shrivelled limbs. There lay the bones of Urquehat, of violent temper, who, in blind frenzy, plunged a dirk into the side of his best friend, and then capped the climax by hanging himself. Here reposed poor Nellie, who died ruined, forsaken, and broken-hearted, because of the ruthlessness of a perjured villain. There slept—it is presumed—Baillie Rutheon, who treasured up riches by extortion and deceit, but now his children have squandered it all, and all that remains of him on earth are a few pounds of unctuous earth;—Enough!—but over him stands a splendid monument of Peterhead granite, as hard as had been his own heart, and on it a lie for an epitaph. Here lies saintly Munro, or rather his remains, but his hymnal chorus of adoration is now echoing in celestial courts. Each green mound has a history, either real or mythical, and Murdock had heard of the tortured spirits of those departed, periodically haunting the scenes of their earthly sepulchre. He believed that such was the case, and while he cogitated, his fears increased. Diabolus was always supposed to be lurking near churches and impregnating the air with satanic influences. He made his way to the church door, and finding it open, he entered. The bearers had been left near the pulpit, and Murdock determined to make a rush for the spot and retreat as quickly as possible. He gathered up one coat tail under each arm, and fixed his blue bonnet firmly upon the top of his head, and then made the grand charge along one of the aisles. But alas! for all his plans and hopes, the enemy had him in his clutches, and apparently his hour of doom had come. He felt a painful constriction round the throat, which was fast suffocating him, but he was determined not to fall into the hands of the Evil One without a struggle; yet, like the bewildered traveller in a morass, the more he struggled the more his difficulties increased, and the tighter the grip became. He beat the air with his hands and stamped the floor with his feet. He gurgled forth short prayers with gasping

emphasis, intermingled with the creed, and snatches from the shorter catechism, with now and then ejaculations, which seemed second cousins to profanation. His objurations seemed of no avail for strangulation by the relentless and untiring fingers of his adversary was increasing in intensity every moment. He made a rush for the door as he supposed, but blind with terror he had lost his longitude and latitude. No matter, any way out of the church, by window, vestry, or door would be acceptable. Over the pews and seats he went—now floundering on the floor between them, and anon perched on the top of them in vain attempts to gain his equilibrium, for his unseen enemy had entangled his legs and arms in the meshes of this terrible mysterious agency. He was partially bound hand and foot. Wherever he plunged a bloody trail was left behind. The bonnet was gone, the coat and nether garments,

"Like tattered sail  
Flung their fragments to the gale."

He attempted to scream but fatigue and a tightened throat forbade it. To add to his terror, his adversary leaped upon his head and scoured his face and body with merciless blows. These fell fast and furious, accompanied by unearthly screams, appalling enough to awaken the seven, or seventy and seven sleepers. The thought came up to his mind whether it would not be better to come to terms and capitulate on conditions to the Enemy of souls, by the barter of his body and soul for his release from thralldom, rather than be immolated at once, and never see Flora again. He called upon the Prince of Darkness to release him and he would be his abject slave forever. He would seal such a contract with his blood, only liberate him now; but no response except blows without stint, came from his Satanic Highness. The battle of life and death continued foul and fierce, and yet no truce was sounded by the enemy. In sheer desperation, Murdock made for a small glimmer of light, which met his eye, and which happened to be a gothic window. He plunged at it, and through it, on to the green sward outside, as a storm-tossed mariner steers for the streaming light of afar, which to him is a beacon of hope. A woe-begone creature told his "horrible tale" to an awe-stricken assembly at the house of the dead, and a *posse comitatus* was formed of all the "braves" of the vicinity to 'beard the lion in his den' and exorcise him with cudgels, instead of with "book and candle." With slow steps, and bated breath, and dilated eyes, the crowd surrounded the church, and as the day dawned a goose with broken legs, and a cord fastened to one of them was found dangling from the window. The minister's wife had tethered the fowl in the church-yard, and as the door had been left open, it had found its way into the church, and sitting on one of the pews its cord had become entangled about Murdock's neck, and in the struggle he had wound it round his legs and arms, until the poor animal was dragged upon the top of his head, and in its fight for liberty, had beat him with its wings. Murdock fled the country for Canada, in very shame, and saw Flora no more. If this true tale meets his eye, we expect to be "called out," but we have provided pistols for two and wine for one. As poor Artemus would say "let him appoint the day for his funeral, and the corpse shall be ready."

A Detroit man wants to sell a patent-pistol-cane, or a promising Newfoundland pup—he don't care which. He went home the other night and set his cane, heavily charged, behind the door, and started in for a little romp with three bright little ones and the sportive pup. They got well enough along until pup spied the cane, and going for it, started on a promiscuous run around the chairs and table-legs with it in his teeth. The father remembered the effect of a slight pressure on a spring, and with rare presence of mind succeeded in throwing the children down the cellar stairs and placing himself on the top of a side-board before the thing went off. The ball only broke \$100 mirror, and the pup got a very few slight scratches in jumping through a plate glass window. The doctor says the children will all recover. No insurance.