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No. 5

LIGHT AT EVENTIDE.

BY EBEN E. REXFORD.

The day had been dark and doleful,
A day of wind and rain,
With a sound of ghostly fingers
Upon the window-pane,
And never a gleam of sunshine
The cold gray sky had crossed,
In the time for sad remembrance
Of what our lives had lost.

Wearied with vain regretting
For things that could not be,
Wearied with counting over
The graves in memory,
I opened the Book of Comfort
And in its pages read
What one of the grand old prophets
In time of trouble said.

I heard, like a voice from Heaven,
The royal singer's song
Of faith in Eternal Goodness
To triumph over wrong,
That the day be with tempests
In patient trust abide,
And remember the sweet old promise
Of light at the eventide.

And, lo! as I read the chapter
So dear to the troubled heart,
I saw the clouds at sun-set
Like curtains being swept apart.
And I saw, like a glimpse of Heaven,
That touched my eyes like beam,
As I sat in the sunset glory
Repeating the dear old psalm.

Lion-Hearted Dick; The Gentleman Road-Agent.

A Wild Tale of California Adventure.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "OVERLAND KIT," "TALBOT OF CINNABAR," "CAPTAIN DICK TALBOT," "THE RED MAZEPPA," "LA MAR-MOSSET," "FRESH OF FRISCO," ETC.

CHAPTER VIII. A FRONTIER TRICK.

Too late, Miss Murdoch suspected the purpose of the young man, his lips were just at the point of touching hers when the pistol shot sounded on the air.

The horses, alarmed by the report, started apart; a gasp came from the lips of De Welcher and he fell forward upon the neck of his steed like one stricken unto death, but the noble brute, instead of bounding away in terror, stood perfectly still the moment it felt the weight of its master upon its neck, as though conscious that some untoward event had occurred.

Cries of horror came from the lips of the two young men, completely surprised by the unexpected occurrence.

Just at the moment when victory seemed within the grasp of the young blood—when it looked as if nothing short of a miracle could prevent the pure, fresh, dewy lips of the maiden from being profaned by the unholy kiss of De Welcher, Talbot had drawn a revolver from his pocket and seemingly in the most careless manner had discharged it, apparently without troubling himself to take aim. Those who have followed the fortunes of "Injun Dick" will remember that in such snap-shots as this Talbot was a marvel.

The German was the first to speak.

"Mein Gott! you have murdered der mans!" he cried.

"Oh, no," responded Dick, rising to his feet, and advancing. "I have only played a little trick upon him, that is all. He is worth a dozen dead men. The fact is, miss," he continued, addressing the astonished girl, "there was a little wager between that gentleman and myself. He was anxious to bet somebody five to one that he could kiss you right here on the open road; I took him up, for I didn't believe that he could do it. He said he should be obliged to use a trick and I told him I was agreeable, provided I could try a trick too, and as you see, my trick succeeded by far the best. He has not kissed you and his five hundred dollars are mine."

The face of Carlotta Murdoch flashed crimson.

"It was a cruel thing to make me the subject of such a wager, and I do not know which I most despise—the ruffian who was shot or the bravo that fired the shot!" she exclaimed, and giving reins to her steed, she galloped away at its topmost speed.

"And that is all the thanks a man gets for saving a woman from insult; but when did anybody ever know one of the fair sex to be reasonable or logical?" Talbot quietly remarked.

"You infernal scoundrel, you shall suffer for this outrage!" L'Anguille exclaimed.

"You ought to be strung up to the nearest tree, without the benefit of judge or jury, you vile rascal!" declared Bronson, equally as violent as his companion.

"Are you," heeled, gentlemen?" asked Dick, handling his revolver in a business-like way.

"If you are, out with your weapons and let the fun begin. The odds are rather against me, but I don't mind it. I will fight both of you at once."

"Hold on, hold on!" cried L'Anguille, his valor rapidly ebbing when he beheld this hostile demonstration.

"Take care what you are about! That pistol might go off!" howled Bronson, taking refuge behind a small tree, not big enough to afford shelter to a third of his person.

"In this glorious climate of California when men use such epithets as scoundrel and rascal, they must be prepared to back up their words and take the consequences."

Now, although neither of the young men were cowards, strictly speaking, yet after the proof which they had witnessed of Talbot's skill with the pistol, they were not at all anxious to become engaged in a personal encounter with him.

"The law will hold you answerable for this murder," L'Anguille cried.

"Murder, bah!" Talbot replied, in a tone of contempt. "He's no more murdered than you are. All in the world I did was to try upon him the Mustang's trick, by means of which the finest wild horses are secured. I crossed him with a bullet; he's only stumped, that is all. Take him off his horse, lay him on a table, dash plenty of water in his face and inside of ten minutes he'll be himself again."

"He'll make you pay dearly when he does come to!" Bronson remarked, threateningly.

"I shouldn't be surprised if he did try it, but my lynch-string is always out. No man can truthfully say that he ever called upon Dick Talbot to step up to the captain's office and set



"Come out from behind that tree, you coward!" he cried, advancing slowly, a revolver in each hand.

le without the request being responded to promptly.

"Shentlemens, you shall not fight mid dis place!" the old Dutchman cried, energetically, coming forward as he perceived that there was but small danger of an immediate beginning of hostilities. "I will call for der bolles!"

When she became old enough she was sent to a celebrated Eastern boarding-school and there remained until her education was finished, and from the school she had come straight to California, so that everything was new and strange to her.

The father and daughter left gay San Francisco that evening and journeyed northward as far as the railroad would carry them, and then took stage to Yreka.

At Yreka they waited a week, Murdoch having some mining business to attend to in that neighborhood; then they took the mail-coach up the valley of the Shasta as far as Cinnabar City, where another halt of a week was made.

Shasta Bar was some thirty odd miles from Cinnabar City, up in the wild region once lorded over by the red McClouds, but the tide of civilization had swept the savage warriors before its resistless power, and now there was hardly a red-skin to be found south of the Oregon line.

The only means of communication Shasta Bar had with the outer world was a hack line running twice a week to Cinnabar City, and occupying about six hours in the trip.

This hack ran in connection with the mail coach from Yreka, leaving at two in the afternoon, or when the Yreka coach got in, and as this was generally late it was very seldom indeed the Shasta Bar vehicle ever arrived at that camp before nine or ten in the evening.

And on the particular day when Murdoch and his daughter started for their future home, the Yreka coach having met with an accident on the way, it was five o'clock before "Indigo Jake" gathered up his reins, cried "all aboard," and took the wild mountain road which led northward through the old Indian country to the mining-camp of Shasta Bar. The adventures that took place on that trip have already been detailed.

CHAPTER IX. THE CHALLENGE.

AND now that we have explained how it happened that Dick Talbot found himself once again up in the Shasta region we may resume the thread of our story.

The sudden production of the derringers took Shanghai Sam completely by surprise. In fact, with his leveled revolver, almost touching the breast of Talbot, he seemed to hold the life of the sport completely at his mercy. But, for all his blustering, the bully was not of the stuff

of which heroes are made, for no sooner did the surprise occur than his presence of mind deserted him, and he risked his life by staggering back, cowed for the moment.

"No, sir-ee, you have not got the drop on me now as much as you had," repeated Talbot, covering the big fellow with deadly aim, yet smiling pleasantly as though the affair was a capital joke.

"Durn your skin!" growled Sam. "You got me off my guard with your chinning."

"Exactly; and that is the reason I wasted breath upon you, you big, hulking, black-faced scoundrel!"

"Wot? Do you dar' to call me names to my teeth?" growled Sam, in a fearful rage.

"Do I dar' you overgrown, slab-sided, thick-headed mountain jacks?" retorted Dick.

"I don't take much daring to play a game of bluff with any such man as you! You have no more backbone than an eel—haven't got sand enough in all your big carcass to throw in the eyes of a grasshopper! Here you are, fooling around with your revolver at my breast, and yet don't dare to pull the trigger."

"Neither do you dar'," returned the other, sulkily. "I reckon I have got as much sand as you, any time."

"I don't pull because I don't want to murder you in cold blood. I ain't anxious to have the death of even such a ruffian as you at my door; and then, too, there's some poor devil of a hangman somewhere in the world, waiting for a chance to string you up, and do you think I'm the kind of a man to cheat that man out of his job? No, sir; I'm no such hair-pin! You can put up your weapon and get out; I sha'n't hinder you; your room is a deuced sight better than your company."

"I want satisfaction!" growled the ruffian.

"Ain't you satisfied already? I'll be hanged if you ain't a regular hog! Why, just look how your comb has been cut and your crowing stopped. You waltzed in here, bold as brass, the biggest chief that ever set foot in the town. You were going to astonish yourself by being fixed up like a gentleman, or else you were going in for blood and massacre, and when—"

"You're lying now, you know you are!" interrupted Sam, now trembling in his rage.

"Let's go outside and fight a regular fight like gentlemen; so stop yer palaver!"

"Oh, I see; you ain't eager to court death, even with the chance of killing your antagonist."

"I want some show for my life! You 'bused me and called me names, and I want you to understand that I'm a gentleman, the bull on me. I'm a chief, too, and I'm on the fight, bigger'n an Injun!"

"Yes, when you succeed in getting all the advantage on your side."

"I don't ask anything but a fair show. S'pose we go out into the street. You walk up and I walk down; say we walk fifty paces, and then we'll turn and go for each other."

"Oh-ho! I reckon I guess your beetle game. You are a first-class pistol shot, and you are figuring around for a chance to plug me without incurring any risk yourself."

"Wasl, I ain't no slouch with the we'pon, I admit, but that ain't saying that it is a sure enough thing for me to plug you. I reckon you kin shoot some yourself, or else you wouldn't be carrying 'round any sich tools as them things, the likes of which I never seed afore."

"I am the champion pistol-shot of California," Talbot replied, speaking in such a matter-of-fact way and so utterly devoid of any appearance of boasting, that it made the ruffian stare. "You may not believe me, but I never yet met my master with the pistol."

"Oh, you are only trying to skeer me, now, so that you will have a chance to get out of this hyer scrape, but it can't be did! I want satisfaction, and you have got to fight a duel with me like a gentleman!" blustered the bully.

"I'm your man, any way you want to take me, and if I don't cut your comb worse than it was ever cut before, then you can take my head for a football!"

At this point Mrs. Ashford, who had watched all that had taken place with almost breathless interest, thought it necessary to speak.

"Oh, sir, why do you risk your life against this man? It is not an even contest, for you are a gentleman, I am sure, while he is a villain, cursed with the weight of a hundred crimes!"

The ruffian glared at her open-mouthed. He did not remember to have ever seen her before. How was it, then, that she possessed such accurate knowledge regarding him?

"So much the more reason then that he should be either killed or disabled, and so for a time at least kept from dark and bloody deeds."

"You'll need a funeral party to plant you arter I get through with you!" avowed Sam.

"Well, you won't, for no one will take that trouble. Your carcass ain't worth it, and so we'll just throw it out amid the rocks and allow the buzzards and the wolves to make away with it, and if it don't poison them it will be a wonder."

A hoarse growl of rage was Shanghai's only answer.

CHAPTER X. THE STREET FIGHT.

"Now then, as I don't propose that you shall get 'the drop' on me or my underhand work, just uncork that revolver and put it in your belt," ordered Dick.

"Oh, you want a chance to plug me, without giving me any show to return your fire?" cried Sam, quick to take the alarm.

"Nary time! I will do the same with my weapons; then you can go out into the street and I will allow you five minutes to take up any position you like; then I will follow you and it will be perfectly fair for either one of us to shoot on sight, and we are at liberty to use any and all weapons we may possess."

"Wa-al, that sounds fair enough," the bully assented, yet with a lingering suspicion that in the arrangement Talbot had so contrived as to secure some advantage.

"Fair and square as they make 'em!"

"We kin use any we'pon?"

"Yes, that we possess or can get hold of; that is understood."

"Mebbe you've got a repeating rifle hid 'bout you somewhars?"

"Oh, yes; down my back; don't you see the muzzle sticking up under my left ear? And I've got a ten-pound cannon in my right boot and a Gatling gun in my left one. I'm well heeled; you can bet all your wealth on it. I give you this warning, so when I go for you in a manner that will make you think all Mount Shasta has fallen on your unlucky head, you will not be astonished."

Shanghai Sam grinned in a sickly sort of way. It was plain from the manner of the other's dress that it was impossible for him to have any larger weapon than a knife or a pistol concealed, yet the undoubted confidence which Talbot entertained in his own prowess was not without its effect upon the trembling giant, but if he "took water" in this his first quarrel in the camp of Shasta Bar, good-by to all ideas of lording it over the town; no "chief" would he be; and as he had come into that region with the idea of making all men bow down to his superiority, his discomfiture would be his ruin; so he determined to fight now to the bitter end.

"Wot? I'm agreeable," he said, at last, "and to show you that I'm willing to do the square thing, up goes my shooting-iron!"

And snuffing the action to the word, he uncorked the revolver and thrust it back into his belt.

Talbot immediately followed suit.

"Five minutes, sir, and then I'm after you, and keep your eyes open, for I ain't upset your apple-cart it will be because I ain't able to do it."

"Brag is a good dog but hold-fast is a better," the other retorted, as Talbot moved away from the door, and Shanghai made his exit through it.

Talbot immediately took up a position by the window in the upper part of the room so as to be able to see where his opponent went.

Shanghai Sam had confidence in him, the sport didn't have the least bit in that worthy, and considered him quite capable of concealing himself somewhere in the neighborhood so as to be able to fire the moment his antagonist stepped from the door.

And Dick had guessed correctly; this was exactly the game which Shanghai had determined to play the instant he crossed the threshold, but as he halted for a moment, ten steps or so away from the house, and looked eagerly around in search of some ambush, the sight of Talbot watching him from the window started him on again.

"Durn the cuss! he's up to the trick," Sam muttered, and with his nose uplifted and an impatient swag, he proceeded up the street. Fifty paces off a pool-sized cottonwood-tree was standing in front of Uncle Solomon's store to serve as a hitching-post for the horses of his customers. To it Sam made his way.

"This byer will do; a right nice beetle fort, I reckon, and if he kin get me out from behind his fort, without me plugging him two or three times, then the devil himself is in the luck that made me run foul of him the moment I struck the town!"

Behind the tree, which was about eight inches in diameter, Shanghai Sam ensconced himself,