

The GIRLAHORSE AND A DOG

By
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(Continued).

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Under his grandfather's will, Stanford Broughton, society idler, finds his share of the estate, valued at something like \$440,000, lies in a "safe repository," latitude and longitude unknown. It may be identified by the presence, in part, of a brown-haired, blue-eyed girl; a piebald horse, and a dog with a split face, half black and half white. Stanford at first regards the bequest as a joke, but after consideration sets out to find his legacy.

CHAPTER II.—On his way to Denver, the city nearest the meridian described in his grandfather's will, Stanford hears from a fellow traveler a story having to do with a flooded mine.

I happened to think of the Mining exchange, and to wonder if somebody connected with it might not have a list of engineers and mining experts. A hike through the streets brought me to the exchange and the secretary not only had such a list, but was willing to show it to me. In its proper place I found the name, "Charles Bullerton." A query shot at the man behind the desk elicited the information that Mr. Charles Bullerton was in South America. At this, I could have shouted for joy, because it proved conclusively that Charles Bullerton was my man, and that the tale to which I had listened wasn't altogether made up of whole cloth, as so many Pullman smoke-room romances are.

Bullerton's usual address, when he was in Colorado and not in Denver, was in care of a certain bank in Cripple Creek; or, at least, that was the way it had been before he went to South America.

A telegraph office was the next thing on the program, and when I found one it seemed to be about a hundred-to-one shot that I'd never touch bottom, since I had no hint that Bullerton had been headed for Cripple Creek. My message, prepaid and answer prepaid, contained only a single question: "What was the name of the old gentleman who bought the watered mine

and then died?" An answer to that would tell the story.

For two whole days, an interval which I spent in hither-and-yon chasings of piebald ponies and harlequin-faced dogs about the streets of Denver—and found no blue-eyed girls attached to any of them—I thought I had merely shot up into the air with my telegram, and missed the whole face of the earth. Then, one morn-



Then One Morning the Answer Came

ing, the answer came in just two words, like this:

"To Stanford Broughton,
Hotel Savoy,
Denver."

"John Smith.
CHARLES BULLERTON."

That settled it with a vengeance, you'd say. And yet it didn't. It merely proved that Mr. Charles Bullerton had acquired a sudden excess of caution, and was probably cussing himself plentifully for having been too loose-tongued with a perfect stranger in a Pullman smoker. He had answered my wire with a name that meant just as much or as little as if he'd said "Alexander the Great," and that was precisely the amount of information he had intended to convey.

Whether or not Bullerton's memorandum agreement with my grandfather would be binding upon me as Grandfather Jasper's heir, was a question for the courts to decide. But one thing was certain—that is, granting all the assumptions; if he should find the mine and go to work on his unwatering scheme, he would have a grip on things that might be handsomely troublesome to shake loose.

After I had argued it out thus far the next step suggested itself in a

through ticket to Angels; and the following morning, when I ran my window shade up previous to turning out for breakfast, the train was rolicking along over endless reaches of the driest, dreariest, most barren-looking country that the sun ever shone upon; red sand, it appeared to be, with withered bits of grass here and there and scattering bunches of what I afterward learned was called "greasewood." It was while luncheon was getting itself served that the train stopped to water the engine at the most desolate place that ever lay out of doors, I do think. The place was utterly deserted; there wasn't a human being in sight, either on the platform or in the street upon which the station faced; not even the bunch of loafers which usually materializes out of nowhere to see a train come and go. I was looking out of the window and wondering how anybody, even a hermit telegraph operator, could stand it to live in such a graveyard of a place when I got my shock.

It was a dog that connected up the high-voltage wires for me; a shaggy mongrel with his ears cocked and a red ribbon of a tongue hanging out as he jumped up on the high station platform as if to say "Hello, stranger!" to me. For, right down the center of that dog's face and dividing it as accurately as if it had been drawn by some mathematical draftsman, was a line marking off a black half from a white half!

I was just taking a swallow of hot chocolate when the dog appeared, and it nearly choked me. Luckily, I got the swallow down before I saw the horse—a grasshopper-headed cow pony, saddled and bridled and standing hitched to a gnawed wooden rail in front of one of the tumble-down



"H'm; Ticketed to Angels," He Muttered Half to Himself.

shacks. "Piebald" is a sort of elastic word, as the dictionaries define it, and it might apply to almost any beast-markings out of the ordinary. But the horse I was gaping at fell easily within any or all of the definitions; it was a true "calico" white and light sorrel in grotesque patchings; unmissably "piebald," if a purist in the use of the mother-tongue—like Cousin Percy, for example—wished to call it so.

Before I could rush back to the steward's sentry-box in the vestibule of the car our train was chasing along again.

"Hey!" I shouted: "what's the name of that place where we stopped to water the engine?"

"Atropia."

"Death-sleep," I translated with a grin. "It fits, all the way down to the ground. What are the industries of Atropia?"

"I don't get you."

"Excuse me; I'll try to put it in simpler form. Why is Atropia?"

He appeared to have reached the conclusion that I was an escaped lunatic, safe enough, most probably a harmless one. He looked first at the little colored slip sticking in my hand and then consulted a note-book drawn from his pocket.

"H'm; ticketed to Angels," he muttered half to himself. And then to me: "Was you expectin' to have friends meet you at Angels?"

This was too much, and, anxious as I was to find out something more about Atropia, I felt it an imperative duty—fool-like—to do my small part toward enlivening a rather sad world. So I said, solemnly:

"I shall be met by a parade of the Angels fire department, in uniform, and with the apparatus, headed by a brass band. But this is irrelevant to the present burning question. What I am thirsting to know is why there should be a dog with a face half white and half black standing on the Atropia station platform, and a piebald pony hitched to the horse-rack on the Atropia public square."

That finished him.

"Say, young feller, you've got 'em bad," he commented. "But that'll be all right. Just you wait till we get to Angels, and then you can find out all these funny things you're so dead anxious to know!"

"Hold on a minute," I interposed as he was trying to escape. "Atropia hasn't always been as dead as it is now, has it? What was its name when it was alive and able to sit up and take nourishment?"

As to the manner of reaching the "has been," this, as he pointed out, was simple enough. There were through sleepers by way of the P. S. W. and Copah all the way to the Pacific coast.

Armed with this information, I quickly shook the dust of Denver (no slam here intended at the Queen City of the Plain) from my feet, taking a

"Thank you; that helps. Now how much farther is it to Angels?"

"Bout twenty miles."

"All right. And when will there be a train coming back to this Atropia place?"

"Way-freight — tomorruh mornin' — eight-thirty out o' Angels."

"Good. Now if those fire people and the brass band don't miss me—" I couldn't resist the temptation to give him a final shot, and it hit the bull's-eye. As he edged away I could see by his expression that he still thought me crazy.

When I got back to my Pullman after luncheon I perceived at once that the train conductor had promptly passed the word about the episode in the dining car. The Pullman conductor evidently had his weather eye on me, and the negro porter shied every time he passed my section. This was rich, but if I could have known the tenth part of what was going to pop out of this Pandora box that I had foolishly dug up in the dining car, the amusement feature would speedily have been forgotten in a pretty strenuous effort to straighten things out while there was yet time.

I descended from the train at my ticket-named destination of Angels, and found a typical mining camp of a single street and a tawdry, dusty dreariness scarcely exceeded by that of the dead-alive Atropia. The first thing I saw on the station platform was my train conductor talking earnestly to a large, desperadoish-looking man whose greatest need was for a clean shave. By the manner of the two I saw that their talk was aiming itself at me; the railroad man was only too plainly warning the Angelic person that Angels the Blest had a probably harmless, but possibly dangerous, maniac in its midst.

Still I saw only the humorous side of it and refused to be disturbed. Fired by the ambition to find some way of returning at once to Atropia, before the magic horse and dog should disappear, I tramped off in search of a place where I could leave my two grips. The place that offered, and the only one, was the "Celestial Hotel," and I wondered what sly wag had suggested the name, which was a double pun upon the name of the town and the fact that the tavern, half restaurant and half lodging-house, was kept by a Chinaman.

But I secured accommodation, and as I was turning to leave the restaurant-tavern trouble loomed up in the shape of the heavy-shouldered desperadoish-looking person whom I had seen at the station talking with the train conductor.

"I'm onto you with both feet," he remarked, boring me with an eye that I could easily fancy might strike terror into the heart of the most reckless criminal. "I'm givin' you warnin' right now that no funny business don't go in this man's town; see?"

"I'm quite harmless," I assured him. "Give me a little information, and I'll forthwith remove myself from the confines of your charming city. How far is it by wagon-road to Placerville-Atropia, and how can I get there?"

"My gosh!" he said gloomily; "two of you in the same dog-goned week!"

"Even so. When did the other one arrive?"

"Day before yesteridday. He didn't look so much bughouse as you do, but I reckon he must 'a' been off his ka-whoo, too, 'e' he wouldn't 'a' gone to Tropia."

"Let him rest in peace. Do I get my information?"

"Shore: we speeds the partin' guest. You've come apast your place. Twenty-one mile back; and the way-freight 'll git you there to-morrurh mornin'."

"I'm going to Atropia—this afternoon," I bragged.

"He let me pass, and I tramped up the street until I found the one livery stable. Here, again, my fool reputation had quite evidently outrun me. The man had idle horses, plenty of them, as I couldn't help seeing, but I couldn't hire one for love or money.

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"They say that necessity is the mother of invention; but I'll defy anybody to invent a piece of wire in the middle of the Great Sahara desert. Every minute I was expecting to hear the rumble and roar of a train.

In this extremity it was a little death zephyr that gave me the great idea. A gentle breeze came sighing up the draw from some overheated area out beyond, and finding no trees on the barren hills, it sang its little song in the thickly clustering telegraph wires on the poles. Why, sure! I said to myself; here was my wire—miles and miles of it. All I had to do was to climb up and get it.

Gentle reader, I wonder if you've ever tried to climb a telegraph pole without the contrivances that a lineman buckles upon his feet? If you haven't, the advice of this amateur is—don't. Half a dozen times I climbed up to perhaps the height of a man's head, only to come sliding down again on a run. At last, by a series of inches I contrived to get within arm's reach of the lowest crosspiece. Pliers in hand, I strained for the nearest wire, prodded it, and began to twist it back and forth to break it.

Not to let me miss any of the thrills, it was at the precise instant of the wire-breaking that my straining ears caught the sound they had been listening for; a far-away, drumming rumble that seemed to come from nowhere in particular. Then, out of the same indefinite circumstance came a warning that was still more unmistakable—the long-drawn blast of a locomotive whistle.

I didn't climb down that pole; I came down like the time-ball on the flagstaff in Washington at high noon. Moreover, I struck the ground running, as one might say. All thoughts of tinkering that confounded motor had vanished and my one great object in life was to get the car off the track before a worse thing should happen. I was doing fairly well with the lifting and tugging when the enemy hove in sight less than five hundred yards away. And that wasn't all, either. At precisely the same instant, as if it had

been timed by the same mechanism that had brought the freight train, here came a wild engine around the curve in the opposite direction, with its whistle valve held open and making a racket to wake the dead. The bereft motor-car riders had found a locomotive somewhere and were chasing me.

One mad heave at the stranded gasoline car, a mighty boost that got all but one wheel of it in the clear, and I was gone—streaking it like a jack-rabbit for the tall timber—only there wasn't a stick of timber nearer than the slopes of the background mountains.

One glance over my shoulder as I fled showed me what I was in for: that the story was to be immediately continued in our next. Both engineers tried to stop; did stop in time to avert the greater catastrophe. Three or four men jumped from the freight and two from the wild engine to come tearing after me. I fancied I could give them their money's worth at that game—being in pretty fair training—so I pitched out to try to turn the hypothetical theory into a condition.

It was a great race. Through one gap and into another we went, making figure eights around the hills and back again, dodging into new ravines and out of them into others, circling among great sandstone boulders that took all sorts of weird shapes in the passing glimpse.

I don't know just how long the chase lasted, but it was long enough to give me a very considerable degree of respect for the nerve and persistence of those highly indignant railroad men. We must have been miles away from the scene of the disaster when I finally left them behind and lost them. When I looked back and found myself alone with the solitudes I sat down upon a flat rock to gasp and laugh. It had all been so supremely ridiculous, and so beautifully in keeping with the reputation I had left behind me at Angels, that I felt sure that now nothing less than a verdict of expert alienists would ever serve to convince these Red Desert folk that I was anything but an escaped lunatic.

After the breathing spell I kept on up the valley, heading away from the setting sun, and feeling certain that sooner or later, I must come out somewhere in the neighborhood of Atropia.

Two hours later I came into a sort of an excuse for a road. Being pretty well winded by the stiff climb out of the canyon ravine, I sat down at the roadside to rest a bit and to decide which way I should go, to the right or to the left. Just as I was making up my mind I heard a patter of feet and a dog barked.

A moment later I could see the beast, indistinctly. He had been coming up the road and had stopped at the sight—or scent—of me. Since a dog argued the proximity of a dog-owning human being, I called coaxingly: "Here, Towser—here—come on, old fellow—that's a boy!" and the curious thing about it is that he did it, running up a little way and stopping, and finally coming to squat before me and to lift a paw for me to shake.

I jolted him a bit and let him nose me to his heart's content. Then suddenly, as if he had discovered a long-lost master, he broke away and began to leap and dance around me, barking a furious and hilarious welcome. In the midst of this hubbub I heard hoofbeats and the squeaking of saddle leather, and the dog's owner rode up. At first I thought the dimly outlined Stetson-hatted figure in the saddle was that of a boy. But it was a woman's voice, and a mighty pleasant one, that called to the dog: "Down, Barney, and behave yourself—what's the matter with you, sir!"

I stood up and pulled off my cap. "I'm chiefly the master," I said. "Your dog seems to think he knows me, and I'm awfully sorry that his memory is so much better than mine." You'd think—anybody would think—that a woman riding alone in the dark on a solitary mountain road would be handsomely startled, to say the least, at seeing a man rise up faintly under her horse's nose. But if my little lady were scared, she certainly didn't parade her fright.

"Barney is such a foolish dog, sometimes," she said apologetically. "He has a double brain, you know; half of it is good-natured and silly and the other half is—well, it's—" (Continued Next Week.)

Pennsylvania Leads in Automobile Registration.

Pennsylvania leads the Union in the number of passenger automobiles registered, according to a tabulation prepared by the Bureau of Public Roads, United States Department of Agriculture. The total number of such cars registered in Pennsylvania is 557,765. California had only several hundred fewer—557,231. Passenger automobiles in New York are estimated, in the lack of complete information, at 505,642. Other States showing large registrations are Ohio, 547,000; Illinois, 512,541; and Texas, 412,332. Nevada has the smallest number of registrations, 8,688.

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