



IN THE COVER.

Across my face a gentle wind is blowing,
 Bearing my fancies far—where once again
 In memory I see the wild flowers growing
 Beneath the hedgerows of an English lane.

A tiny path, half-hidden in the grasses,
 Leads down the hillside to a fairy dell,
 Where hyacinths in heaven-tinted masses
 Ring elin music from each nodding bell.

Forget-me-nots in sweet profusion mingle
 Their tender blue with cowslip's yellow gold,
 And in each nook and crevice of the dingle
 The early primrose rises from the mold.

A laughing stream, touched by the sun to splendor
 Runs through the bracken like a jeweled thread;
 And from afar comes, clear and sweet and tender,
 "Cuck-oo! cuck-oo!" by all the breezes sped.

I long for this—as maiden for her lover—
 To stand where oft in childhood's days I stood,
 To gather roses in the dear old cover—
 Sweet wild-flower posies from an English wood.

Evelyn Shams, in Youth's Companion.

GAMBLING WITH FATE

By WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

Author of "The Gold Gleamers: A Story of the Grand Banks," "Wilby's Dream," "His Friend the Enemy," "Rogers of Bute," "Eve," etc.

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CHAPTER I.

DARREL RIDES TO SANDY BAR.

When Nate Darrel went to Sandy Bar he knew he took his life in his hand. Murgatroyd was there and Murgatroyd had sworn to shoot him on sight.

The element of chance, however, entered intimately into every act of Darrel's career. It was guide, counselor and friend for him and formed the basis of his rule of conduct.

Never since he could remember had he wavered between the Known and the Unknown. Luck was the single known factor in his equation and he yielded himself blindly into the hands of fate, always expecting good fortune yet always prepared for the worst.

The feud between Murgatroyd and himself was bitter and of long standing; and Darrel, while caring nothing for bridges in front, was careful to burn those behind. An enemy in the rear is a foe in ambush and it was well that this Murgatroyd affair should be settled one for all.

Thus Darrel reasoned. After studying the aspect of his bright particular star he took team and buckboard, one fine morning, and traveled out of Anaconda by the Blackfoot trail.

Anaconda knew little of the astute, gentlemanly and well dressed young man. He had been in town over night and had essayed a game in the "Colonel's Own," causing a ripple of excitement by showing a discard of two aces and drawing a pair of knives that "flicked" his hand and won him the table stakes.

"It's foolish to tempt fate in that way," said a veteran blackleg who stood near watching the play.

"We make our own fate, my friend," replied Darrel in the easy, well bred way that was always his; "it is not fate that makes or mars us. Be truculent and apprehensive and destiny turns and rends you; lay hold of it with your bare hands and you make it your slave. Fortune crawls at the feet of a daring man but hates and spurns a coward."

The habits of the "Colonel's Own" listened wonderingly. Such philosophy was over the heads of most of them, but the veteran blackleg was impressed.

"I have heard of but one man," said he "who invariably discards aces when he gets a pair. That man is Nate Darrel of San Francisco."

The veteran might have added that the play was known as "Darrel's discard," and that the man who had originated it had quit college to follow the cards and prove his startling theories—a philosopher of the devils picture books, courting ruin over the green cloth that he might work out a hypothesis of doubtful value.

Darrel had no intention of revealing himself. He was tarrying at Anaconda enroute to Sandy Bar and when his eccentric orbit crossed Murgatroyd's he wished it to be sudden and unexpected.

It chanced, nevertheless, that Darrel had overplayed his hand. That night the veteran gambler dispatched a mounted man to Sandy Bar with a notice to his friend Murgatroyd that Nate Darrel was in Anaconda and possibly would continue on to the mining camp.

When Darrel drew in his team of bronches at the Half Way House, the hour was high noon. The team was given into the hands of the hostler and Darrel went into the house for his dinner.

This halting place was midway between Anaconda and Sandy Bar. East and west trails also crossed at this point leading to mining regions farther back in the hills.

There was much travel along the trails and it was common report that the Half Way House was the biggest gold mine in those parts. So it happened that the dining room was comfortably filled when the Chinese waiter ushered Darrel to a vacant chair at a side table.

The new-comer was eyed with sus-

picion. In the eyes of the rough and ready crowd already there he was too well dressed, too "pretty" and defied the laws of convenience by making a distinction in his use of knife and fork.

Then, too, his voice was too soft and his language too precise. These evidences of superiority rankled under the greasy blue shirts affected by the miners and freighters.

Before Darrel's entrance another had been looked at askance. This other was a white-faced man in corduroys with "easterner" and "tenderfoot" written large in person and manner.

His reserve was stretched to the point of timidity and before he had used plate, knife and fork he had surreptitiously wiped them on the edge of the table cloth.

That of itself was an insult which might have resulted in gun-play had the proprietor been a witness. The stranger was slender, like Darrel, had the same dark eyes and closely cropped hair and was near the same height.

His face was smooth, however, while Darrel had a neatly trimmed full beard. There was something about the stranger that held Darrel's eye.

A man in Darrel's peculiar line is perforce a reader of character. After a little study over the bacon, beans, coffee and sour dough bread, Darrel concluded that the gentleman in corduroys had been driven west under the spur of conscience.

Possibly his absence had left an unprofitable void in some eastern bank, or other financial institution.

The coming of Darrel caused general attention to withdraw itself from the tenderfoot and focus upon him. Yet, although his superiority was manifest, every man in the room knew that the second stranger was not a raw recruit in the ranks of the frontier.

Finishing his meal under a running fire of half veiled sneers and covert jests, Darrel calmly rose and went out.

"Goin' south?" asked the proprietor, withdrawing his attention from a Mexican hag who, for four bits, was reading an old deck of cards for a prospector and telling him where he would best go to strike a paying lead.

Darrel nodded as he settled his bill. "Mebby you'd like to help out a fellow human who's down on his luck?" proceeded the proprietor tenta-



"THE SCRATCHING OF THE CLERK'S PEN CEASED SUDDENLY WHEN HE SAW A STRANGER IN THE OFFICE."

tively, for he was likewise impressed with Darrel's superiority and feared he might refuse the favor.

"I shall be happy to do what I can," replied the young man and immediately went up a nook in the other's estimation.

"Then come this way," said the proprietor, turning and making for a rear room. "It ain't much you'll be asked to do an' yer kindness 'll be appreciated."

Darrel presently found himself in a little back room where a red-whiskered man lay groaning on a cot, his right arm in splints and bandages.

"Got a man for ye, Hasbrook," said the proprietor cheerily; then added, facing Darrel: "Hasbrook's hoss played out hyer an' I give him another, the best I had. The bronk threw him—"

"I can ride with the best of 'em," groaned Hasbrook, breaking in, "but the brute is a regular devil."

"The bronk threw him," continued the proprietor, heedless of the interruption, "an' Hasbrook's laid up with a busted arm. He was carryin' a message to Sandy Bar an' if you'll take it he'll be obliged."

"What's the message?" queried Darrel.

"It's for Murgatroyd," said Hasbrook.

"Who is Murgatroyd, and where will I find him?" asked Darrel, artfully.

"He's a gambler at Sandy Bar an' I reckon anyone can tell where he is. Tell him Cowperthwait says Nate Darrel is in Anaconda and maybe intends comin' to the Bar."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, 'ceptin' you might add that Hasbrook started with the message, but got hung up at the Half Way House."

"I'll deliver the message," said Darrel.

"Murg 'll make it right with you," Darrel threw up his hands deprecatingly and returned to the office.

The fortune teller had just finished with the prospector and swerved inquiring eyes on the young man.

"Your fortune, senator?" she whimpered. "For four bits I tell you what has happened—"

"I know what has happened."

"U! Then I tell you what is to come, senator. Four bits."

"Very well," said he.

She shuffled and shuffled and he cut the pack into three piles. Then she ran over the cards with great care and elaborate show of knowledge.

"Marde mia! Senor it is malo, muy malo. Forswear the cards and keep away from Sandy Bar. That is what I read. Trouble awaits you at the mining camp, ah, mucho, mucho. What I see, senator, I cannot understand, but here it is: You are to die and after that you are to live—"

He laughed, but she flashed him the indignant look of a devotee of an exact science and continued.

"The second time you live you prove your innocence of a crime by fastening it upon yourself. Is it not strange? I no save your fortune, senator, but there it is, plain to see. And, look! there is a queen of hearts; a fair young senorita whose fate links with yours—"

"That will do."

The silver rang as he threw it down on the table and turned away. He had not taken two steps before the old woman had him by the arm.

"You make your living with the cards, senator," she breathed harshly, "have a care that you do nothing wrong."

He pulled away from her and drew himself up.

"I play an honorable game," said he curtly.

"Ojaia!" she mumbled; "you may be honest, but you cannot be honorable and follow the cards. Beware of three aces and two red sevens, senator."

"Why?"

"When you hold that hand you never leave the table alive!"

"Gracias, senora," he said, a fine scorn lurking in the words; "the future is a riddle and a riddle you have read me. As for the jacks full on red sevens, it is a good hand in any game and I shall be glad to receive it. Adios!"

Thereupon he left the office and ordered the hostler to bring his team.

CHAPTER II.

DARREL PRESENTS HIS COMPLIMENTS.

As Darrel climbed into his buckboard the man in corduroys rode past on a calico cayuse. To the saddle cantle was strapped a well-worn traveling bag.

Darrel caught the stranger surveying him covertly. The man's gaze was quickly averted, however, when the other parried the scrutiny with a keen look.

"There's certainly a heavy load on that fellow's mind," thought Darrel as he gathered up the lines and flicked the whip lash between the bronchos' ears.

The galloping cayuse was pointed south and Darrel's plunging team swiftly carried him abreast of its rider, and ahead. Quickly the stranger drew rein and was still at a halt when the buckboard and its single passenger topped a rise and vanished on the other side.

In those days all sorts and conditions of men were to be met in that section, so Darrel scarcely gave the man in corduroys a further thought. "You may be honest, but you cannot be honorable," were the words that passed and repassed through his mind.

Rarely, indeed, did this freelance allow anything to weigh upon his spirits. But there was something in the Mexicana's statement that struck cruelly against a desire to be a little different and a little better than he knew himself to be.

"An honorable man must be honest," thought Darrel, "but an honest man is not necessarily honorable." He smiled to himself. "That is what the senora would imply and she is not consistent."

All the way to Sandy Bar he soliloquized, coming to himself abruptly when he sighted the Eponay below him and made out the huddled buildings of the camp. With a shrug he dismissed his unpleasant reflections and gave attention to the work that confronted him.

"Where will I find Murgatroyd?" he asked of the man who took charge of his team at the camp corral.

"That's tellin'," was the answer, as a pair of speculative eyes traveled over the newcomer. "By ten an' after you can generally find Murg at Hawk-bill's. Sometimes durin' the day he's at his minin' office."

"Where is the office?"

"Up stairs over Kalipper's place. See that buildin' with the lamps in front?"

The man pointed down the street as he put the question.

"Yes," replied Darrel. "Is that Kalipper's?"

"Now, that's Hawkbill's. Kalipper's is the next buildin' north."

"Thank you."

Darrel started immediately, his slight, graceful figure watched curiously by the man at the corral. "A tinhorn, if I know the brand," the man muttered, shaking his head forebodingly as he began unhitching the team; "he looks it all right, and besides he asked for Murgatroyd."

At that hour of the day Sandy Bar was quiet and orderly. Night brought the miners out of the hills and the gambling gentry from their lurking places, the games and the excitement beginning simultaneously.

While passing the cluster of lamps that arched above the sidewalk, Darrel took note of the temple of chance behind them. Such establishments always interested him professionally, and this one, with its elaborately painted front, its fulsome display of red globes and its air of prosperity, was plainly a favorite rendezvous.

Kalipper's place was a restaurant, at least a sign indicated that "meals" were to be had at all hours. A narrow stairway led to the second floor and at the top of the flight Darrel was confronted by a door bearing the words: "L. Murgatroyd, Mines and Mining Stocks."

Without a moment's hesitation, Darrel opened the door and stepped within. A sallow-faced young man sat at the table, writing.

The clerk was alone, but off to the

right was a door, partly ajar, and marked "Private." The scratching of the clerk's pen ceased suddenly when he saw a stranger in the office—a stranger with one hand behind him, under his coat.

"Well?" queried the clerk.

"I have business with Murgatroyd," answered Darrel.

"He's out of town," said the clerk.

A shadow of disappointment crossed Darrel's face as the hand was withdrawn from under the coat.

"When will he return?"

"In time for the games at Hawk-bill's."

"If I left a few lines for him would he see them if he gets back?"

"Reckon he would. He always comes to the office after a trip into the hills."

"Where can I write?"

"Step right into his private room. Stranger in camp?"

"Yes."

"I've known him for a good many years."

Darrel was ushered into the other apartment and the clerk placed paper, pens and envelopes at Darrel's disposal. As he seated himself, Darrel saw a revolver lying on the desk by the inkwell.

The weapon had an ebony stock, carved with a death's head. It was Murgatroyd's, as Darrel well knew, and by what chance had its owner gone into the hills without it?

The clerk noticed Darrel's curious glance at the firearm.

"That's the old man's," he vouchsafed; "first time I ever knew him to go away and forget it. Make yourself at home. What name did you say?"

"Nathan."

"All right, Mr. Nathan. Nothing in this layout is too good for the old man's friends. If you don't see what you want, ask for it."

"Much obliged."

The clerk withdrew and resumed his penwork in the outer office. Picking up the pen, Darrel wrote as follows:

"Mr. Darrel presents his compliments to Mr. Murgatroyd and desires to state that he is now in town awaiting Mr. Murgatroyd's pleasure. Mr. Darrel also wishes it known that he can be found this evening at Mr. Hawkbill Henderson's. He trusts Mr. Murgatroyd will embrace his opportunity."

Darrel knew his arrival in camp would be noised abroad and reach his enemy's ears. Murgatroyd's absence from Sandy Bar, therefore, made a sudden and unexpected meeting impossible.

Darrel therefore desired the notification to come through himself, in his own way. Having addressed the envelope, he inclosed the folded sheet, laid the communication on the desk and placed the revolver on it for a paperweight.

Then, lighting a cigar, he leaned back in the chair, wondering why fate couldn't be kind and send Murgatroyd to him as he was then—in his enemy's own room with his enemy's own revolver within easy reach. Presently the artfulness of Murgatroyd's character suggested something and the revolver suggested something else.

(To Be Continued.)

TWILIGHT IN THE KITCHEN.

Women Have Ever Cooked and Dreamed in the Glow of the Embers.

The fire-light fills the dusky room with shadows. The red coals glow and wink and the little flames snatch at the crisping toast. I always imagine Cinderella in a dusky glow like this, when she still sat in rags and cinders. Probably there was a big pumpkin under her kitchen table just as there is under mine. I hope my fairy godmother won't trouble to make this one into a coach, though, for I want to make it into pies tomorrow. I like to think of the morning after the ball, when the ugly sisters and the stepmother were sleeping late, and Cinderella was getting breakfast, dancing back and forth between the cupboard and the fire and whispering remarks about the prince to the kettle, says a writer in Scribner's Magazine. I know she peeped into her pocket at the little glass slipper, when she should have looked into the oven. Excellent thought! In a moment more my precious supper dish might have been black as King Alfred's cakes. Dear King Alfred, patron saint of absent-minded cooks! But how times change; only a day or two ago I set a mighty man to watch my cookery, and instead of letting it burn while he thought of his mighty affairs, he spent the time thinking out a dozen ways of doing it better. I have spared him the service since as tactfully as if he had burned my biscuits to cinders.

The flames have snatched into the steady glow of the coals; the red heaps and hollows are full of pictures. Women have cooked and dreamed in this ember-glow since the world began. In the old days when the shewbread was baking, or sometimes the "cakes for the queen of heaven." Hebrew women must have pictured marches and deliverances, seas divided and cities with miraculously fallen walls; and always the universal woman-vision of lovers and espousals, of home-comings and toddling children. * * * Pious battles and triumphs must have glowed in the fires of the Viking wives as they watched the roasting feasts and chanted songs of their lords' exploits.

Her Regular Day.

Minister's little boy to widow, who has buried four husbands—Pa sent me up to ask you if it was Wednesday or Thursday that Mr. Smith wanted him to perform the wedding ceremony. He's forgot, and didn't like to say so to Mr. Smith.

Widow—Wednesday, little boy.

"That's what pa thought, but he wasn't sure," cause Thursday, he said, has always been your day for marryin'."—Stray Stories.

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