

At Squatter's Gulch

By THOMAS B. MONTFORT

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JOE COUSINS was seated in front of his cabin up in Squatchie gulch. He was weary and discouraged. He had just added another to a long series of days of hard and futile effort in his search for gold.

Presently another man came down the road, togged out in his Sunday attire. He was humming a light air, his head well up and a satisfied expression on his face. Joe Cousins watched this man for a moment, a scowl on his countenance, then to himself he said: "D— him."

When the man came even with Joe he stopped and, for an instant, stood silent, eyeing him closely. There was something of an air of triumph in his manner that was exasperating.

"Well," he said, presently, "how's things?"

"Oh, about so," Cousins replied, with forced calmness. "Struck nothing yet?"

"No." "Too bad, isn't it?" "Oh, I don't know. It takes time to strike a fortune. Things will come around all right, I guess."

"Maybe so. I hope they will, anyhow; but you can't always tell. You missed your chance up there at Ruggie's Point. If you had done as I did you would be on Easy street now."

"That's true, I guess; but I prefer to get money in some other way. I'd rather remain poor all my life than rob a helpless old man."

"Oh, it wasn't robbery, Joe. Nothing like it. It was just merely a sharp stroke of business. It's done every day."

"Perhaps it is; but that doesn't make it right," Joe replied. "It may be business in the eyes of some people, but to me it looks like dishonesty."

The other laughed. "Well, look at it as you please," he said. "You have that right. I'm afraid, though, you'll never get on in this world if you're always going to be so particular. It don't pay. Such high notions of honor are commendable no doubt, but they don't buy anything. Well, I'm off for town. Anything I can do for you down there?"

"No." "I may see Miss Harmon. Just barely possible, you know. If there is any word you want to send her I'll be glad to take it."

Joe's face darkened again. "Very much obliged," he said. "There is nothing you can do for me."

The other hesitated for a moment, then, with an exasperating air of self assurance, said:

"I want to be square with you, Joe, so I'll tell you something. I'm going to ask Miss Harmon to marry me."

Joe stood up, a flash of anger in his eyes. With an effort he controlled his feelings and calmly replied:

"So far as I can see that is none of my business. If you want her, and she is willing to have you, marry her."

"Of course. But knowing that you are in love with her, I thought I ought to tell you. I don't want to appear to take any advantage of you, you know."

"You are very considerate Jim; very. But it is not necessary for you to bother about me. You have a perfect right to marry Miss Harmon—if you can get her."

"Thanks! I am glad you feel so about it. Of course, I know you can not expect to win her—not in your financial condition you know. That is one of the great disadvantages of being poor, isn't it?"

The half-smearing, wholly patronizing tone in which these words were uttered was highly trying to Joe. Drawing himself up to his full height he said, warmly:

"Poor as I am, Jim Lewis, I would not exchange places with you for the world. Money is a good thing to have, but a clear conscience is better. Even for the sake of winning Miss Harmon I would not want to get a dollar dishonestly."

"No! Well, I hope you may find much happiness in your high ideas, Joe. For my part, I'll risk finding my happiness in plenty of money and the woman I love. So long."

Jim Lewis resumed his walk down the road. His manner was that of a man thoroughly satisfied with himself and the world in general. His bearing was that of a victor.

Joe Cousins returned to his seat, and, placing his elbows on his knees, dropped his face into his hands. He was very unhappy. He loved Jane Harmon, and he believed he could win her if he dared to try. But he was poor, and he was too proud to ask any woman to marry him and share his poverty. He had toiled faithfully for years and fortune had not smiled on him. So far as he could see, there was not the slightest indication of any improvement in his financial prospects. For this reason he remained away from Miss Harmon, giving Jim Lewis the field.

He had been sitting in the same dejected attitude for an hour, brooding over his ill-fortune, and wondering whether it paid, after all, to be honest, when a strange but hearty voice accosted him. Looking up he saw an old man, with long hair and an unkempt beard, standing before him.

"Ha! I thought I couldn't be mistaken," the old man cried. "I'd remember that face anywhere. I never forget a good, honest countenance, do you?"

Joe arose and met the extended

hand, at the same time looking at the old man in a puzzled way.

"I believe you have the advantage of me," he said. "I can't just place you at once."

"So! Don't you remember an old fellow up at Ruggie's Point? A young chap, your friend, named Lewis, beat him out of a claim by jumping it while he was sick. He wanted you to jump another claim and you refused. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, now I do." "That was a mean trick in Lewis. He made \$10,000 out of it, though. Hope he may enjoy it. It didn't hurt me much. Got plenty without that. The other mine turned out big. Made me rich. How you doing?"

"Well, a little slow, I'm afraid." "So? Haven't struck anything down here, then?"

"Not yet." "Too bad. What would you think if I was to tell you that you are rich?"

"I should think you were joking, of course."

"I never joke. You are rich." Joe shook his head and smiled sadly.

"Don't believe it, eh?" the old man cried.

"I can't imagine any possibility by which such a thing could be so," Joe replied.

"Can't you? Do you remember the claim you abandoned up there at the Point?"

"Yes, I remember that. I ought to, after wasting nearly a year on it."

"That claim is still yours, and there is a fortune in it. It's worth \$100,000 any day. I prospected it and know. Been offered that for it. Where's your friend—Lewis?"

"He's gone to town. Are you sure about that claim of mine?"

"Of course. You can have \$100,000 for it any day. I'm going back, and I want you to go with me. I just came down for a day or two. Got a daughter, and heard she was down at town. Came to meet her. Maybe you know her?"

"I may, but I believe I have forgotten your name. Or did I ever know it?"

"I guess not. Everybody called me Shortcut. The way I talk, you know. Remember?"

"Yes. Your real name is—"

"Harmon. Zach Harmon."

Joe gave a start, and his face paled and flushed. The old man saw nothing however, and presently he rattled on:

"I haven't seen my daughter for five years. Haven't heard from her for a long time. I used to write to her back home, but got out of the habit. Not much mail going up there, you know. I heard last week she was down here. A man from down here told me. He said she had come on to hunt me up if I was still living. Fine girl, and I am anxious to find her. Do you know her?"

"What is her first name?" Joe asked.

"Jane."

Joe was silent a moment, then he answered, quietly:

"Yes, I think I know her. At least I know a lady of that name."

"So? Then it is my daughter. Where is she?"

"Down in town." "Yes. How far from here?" "About three miles."

"So? Well, I must get on. Anxious to see her, you know. Five years is a long time. I'll see you to-morrow." Joe hesitated a moment, then he said:

"Perhaps I ought to tell you something before you go, Mr. Harmon."

"Well, what is it?"

"Lewis is down there."

"Down there? With my girl, you mean?"

"Yes."

"What for? Want to marry her?"

"I think so."

The old man's eyes blazed. "The scoundrel!" he cried. "I'll soon settle him, though. Guess she don't know that he robbed me. Why didn't you tell her?"

"I didn't know who you were. I never dreamed of you being her father."

"That's so. Well, must hurry. Would you come with me? Wish you would, to show me the way."

"I'll come, if you wish it."

"All right, come on."

They passed out of the gulch as the night began to fall. They went down the mountain in the darkness. There was comparative silence between them. Now and then the old man jerked out a short sentence and Joe answered. That was all.

"Can I win her?" he said to himself.

"Or is it too late?"

He remembered Lewis' air of confidence, and he sighed, and in his heart there was a feeling of fear.

"This is the house," he finally announced.

Without making his presence known, the old man threw open the door and walked in. Joe followed. They came upon Lewis and the girl, sitting together, and the former was declaring his love. The old man walked straight up to Lewis and rapped him over the head with his cane.

"Ha! Scoundrel, villain, thief!" he cried. Then, turning to the girl, he added: "Jane, don't you know me? I'm your father."

She gave a little glad cry and went to his outstretched arms. There was a long and impressive silence; then the old man pointed to Lewis and said:

"Jane, are you going to marry that man?"

"No, father," she replied. "Never!"

"Ha! Good! He's a scoundrel!" He paused a moment, then, pointing to Joe, added: "Now, there's a man who's honest. Do you know him?"

"Yes, I know him," she said, softly.

"Do you like him?"

She did not answer. It was not necessary. Joe knew he would not have to win her.

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War Bulletins

JAPS GAINED GROUND.

Gen. Kuropatkin's advance has been met with a counter advance of the forces under Field Marshal Oyama. According to advices received at Tokio a general engagement is in progress between Liao Yang and Mukden, but reports from Russian sources describe the fighting there as merely in the nature of advance guard actions. Kuropatkin is reported to be aiming to strike simultaneously at two widely separated points on the Japanese left. There has been hard fighting a short distance north of Bensihu, in which a Russian loss of 150 is killed or wounded is admitted. The Japanese claim to have cut off a Russian column south of the Taitse river.

It is evident that Kuropatkin is transferring the weight of his attack to the Japanese right, which rests on the Taitse river east of the Yentai mines. North of Yentai the fighting is reported to be of the most desperate character, the positions constantly changing hands and the losses on both sides being heavy.

Tokio reports that the battle raged uninterruptedly all of Tuesday and into the night and that it is believed there that the Russian turning movement was checked. Oyama reports that he is gaining ground and that the Russian attack on Sienchung in the effort to cut the Japanese communications with the Yalu river was repulsed.

VICTORY FOR THE JAPS.

Tokio, Oct. 14.—The latest telegrams from the front indicate the continuation of Japanese success.

Gen. Oku's left army alone bagged 25 guns.

The Russians made two desperate counter attacks against the Japanese left, but were repulsed with heavy slaughter.

The Manchurian headquarters in a telegram sent Thursday reported as follows:

"Since the last report our right army has been continuing a vigorous pursuit of the enemy towards the north.

"The enemy's two counter attacks against the center column of the left army were very daring, but these attacks were repulsed with heavy damage.

"The supports and the artillery reserve advanced to Kuchiatzu and vicinity, driving the Russians from Hunchiatien.

"The right wing of the left column of the center army captured 150 prisoners."

St. Petersburg, Oct. 14.—Gen. Kuropatkin reports that during the fighting Wednesday and Thursday the advance troops were reinforced from the principal positions; that last evening the left wing was ordered to fall back on the main position, and that about 2 p. m. the center also fell back.

Desperate fighting and heavy losses on both sides, with varying success for the Russians, such is the summing up of the situation by Kuropatkin in a telegram filed yesterday.

At nightfall on October 12 the Russian right was withdrawn from its main position, but one of the abandoned positions was retaken at the point of the bayonet during the night.

Gen. Stoessel, commander of the Russian troops at Port Arthur, telegraphs that the Russians recently recaptured Signal Hill. He adds that the Japanese are bombarding the interior of the fortress with new batteries and that the bombardment is becoming more and more violent.

RUSSIANS RETREATING.

A SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION.

The main armies of Russia and Japan in Manchuria continue to be engaged in a desperate struggle for supremacy south of Mukden. On both sides there have been such losses in killed and wounded as mark the contest for one of the bloodiest battles in history. Already the losses at Liao Yang have been approximated, and the indications are that they will be exceeded, that of the Russians up to noon of October 14 being estimated at 15,000. The Russian advance has been converted into a stubbornly-fought retreat. The result according to the Russians is still to be determined.

Reports from the Russian left wing are lacking, leaving room for question if that part of Gen. Kuropatkin's army is not in worse extremity than the center and right were at any stage of the battle. On both sides the soldiers have shown the utmost bravery.

In official circles of St. Petersburg there is a disposition to argue that even should Gen. Kuropatkin be obliged to retire upon Mukden his position will be quite as favorable as it was when the order to advance was given on October 6, and that on the other hand the Japanese power of future resistance will have been materially weakened. There is no news from Port Arthur.

Mukden, Oct. 15.—The fighting raged yesterday with the same bitterness as on the previous days of the engagement and the result is still in the balance. The losses on both sides are enormous, that of the Russians being 15,000. Wounded soldiers are being brought in from all directions.

Warlike Burglars in a Bank.

Lakota, N. D., Oct. 15.—An attempt has been made to blow the safe of the People's state bank here, two explosions of dynamite awakening the citizens, who turned out with shotguns and revolvers. Several hundred shots were fired and the bandits forced the guests of the Grace hotel, nearby, to keep inside the building, on penalty of being shot. Among the guests was E. Y. Saries, the republican candidate for governor. The bank safe was wrecked, but the robbers escaped without securing any money.

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