

THE DUSKY DUCK.

Within the blind, before 'tis light,
I take my place to watch, and wait
The coming of the morning flight
Of dusky ducks to meet their fate.
The mist against the eastern sky
Is rising now; as breaks the day
The gloom is fading into light,
The horizon is streaked with gray
I think that up the stream I see
A welcome sight, as in the air
A speck appears; yes, one, two, three,
Nine large black ducks toward me bear,
My trusty "Scott" with trembling hands
I closer grip, and try to calm
My beating heart, while on the sands
I lower crouch so that the charm
May not be broken; now the flock
Is surely coming to the blind;
My heart stops beating; here they come
On whirling pinions like the wind.
Just as they turn my right speaks out,
And bang! spat! spat! now two ducks fall
Then with the left through smoke and doubt,
I speak, two answer to the call.
Two shots, four ducks, with rapture held,
There's nothing more I can desire.
My wife at once the dream dispelled
With "Come get up and make the fire."

SPECTRES ON THE TRAIL

In the summer of 1873 I was thirty years of age—in perfect health and of steady nerve. I was no believer in the uncanny—hardly in the supernatural—and had always pooh-poohed at tales of ghosts, phantoms and visions of all sorts. But at the time mentioned above the experience I am about to relate put my intellect and sensibility to test in such a manner as to make me sparing thenceforward of ridicule, and forced me to find a place in credence for the possibility of apparitions.

It is unnecessary to explain how I came to be travelling in the Far West without companions, except for horse, and dog and gun. Following the general route of the old overland trail, I camped one night in the edge of a considerable forest, and at a point from which I could look forth over a broad, open plain.

It was already after sundown. The good horse was picketed, and having provided a supper for myself and the dog from a rabbit which my gun had brought down an hour or two earlier, I disposed things for the night, and, as the stars came out, lay down to sleep, comfortably rolled in a blanket. It was probably in the small hours of night that I awoke and rose to a sitting posture. The moon was climbing the eastern sky, with not a feather of cloud in her course, and every object stood forth as clearly as in the day.

But it was not for me to contemplate in quietude the rare beauty of the night. In almost the first moment of consciousness my eyes fell upon a slowly moving object in the distance. It was one of those canvas-covered wagons, the "prairie schooners" so familiar in the early days of overland travel to California.

It was approaching almost directly toward me, and my curiosity was at once aroused. Why anyone should be traveling thus, and so late at night, I could not imagine. The movement was heavy, as if the horses were jaded, and the man who walked by their side had a weary step.

Twenty minutes passed, the vehicle approaching nearer and nearer. Still on it came, until when about thirty yards from me it suddenly stopped, and the man looking about seemed to be considering the wisdom of making camp.

At this moment I suddenly realized that the approach of the wagon had been utterly noiseless. Not a chuck of the wheels, not the sound of a step, either of horse or man. And, furthermore, there was no indication that I had been discovered, although I should have been as visible to this man as he to me. What could this mean? Was I dreaming? No, I was never more awake. Was this hallucination? No, for the dog, who had been aroused by my movement in awakening, now turned his head in the direction of the new arrival, and uttered a low growl. I laid my hand on him to keep him quiet.

The man now stood by the forward wheel, looking in at the opening of the canvas top, and though I heard no voice, I imagined that he was speaking to some one within. A woman's head appeared, and after a glance around, gave a nod of assent, and the man proceeded to unharness the horses and turn them loose to graze. Then, after a moment, in which he seemed to be anxiously surveying the trail over which they had come, he helped the woman to alight.

And now their movements greatly puzzled me. Walking to and fro, they seemed to be searching for some particular spot of ground. As I said above, I had selected my camping ground in the outer edge of the forest. They were moving about therefore

amid mingled shadows and moonbeams, but every motion was visible. Finally the woman pointed to a space between two young trees, and the man after looking at it for a moment went to the rear end of the wagon and brought forth a spade. With the edge of this implement he marked off a rectangular space about five feet by two, and began to dig. All this, let it be remembered, was in absolute silence. Here were apparently living beings, actively engaged, and not more than a hundred feet away, and yet no sound was borne to me on the quiet air.

By this time my curiosity had turned to marvel. Here was a contradiction of common sense! I could not believe that what I saw was real; these beings must be apparitions. And yet here by my side was the dog, as alert as I, and trembling with an impulse to investigate, while obedient to my hand of restraint.

The digging proceeded, and the soil being soft five feet of depth was soon reached, and then the man threw out the spade upon the ground. The woman, meanwhile, had been plucking branches of evergreen, bringing them in armfuls and throwing them beside "the grave," I thought. And now, with the utmost care and patience, the whole cavity was lined with these sprigs of evergreen, held in place by twigs thrust into the banks on either side.

This done, the man sprang out. The two surveyed their work for a moment, and then after gazing once more, as if in anxiety, over the route by which they had come, approached the wagon. Having rolled up the canvas on one side, they lifted out a small mattress, depositing it upon a blanket which they had spread upon the ground.

This mattress was not without its burden. The beams of the full moon enabled me to see thereon a slight form—that of a little girl who had scarcely lived out three years. The pretty white hands were folded over the breast. Long golden curls fell on either side upon the pillow. The face, which I could see with astonishing clearness, was wonderfully beautiful in its aspect of innocence, and bore a life-like smile, as if in answer to the radiant queen of the sky, who seemed to be smiling, too, as she looked steadfastly down upon the living and the dead.

The mother forthwith proceeded to arrange the spreads upon the child, tucking them and smoothing them down as if she were only putting her little one to bed, although while I heard no sob nor any expression of grief, I could see that her breast was heaving with sorrow and her face was visited by tears.

The two now knelt on either side, kissing their darling many times, and weeping over her, though trying apparently to comfort one another in their mutual wretchedness, if perchance there might come in their hearts a calm like that with which the moon was still sending down her beams to illumine the tearful scene.

Then laying hold of the blanket they carried their darling to the grave, and by the aid of the bridle-reins let the precious burden down into the place which they had so carefully prepared. Green boughs were scattered over her, until they covered the beautiful form many inches deep, and then the clouds were gently replaced, and a little mound was heaped, and the child transferred from her mother's bosom was sleeping at last in the bosom of that greater mother—Earth. The two sad mourners knelt again beside the grave, and seemed to be engaged in prayer, lifting their faces now and then to the sky, as if in its infinite clear depths they saw the future hopes.

All this—though I still thought it unreal—had awakened in me the keenest interest and sympathy. But my attention was now suddenly diverted to a line of figures in the distance, somewhat beyond the spot where I had seen the wagon when I first awoke. These were horsemen who came sweeping on at a rapid pace, as if engaged in eager pursuit. From the manner in which they rode I knew they were Indians. Ah! I saw it all now, and understood why these spectral visitors had so often looked back apprehensively in the direction from which they had approached. These pilgrims across the plains had seen signs of savages, and had used the night to push on beyond their reach, if haply they might bury their dead in peace and find safety for themselves. But the foe had discovered their trail and followed them, bent on massacre.

I laid my hand instinctively on the rifle under the edge of my blanket that I might join in the defence, and was about to cry out in warning of the danger I saw approaching, but instant-

ly bethought myself that this was unreal, a mere vision, calling for no practical action, and I might better let these shadows work out their tragedy to the end. I again restrained the dog who seemed agitated, whether because he saw what I was seeing, or out of sympathy with my emotion—I know not which.

The two at the grave seemed unconscious of the threatened danger until their enemies were within a hundred yards, when the man sprang up and lifted the woman also to her feet. They turned toward the wagon, as if to gain its shelter and secure weapons for defence. It was too late. I saw flashes of fire and also a flight of arrows, still without a sound, however, to break the calm of the night.

Both the man and woman staggered as if wounded. They stopped and turned face to face, throwing their arms about each other as if realizing that this was their last embrace. Each other the agony of death, they fell together upon the grave of their child.

The Indians were not long in completing their work. Then catching the horses and harnessing them into the wagon they hastened away, as though themselves in fear of pursuit. I watched them until they disappeared and then was alone with my thoughts and the brilliant night.

I realized that I had seen a vision, and, though I turned myself resolutely to rest, my sleep for the remainder of the night was fitful and disturbed. When finally I awakened again, the sun had risen, and under the influence of that great dispeller of illusions, and in spite of the vividness of the night's experience, I began to think that after all I might have been only dreaming; especially when I saw that the space where I had seen the burial and the tragedy that followed was not open and clear, but overgrown with brush and young trees.

Nevertheless, yielding to a curiosity of which I was meanwhile almost ashamed, I soon made my way into the bushes. Parting these with my hands as I went forward and scanning the ground closely, I shortly experienced a new shock of surprise. For there in the exact spot marked by the night scene, was a little mound and over it the remains of two skeletons.

And now for a retrospective fact which gave to this weird experience of the night a personal significance. While I was yet a lad in my teens my brother, twenty years older, had taken his young wife and only child and set out to cross the plains in pursuit of fortune. The mails had brought home tidings of the progress of their journey up to a certain point. Beyond this all trace was lost, and we never heard of them again.

I have not been able to account satisfactorily for what I have related. Was this an indubitable information vouchsafed to me from another world as to the fate of my relatives? If so, why was it reserved for this time and place? Was it impossible that I should have this vision elsewhere. And if this is the case, then why? Had nature photographed these tragic scenes and preserved their reflection, to reproduce them for an eye that was fitted by some occult law of sympathy to behold? Let the savants answer if they can—I cannot.—Edward B. Bayne in *The Overland*.

QUEER BANK DEPOSITORS.

A Greenhorn Who Thought the Signature Book Was His Deposit Book.

As queer things happen sometimes at the banks as anywhere else. It was not long ago that a galoosh-looking fellow walked into the First National of Chicago, and asked for a certificate of deposit. He counted out his money and handed it through the window. The teller took it, counted it and threw it into his box. Then taking his great canvas-covered book, wherein are entered the signatures of the thousands of people who hold certificates of the First National, he threw it around and passed it through for the galoosh to sign. The next instant, when the teller looked up, that depositor was half way down the big banking room with that great book under his arm and making for the door. There were the money boxes to look out for and the drawers to close, and the clerk could get out in pursuit only by running down and around one hundred feet of counters. He didn't try to do all these things. He hallooed to the nearest customer he saw outside to run and stop that fellow with the great canvas-covered book. That was no difficult matter. The man was making his way painfully and slowly down Dearborn street and came back cheerfully. He thought that that forty-pound book, he said, was his certificate of deposit.

A rather nice-looking but matronly-looking young woman began depositing \$100 a week at the First National. She came so regularly, always with the same amount, that the young man at the window made bold to congratulate her that she was doing so well in her business. "Don't give me away," she said in a friendly tone; "my husband is a bartender."

A DOG THAT'S A MIRACLE.

The Owner Tells Uncle Billy Bowers All About Him.

Recently on the little branch narrow gauge from Bowersville to Hartwell, I met the sheriff—an unbridled, irrefragable, naive Georgian. He's a cheerful Georgian.

To a good many people in Georgia, the sheriff's name is at once an introduction and description, for everybody in that country knows Jim Roberts. Crouched under Jim's seat was a measly, thin, black and white cur. The dog's air of mortification and bewilderment was something ludicrous, and all the more noticeable because it was Jim Roberts's dog.

The brute's looks were against him, decidedly. His countenance would have convicted him of anything—sneaking eggs, sheep killing, chicken stealing or what not. He was a miserable, mean looking dog.

Uncle Billy Bowers sat just behind Jim. The two talked like old friends, and, in the course of conversation, Uncle Billy recalled an experience of his own in which a very intelligent dog had figured.

Jim could hardly wait for the old man to finish his story.

"Talk about dogs," in a matter of fact tone, as Uncle Billy concluded his dog story, "I've got the smartest dog in the country, Uncle Billy. He don't look as fine as some dogs," reaching under the seat for the black and white cur, "but that dog's a miracle."

The miracle was held up by the nape of the neck for Uncle Billy's inspection, as non-committal as a disrag. "Them eyes," continued the owner, "around in a vague effort to escape, 'just look at them eyes.'"

Uncle Billy's face was a study. Evidently he was not certain in his own mind that the dog was a miracle.

"Uncle Billy," in the same matter of fact tone, as the miracle was let go, "that dog has as much human nature in him as me or you. I tell you what that dog does. You know that little branch in my bottom? Well, sir, he goes fishin' every day at dinner time just as regular as the boys do, and the other day I watched him at it. He will run his paw under a root or rock to scare out the fish, and then he'll stand and watch 'em as they go over the shallow places. He don't pay any attention to the little fish—not a bit in the world. A whole drove of silver sides can wiggle and squirm over the shallow place, and Tucker won't notice 'em. I call him Tucker after Dr. Tucker, in Atlanta. But just let a good sized fish start down—you oughter see that dog! He comes down on that fish like a kingfisher. He gets 'em ever' time."

"Don't bother the little fish?"

"Exactly—but he goes for the big ones. That's one reason I call on him Dr. Tucker. He's got sense, that dog has."

"About six weeks ago," continued the owner of the miracle, "a fellow brought me a young pointer puppy. Old Tucker has a box out in the back yard, but we sorter depended on the puppy to look out for himself. First night after he got there, that blamed puppy got out on the back porch and howled and whined until I just couldn't stand it any longer. Finally I got up and carried him out and put him in Tucker's box. I hadn't more than got back in bed before that puppy was back on the porch. I carried him back to Tucker's box and went to bed again. I had just made up my mind to go to sleep when that puppy set up a whine. He was back on the porch. I hated to kill the puppy. I just carried him back to Tucker's box, and I tried a new scheme on him. I bundled him up under Tucker's nose and put one of Tucker's forelegs around him, like a woman holds a baby. 'Now, Tucker,' says I, 'hold 'im!' I went back to bed and to sleep. I never heard anything more of the puppy that night."

Every night now, after the puppy gets his supper, old Tucker picks him up and puts him to bed. When the puppy is frisky and don't want to go, Tucker just picks him up by the back of the neck and then lies down in the box and holds him till the puppy goes to sleep.

"He's a mighty polite dog, Tucker is."

The doubtful look on Uncle Billy's face had given place to one of vivid interest. The owner of that miracle could convince a dictionary.

"Polite?" repeated Uncle Billy. "Mighty polite dog—mighty polite. George Parker came over a week or two ago, and brought that old hound of his along. You've seen that old hound many a time. George tied him to the fence, 'bout the kitchen place, and just left him there. That night I threw some scraps out to Tucker and the pup, but never once thought of that old hound."

"Tucker looked up like he was waitin' for me to do something else, and after waitin' for a minute or so he picked out the biggest piece of meat and started 'round the house with it. I followed to see what he would do with it, and the minute I turned the corner of the house I understood it all. There was that old hound hadn't had a thing to eat for dinner or supper. Tucker walked up and laid down the meat, and the old hound went for it."

"That's a fine dog," said Uncle Billy. "Heap 'o folks wouldn't er done that."

"Tucker jest set there like he enjoyed seein' the old hound eat, waggin' his tail."

"But the smartest thing Tucker ever done," continued the sheriff, meditatively, "was three or four days ago there at home. That puppy got so he would kill the little chickens and finally I tied him to the woodpile. That was at dinner time, and in little or no time that puppy had crawled around and bewtixt the logs till he had just about hung himself."

"Tucker heard him hollerin'."

"I saw Tucker go back there and examine just like a judge would do. The puppy was whining and choking, and I believe he would have killed himself in five minutes longer. Tucker made up

his mind that it was a desperate case, and just pitched in and gnawed!"

Uncle Billy heaved a sigh of relief. "Gnawed that rope in two."

"Smart dog," said Uncle Billy. "Smart dog."

"But I haven't told you what he done. As soon as the rope was gnawed in two, Tucker took the rope in his mouth and there he stood, holding the puppy until I went to him. You see, Tucker knew the puppy was tied there for a purpose, and he knew it wouldn't do to let go. So he made a hitching post of himself!"

"That?"

"Yes, sir, that same dog I showed you. You wouldn't think it, would you? That dog is certainly a miracle."

"He certainly is," agreed Uncle Billy.

Alabama's Boss Outlaw.

Rube Barrow, "Red Rube" he is called in the terrorized region he lives in, is physically a splendid specimen of manhood. He is just thirty-four years of age and stands 6 feet 1 inch in his stocking feet, weighing 175 pounds. His shoulders are very broad and square and his arms long and muscular. He is as active as a cat, and has been noted as a runner since his boyhood days, it being said that he was never beaten in a foot race or thrown in a wrestling match. His face, even, has a muscular appearance. It is rather long, with high cheek bones and prominent lower jaws protruding noticeably backward under his ears. His complexion is inclined to be light, his hair a dark, sandy color, rather stiff, and his mustache long and drooping. His eyes are, however, the main feature of his appearance. They are grayish-blue in color, set well back, and are very piercing, giving him a dare-devil, reckless appearance. As he appeared in Blount County the other day he was dressed in a dark coat, heavy jean pants, and wore a broad sombrero or cowboy hat. Running down from over his shoulders and around his waist was a leather cartridge-belt. On each side, rather in front of the hips, was a Colt's 45-calibre revolver. In front, stuck through the belt, was a large bowie-knife, and in his hand he carried a sixteen-shooting 45-calibre Winchester rifle. It is sure death for any one to stand in front of that rifle within a quarter of a mile distance with Rube at the trigger. His pal, Joe Jackson, alias Henry Davis, who was with him, is very much smaller in stature, with dark hair and dark complexion, and similarly equipped.

Why Women Are Rarely Robbed.

It is singular that more ladies are not robbed on the public thoroughfares, for the majority of them carry every cent they possess in their pocketbooks, which in turn are carried in their hands. I suppose, however, the reason thieves do not snatch more of these money-books is that they know well the chances are they would get but little, even if successful in evading the police, after the assault of the kind upon a woman. The great handsome silver-tipped Russia leather affairs called purses are very attractive in themselves, but in nine out of ten cases the inside of them is "very lonesome." I heard a professional thief say once that it was regarded as extra hazardous in his profession to rob a woman, either in the house or on the street, and for two reasons: Firstly, that a woman always screams, and, secondly, she has seldom much to be taken. A man, on the contrary, either gives the thief a chance to get away or fights, and then his watch, money or valuables are much easier to get at.

A Clergyman's Queer Idea.

A distinguished clergyman has recently condemned all social and polite fictions. When, for instance, a stupid bore calls upon you, he thinks you ought to tell him that you are not glad to see him, but that, on the contrary, you are sorry to see him, and that you wish he would go. This sort of brutal frankness would not do in the pulpit, as a critic of the clergyman has pointed out. A clergyman might as well quit preaching who should begin his sermons as follows: "My selfish, mostly ignorant and despicable hearers, I should like to call your prayerful attention to my text, but I know most of you are thinking about other matters and that you do not come here to learn piety, but rather to show your good clothes and maintain a social position."

—New York Tribune.

It Had a Familiar Sound.

"Maude," he said softly, as he pulled out the tremolo stop in his larynx, "will you marry me?" "No," she answered, with all the earnestness of sincere conviction. He paused as if in deep thought, and then said: "Strange, strange, how a simple word revives scenes and impressions that have passed away. I am almost certain that I have heard that before."

Pertinent Queries.

Why do we always talk of putting on a coat and vest? Who puts on a coat before a vest? We also say putting on shoes and stockings. Who puts on the shoes before the stockings? We also put up signs telling people to wipe their feet when we mean their boots or shoes. And a father tells a boy he will warm his jacket when he means to warm his pantaloons. We are a little eccentric in our phrases, ain't we, at times?

It's not the gay coat makes the gentleman.

From the oil of grasshoppers a Spanish inventor claims to make the finest soap yet produced.

If fathers could be sons to themselves what good sons they would be.

THE SNAKE CATCHER

Old Zachary Archer of the Storm King Mountain.

In a little hut on the side of the great Storm King Mountain, in the Hudson Highlands, far above the river and almost an equal distance below the loftiest pinnacle of the towering hill, lives old Zachary Archer, who supports his wife and himself, the only inhabitants of the cabin, by catching snakes. The cottage is not visible from above or below in summer time.

The thick foliage of the trees, and the undergrowth which rises almost to the level of its roof, effectually conceal it; and as the old man has an insurmountable objection to a fire in the kitchen in the warm weather, and makes his wife walk two miles every day to a small cave to cook their food, which is always eaten cold, no floating smoke betrays the presence of their dwelling. But at this season, when the mountain trees have partly with-drawn the curtains that covered it, while the gorse and brushwood are covering close to the ground as if for warmth, the desolate little building is very conspicuous. No other house is near it, and it is a picture of loneliness.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE.

The venerable snake catcher does not like it in the winter months, and passes as much time as he can away from it, leaving his wife and the snakes to keep each other company. They hibernate together, the serpents sleeping in the cold back room and the old woman dozing before the wood fire, which burns night and day when the snow is on the ground. Old Zack, as he is usually called, is generally pursuing his slippery trade or doing his share of slumbering before a barroom stove in one of the numerous small villages or settlements at the foot of the mountain. He was engaged in the latter avocation a few days ago, when the reporter aroused him and asked him how he felt. He said that he was well, but rheumatic, and added that the reptile business was brisk.

"It's always a sight safer in winter than in summer," he said, when he had taken something to wash down his sleepiness, "and though I don't get as many snakes I like it better. In summer the rattlers and the copperheads stand a chance of catchin' you instead of your trappin' them. You see, they're always wide awake and keepin' their eyes peeled for danger. I can find them ready enough, but to get them into the leather bag I carry, is a horse of another color. Sometimes I set traps for them, and that's a heap the safest way. The trap is only an open basket with a lot of red flannel inside. Snakes, unless they're disturbed, will always go back to their old sleein' ground when the sun is high. When I find a snake track I follow it until I come either to the serpent or his bed. If it's the serpent, I try to pin his neck to the ground with a forked stick that I carry. That's mighty dangerous work it be's rattler for I must go very close to him, and, if I miss him at the first I'll be apt to be closer in a second. However, I never missed yet, and I don't suppose I ever will now, 'm that experienced. When I have him down I take him with my hand, close behind the fork, so that he can't turn his head to bite me, and drop him into the bag. But if the snake hasn't come to bed, and I don't find him, go back about fifty yards along the track, and lay my basket down with the lid open. Then I hunt more serpents. When I come to the basket again, in two hours or so, I creep up from behind and slam the cover shut. The snake is generally inside, mixed up with the flannel. He's found the place too comfortable to get out of it in a hurry. The serpent may be the wisest beast of the field, but he's a luxurious cuss, and he don't value his life nowhere as compared with his comfort."

"When I find a hole with snake marks about its mouth I just hang a running noose of catgut over it, and fasten the single end to a stick like a fishing rod. Then I put a lump of soft bread soaked in milk before the hole, and, goin' back, I hold the rod in my hand. Nearly all snakes are dead set on milk, and the smell of the bait is pretty sure to draw the one I'm after out of the hole. He must pass his head through the loop to reach the bread, and when he does that I jerk the rod, tighten the noose, and I have him. It's just like fishin'."

"Then there's my dog Viper. He catches a lot of snakes and aides me to catch more. In the summer when he sees a snake, he'll walk around him until he makes him dizzy trying to keep his ugly eyes pointed at the danger. At last he'll either drop his head or make a turn the other way to take the kinks out of his body. Then Viper is on him as quick as a wink. He grabs him by the back of the neck out of reach of his fangs, and bring him to me without hurting him. In the winter he can't catch the snakes himself, but he leads me to holes in trees and other snug places where they lie. Just to be on the safe side, I push a stick into their bedrooms first; but they're always as good as dead, they're so sound asleep and I can pull them out with my hand, covered with a thick cloth glove. I have to use a good deal of force to stupidly my snakes when I'm movin' them from the box or bag to another."

"Who buys my serpents? Well, I'll tell you. Circuses and small museums, as well as old fossils of naturalists, who are always wantin' curiosities, and when I catch a snake with two heads, or two tails, which I do about three times a year, I get a good price—often as much as \$100—for him. The common reptiles are worth only a few dollars each. Hello, here's a Viper. Where have you been, sir? There's no snakes down here, you know."

An ill looking dog, with only one eye, trotted up to the stove and lay down before his master. His worth as a serpent chaser may have been above estimate, but his market value was clearly below par.—New York Sun.

Virtue is its own reward, but vice will bring curses from a dozen sources.