## Che Auctioneer

... B y ... WADE MOUNTFORTT

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\*\*\*\*\*\*\* step down from his stand Kansas. My wife an' children are when a ragged man with a yellow down that on the creek bank in a wagface and sunken eyes touched him on on shakin' to death with the ager. the arm. The ragged man pulled an This here's all a mistake, friend." old silver watch from his pocket and handed it to the auctioneer. Roberts asked the auctioneer.

have your attention again for a few an' the babies"-

have here in my hand a solid silver, ter?" full jeweled, stem winding hunting case chronometer. It belongs to the yaller faced gent immediately there on my left. He is traveling an' is sick an' broke. He has a wife an' four children asked. in a wagon down here on Salt creek, "Jim Darrow." an' they've all got the ager. So he desires to barter, soll an' dispose of at public vendue to the highest bidder this full jeweled, solid sterling silver hunting case watch. How much am I

"Five dollars," piped a farmer. and children who were "weepin' in the boy?"

offered to start it?"

valley," but \$5 was all he could get for the watch. Then, with a great show of magnanimity, he waved the ragged man away, refusing to accept a fee for the sale.

There was a sudden commotion in the crowd. Old Hiram Brumfield pushed his way to where the ragged man said Roberts. was folding up the five dollar bill.

Brumfield caught the stranger by the throat and growled, "Whar did y' git that watch? The ragged man tried to speak, but

was fury in the old man's face. "Men," shrieked Brumfield, "I've got a murderer here! That watch belonged to my murdered boy! Git the watch, men; git it! I'll hold this snake till

Brumfield was choking him. There

some of you git the watch!" Twoscore men pressed close to where Brumfield stood holding the trembling stranger. A roar of oaths swept over the crowd. The town marshal pushed his way into the jam and found a dozen men holding the lean and ashen

That's my poor Henry's watch!"

Brumfield snatched the watch from the man who had bought it and pressed It to his lips.

"Men, you all know how my poor boy was shot an' killed by a burglar two months ago. Oh, I have prayed for the time to come when I could git these

old hands on the viper's throat!" "Stand back, everybody!" yelled Jeff Williams, the marshal. "Gimme room to get out with this feller!"

"Hang the murderer! Hang him!"

bawled a half drunken man,

Mark Roberts turned upon the vociferous one and roughly pushed him aside. But the drunken man's cry did its work. Instantly there were shouts of "Lynch him! Hang him!" from dozens of throats. As Williams reached the courthouse door he made a lunge and pushed the prisoner inside. Mart Roberts stopped on the stone step and faced the mob. One man, closer than the others, carried a halter and was fighting to enter the door. Roberts planted himself in front of the man.



'WHAR DID Y' GIT THAT WATCH?" The old auctioneer's eyes were ablaze. From under his long black coat a shining revolver leaped like a-Cash of light-

"Stan' back!" he yelled. "I'll kill the first man that sets a foot on this here

The mob stopped as though it had

collided with a stone wall. "Get out of this yard, every one of you!" shouted the auctioneer, and as he spoke he advanced upon the foremost of the mob, striking viciously with his revolver. In twenty seconds the courthouse yard was cleared.

After the marshal had locked his prisoner in the dungeon under the courthouse Mart Roberts went into the cellar to talk to the man. The ema-

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* bars and peering out.

"They was hot after you," said Roberts by way of opening up a conversa-

ain't done nothin'."

"Where did you get that watch?" Roberts asked.

"I bought it in St. Louis," said the man. "Do you hang people in this town for havin' watches?" "Well, Colonel Brumfield says that

watch belonged to his boy, who was killed by a thief." HE last bony horse had been led er. "Here, listen to me. I'm a stran- a wagon load of misery it is before considered. from the auction block, and ger, an' I don't know a soul in the your eyes right now. This here woman Mart Roberts was about to town. I'm travelin' from Illinoy to

"Where is your wife an' children at?"

"Down thar by the ford on the creek straightened up, took off his hat and -down thar starvin' to death, man. faced the crowd, which had begun to An' their pappy locked up in this hole for a murderer! Great goodness! I "Gentlemen," he shouted, "let me don't keer for myself, but poor Lizy

"Don't worry about your folks," he "Now, gentlemen," said Roberts, "I said. "Don't you want a drink of wa-

Roberts handed a tin cup through the bars, and the prisoner drank as though he were famished.

"What's your name?" the auctioneer

"You'll need a lawyer."

"I ain't done nothin'-thank you," said Darrow, handing back the cup. "An', besides, I ain't got a cent in the world except this \$5, an' the man that bought my watch will want that."

"Man to man, now," said Roberts-Roberts grew poetic over the mother "no lying-did you kill Brumfield's

> the auctioneer in the eyes, and replied: the family of that poor ragged feller "As God is my judge, no! I never heard of Brumfield or his boy or anything about any of this till ten minutes ago."

"I believe you, an' I'll stand by you,"

"An' my wife an' bables"-"Never mind, now," said Roberts. "We will take care of them. You keep

a stiff upper lip." Roberts rode to the ford with a farmsettled down when he reached the place Near the roadside the auctioneer saw a ground and on strips of bedclothing in in Martinsburg tonight!" were the three other children. The Roberts' voice reverberated in the

"Good evenin', mum," said Roberts. "Are you Mrs. Darrow?"

"Yes, sir." "Your husband"-

him?" cried the woman, now standing erect and holding the child close to her

Roberts stammered at first and then blurted out, "He's been arrested!" "Arrested?" She repeated the word in a bewildered tone.

"Yes; he's been accused of stealin' a

"Where is he?" she exclaimed, putting the baby on the ground. "Well, don't get frightened now, mum; don't get frightened," said Rob-

erts. "He's locked up, but"-"Locked up!" she gasped. "Locked up! Why, man, locked up, you say! Don't they know he's pretty nigh dead

with the ager?" The woman caught up her apron and held it to her eyes. The bables clung to her torn skirts, whining piteously. "Locked up!" she moaned over and over again. "An' tomorrow's his chill

Roberts put the woman and the children into the wagon, hitched up the bony horse and started for the village. On the way he tried hard to urge the miserable horse out of a snail-like gait. The mother continued to sob and moan, and the children all cried at once, while the horse crept along as though every step would be its last.

Roberts saw men hurrying along. and once a party of horsemen, uttering loud curses, passed him at a gallop. Finally when the outlandish rig had turned a corner into the main thoroughfare of the village Roberts saw the glare of a fire on the public square and heard volleys of cheers and yells.

As the vehicle passed a group of men Roberts heard one say, "We can't do anything till after midnight; the shoriff's on the lookout."

To this another replied, "We'll get him as soon as the crowd gets worked

Roberts pounded the old horse and drove into the throng of men that had gathered near the auction stand. The county attorney and the mayor were on the box side by side. The mayor was haranguing the crowd and begging the people to go to their homes and let the law take its course. Some of the listeners cheered for the mayor: others jeered at him. Roberts drove the staggering horse close to the speaker's stand, and, leaping from the seat, he tore off the tattered wagon cover that hid the woman and her children from view. Mrs. Darrow's face was as pale as a corpse; her little ones were huddled close about her, and the

baby was still crying. The auctioneer mounted his stand. The red light of the bonfire lit up his familiar face.

"Hooray for Mart Roberts" yelled half of the crowd. "Gentlemen," exclaimed the auction-

ciated one was holding to the wooden eer, assuming his characteristic pose, "you have listened to the mayor an' the county attorney, an' now I want to ask you to listen to me for a few brief

"They never give me any show," said The crowd was moving closer and the man. "I ain't afeared of 'em; I massing around the wagon where the woman and her children were huddled. Stern faced men gazed curiously at the

woeful spectacle. Mart!" cried the drunken man, whose tongue was still unbridled.

"I'm not half through, either," replied Roberts.



A SQUARE DEAL!

The prisoner drew himself up, looking an' these helpless little children are that is locked up in the courthouse over yonder. I want every man of you who ever had a mother or a sister or a wife or a daughter to look at these poor, miserable, helpless, starvin' human bein's. Men, the only hope an' strength that this little bundle of rags is get in all this wide world is locked up in that jail over there, an' you are pantin' an' yelpin' for his life!

"Men, I don't know that man over er who went that way. Twilight had there in the jail no more'n Adam; I never saw him in my life till be came where the mover's family was camped. up here today. I never saw his wife the trap next morning Mr. Man found an' children tiil two hours ago, when I a note which read: "Mr. Man, you are flickering light and heard the fretful found 'em down by the creek bank a chestnut."-St. Louis Post-Dispatch. without footstools, but also remember cries of an infant. Coming closer, he cryin' an' waitin' for their pappy to saw an old wagon covered with a rag- come home an' bring 'em something to ged piece of canvas. Nearby an ani- cat. I brought 'em here, an' I'm goin' mal that might once have been a horse to take care of 'em! I'll tell you somewas tethered to a sapling. A woman thing else I'm goin' to do; I'm goin' sat near the campfire holding the fret- to see that their pappy gets a square ting baby in her arms. Lying on the deal! There ain't goin' to be no lynch-

"Jeff," shouted Brumfield as the marwoman was trying to quiet the infant,
shal caught the prisoner by the collar,
and occasionally she glanced toward night air as keen as the notes of a Because he had eaten too much supbugle. As he stopped talking to catch per a rooster one night was unable to a short breath a yell of approval went sleep, and he just had to sit up on the up that echoed in the remotest parts roost and gaze out through the cracks of the village.

> "My gracious, what's happened to his triumph, and his quick wit turned snored. it to account.

"Gentlemen," he shouted above the derful, and the moon seemed marvelroar of voices, "this woman an' these ous children are sick an' starvin'. They haven't got anything in the world but field he came across a ball-one of their rags an' that poor old hoss, Now, gentlemen, while I talk I'm goin' to ask the mayor an' the county attorney to pass among you with their hats an' give every one of you a chance to show that the milk of human kindness is still in your breasts."

"Hurrah for Mart Roberts! Hip, hip,

The din of shouting was so loud that for once in his career Mart Roberts could not hear himself talk, but he talked on just the same. When the noise had died away and the two officials were passing the hat, Roberts' voice rang out again, louder, shriller, sweeter than ever. Now he pleaded with his audience, now he joked them, now he threatened and now he ex-

"There's a man just dropped in a dollar!" he exclaimed. "God bless you, brother! That dollar has bought you the brightest crown in heaven. When you wear that crown down the glitterin' streets of the New Jerusalem, they'll surely take off their hats to you. Oh, my friends, crowns in glory are for

sale here!" The auctioneer's iron gray hair was disheveled, his face was aglow with perspiration and his voice rose and fell in a it was. singsong tune for all the world like that of a camp meeting shouter with the pow-

There were volleys of frenzied applause as Mart rattled on. He was hourse and almost exhausted. The mayor and the county attorney dumped double hands full of eliver in the woman's lap. The wagon was driven away, while Roberts urged the crowd to disperse. His crude elo-quence had its effect, and in half an hour Martinsburg had gone to sleep.

When Squire Riley opened court next morning the halls and the stuffy little courtroom were packed with people. James Darrew, the prisoner, was brought in to be arraigned. Mart Roberts, smil-ing and bowing triumphantly, was at the ragged man's side. Mrs. Darrow and her children were on a bench in a corner.

her children were on a bench in a corner. The county attorney arose, looking very solemn, and addressed the justice of the peace. He said: "If it please the court we desire to withdraw the complain. against this defendant. On examining the books of a watchmaker here we find that this watch found in the possession of this defendant was never the property of the late Henry Brumfield. There being not the slightest evidence against the defendant, the state asks that the case be dismissed."

Mrs. Darrow sprang up with a scream and wrapped her arms around her husband's neck. She kissed his wrinkled, yellow face and said, "Pappy, this is your chill day."

In the cheering and the uprear that fol-

An Animal Story For Little Polks

### The Up to Date Bunny

One day Mr. Rabbit was loping around the woods, looking for what-"You've done about enough today, ever might satisfy his hopeless appetite, when he espied a large trap set by Mr. Man. He walked up cautiously and inspected it. Inside was a lusclous looking chestnut. Mr. Rabbit's "Gentlemen," he continued, "if ever mouth watered, but being an up to "Good heavens!" moaned the prison- in all your bornden days you ever saw date rabbit he sat on his haunches and the wind had swept the clouds from

> "Huh!" said he, "That sort of thing is played out. Might have fooled my



WALKED UP AND INSPECTED IT. grandaddy, but he's got to play a

foxier game than this to catch me. "Wonder how I'll get that chestnut,

It didn't take him long. In a moment he was off on a trot to Mr. Man's cabin in the woods and banging on who need not consider expense there his back door.

"Ho, Mr. Man, come out here!" Mr. Man stuck his head out. "What yer want?" he asked.

"Please, Mr. Man, give me a brick." "What yer want with a brick?" "Oh, I'm tired of life and want to die. Earth has no joys for me more. I'll tie the brick around my neck and

jump in the pond. You'll never be troubled with me again." Of course Mr. Man wanted to get rid of Mr. Rabbit, as he had done so

him the brick. Mr. Rabbit thanked him sadly and

started for the pond. "Now watch me," he grinned, when he got back to where the trap stood. Saying which he tied the brick on to the other end of the lever that held the trapdoor and quietly got his chestnut out without harm. On the inside of

> An Animal Story For Little Folks

### THE ROOSTER FINDS THE MOON

in the hen house roof at the stars while The auctioneer saw the moment of all the rest of his family slept and

He thought the stars were very won-

The next day as he was crossing a



those fancy colored bouncing balls that children love to play with. Now, Mr. Rooster had never seen one of them before, and he did not know what

"This must be the moon that I saw last night," he said finally. "I wonder what it is doing down here instead of being up in the sky? It is very beautiful, it is true, but I would like to see it shine as it did last night. I suppose it doesn't shine during the day, so I'll wait until night and see it."

So Mr. Rooster sat down by the ball and waited. The sun went down, and it grew dark, and black clouds hid the

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etars and all the sky, but still the ball would not shine.

"It is very strange," declared the

rooster as he sat and waited. All the other chickens had gone to bank's floral creations which is just atroost hours before, but still the rooster waited and watched.

Then the wind began to blow and the thunder to roll and the lightning to flash, and the first thing Mr. Rooster knew it was raining in torrents and he was sonked to the skin and most fright med out of his wits.

"I'll save the moon," he cried, and he grabled up the ball and tried to run with it. When he reached the hen house door, the rain had stopped and the sky, and Mr. Rooster looked up and saw the moon smiling sweetly at him. "So this isn't the moon after all, said Mr. Rooster, looking down at the ball. "Well, I guess it must be one of the stars."-Atlanta Constitution.

### CHOOSING CHAIRS.

Buy Those That Will Give the Greatest Mensure of Comfort.

Why is it that so few women seem to know how to choose comfortable chairs when they are furnishing their homes? We all can recall numbers of parlors prettily and tastefully arranged, yet not containing one really comfortable chair! By that is not meant a lounging or reclining chairmany so called "easy chairs" are such in name only-but a really and truly good chair to sit in, with the seat the right height from the floor and the back at the correct angle. For those Is no excuse for not having chairs to suit them. All cabinetmakers have chair patterns-that is, models of chairs with movable legs, arms and backs, which can be adjusted to exactly fit any person, and can guarantee chairs for each member of a family if they will come to be measured.

Such things are, however, luxurious and beyond the means of most housewives. Fortunately in factory made furniture, even among the cheaper grades, most comfortable chairs are much harm about the place, so he gave to be found if care is only exercised in the selection. Don't buy a chair just because it is "pretty." Chairs are made to sit in, not to look at. Don't buy a chair just because it is "odd." Chairs are not curiosities! If you have a tall family have chairs with seats high from the ground, so that people shall not feel and look cramped in them. If, on the other hand, the members of your family are short, have some low chairs in which they can sit that you may have tall guests, and provide one or two chairs for them.-Boston Traveler.

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