

## ROBBERY ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

WHEN my mate asked of me last Christmas Eve permission to remain with his family at the eastern end of our route, and not to make the tedious forty hours' journey towards the blue waters of the Pacific, on which I was about to start, I had too much heart to refuse him. He—Joe Niel was his name—had a young bride and a younger babe, and it was hard to separate them. True, our orders from the company were that both of us should always jointly make the trip, for we were carrying large quantities of greenbacks and national notes for the payment of the Pacific Railroad contractors; and of course there was no lack of robbers who were awaiting every chance to clean out our trunks, and perhaps clean us poor messengers out of existence.

Shortly before an express car had been entered on our line, and Bill Hughes, the messenger, beaten almost to death, and his valuable charge taken; and it was to guard against such future surprises that a mate had been given me; but Joe pleaded so hard to stay at home, and explained to me so clearly a little plan of his own, whereby I could make the trip in safety alone, that I give in to this request, and hastened with him to set our little plan in motion.

Joe's brother, Ned, the engineer, was to run his engine for the first one hundred miles of my journey, and he was to help in the plan. You see Ned was courting a younger sister of Joe's wife, and so it all being almost in the family, he was willing to do a good deal to give Joe his Christmas at home. First we went to the railroad superintendent, and got his permission to take my through express car out of the train and substitute therefor a grain car. My car was one of those kind with a passage outside, and doors at each end besides those at the sides.

This made it easier of attack, should robbers get on the train, as the multitude of doors required a stricter guard against surprise with an increase of danger.

The grain car had only the two side doors, which locked from without, but had two little grated windows for ventilators, one at each end, with wooden shutters on the inside to close them up tightly. Ned used to lock me in, and to hand the key to the next engineer that came on, with some private instructions.

Well, at 7 o'clock on Christmas eve the train was ready to start. Our express superintendent was down to see his off, and noticed the changed car, but supposing the other to be out of repair said nothing. He watched me place the valuable packages I had received in my safe and iron chest, and then springing into the car, warned both Joe and myself to be very careful, as he had news that mischief was intended before long. Joe was helping me in the car, so as to appear before the superintendent to be going with me. Ned came and locked us in, Joe first kissing his wife, who was on the platform, good by, and pretending—lucky fellow—that he was so sorry that he was going away at Christmas. As soon as the door was shut and locked Joe went through that on the other side, first thanking me again for befriending him, and then I heard him lock the other door with the key Ned had sent to him by his fireman. We were off in a few moments, and I had time to look around and arrange my traps to make the trip as comfortable as possible. There was no receiving or handing out of packages to be done till the next morning, when the new engineer would open my door. Ned would leave us about midnight, and till then, when he would look in upon me, I might make myself as happy or as miserable as I chose.

In less than an hour after leaving I had slung a hammock I carried with me, and had turned in. The shutter over the forward ventilator—my car was next to the engine—I had closed and fastened with a wedge, to keep the wind from blowing it open. The rear ventilator I left open, the little six by six hole, guarded by three iron bars, giving me ventilation. Near this I had slung my hammock, and then with a revolver in a box close to my hand, and with the bell-rope running just over my head, I surely was in safety, and so I dropped asleep.

How long I slept I could not tell before I awakened with a start as something passed over my mouth. It seemed like a mouse or rat, but it left an overwhelming smell, a close, suffocating feeling, and before I could open my eyes to see clearly, or could come to my senses, I was again asleep. Again I awoke, this time completely, but with a fearful weight of oppression over my eyes. My head ached, and I strove to place my hand upon it. My hand would not obey my wish; I must be paralyzed; it seemed as if I was yet dreaming; I had no power over head or limb. Another effort I would make to shake off this deadly feeling, but as I strove to turn in my hammock, or to lift myself, something cold touches my forehead with a refreshing coolness, and a gruff voice bids me lie quiet. I turn my head with intense difficulty and pain, and I see a black-visaged man standing over me. He repeats the injunction to be quiet. I trace his arm down towards my head, and see that it is a revolver which is touching my

forehead. In a half asleep, half foolish manner, I glance at the deadly instrument, and wonder what it cost, and whether it will shoot straight and into my brain should it be fired. The effects of some drug are still working upon me, and as I come more to life, as it were, I recognize the fumes of chloroform.

Two other black-visaged men are busily sorting out my valuables, and are throwing all dangerous bonds and papers into one corner of the car, while they are placing in bags the currency and notes. The man watching me speaks, and says: "No, I, he is coming to." So, I comes close and looks at me; he also is black-visaged, made so, I now see, by a crape veil or mask. Without speaking, he returns to his work of sorting the money. Having nothing else to do, I look more closely at myself. Small, thin, cords, which cut deeply into my flesh, are tied around my wrists and ankles, while others tie me tightly to the hammock. I must, indeed, have been far gone in sleep, and deeply drugged, to have allowed this. The robbers evidently mean me no harm, but how can I face the company after this robbery? How account for the absence of Joe, without his immediate dismissal? As for myself, it will be the old story. The papers will say, I was a willing confederate, and submitted to being tied and robbed. I shall be imprisoned, perhaps for life. My poor wife and children will be worse than fatherless.

No, I, who is hard at work yet with his companion, opening the bundles and sorting out their contents, here for the first time speaks. "We're nearing the hog tunnel, No. 2," he says, in a light, lisping voice. Even in my half stupor I know that voice. If it is whom I think it is, his left arm is slightly crooked, the palm of the hand turning nearly outwards. As he moves into the light of the solitary lamp, to glance at some bonds, I plainly see the turned hand; "Bill Lane," I call, "won't you free my hands? this cord hurts me." With a horrible oath he springs forward: "You've sealed your doom," he says; "you must die now." I plead for life, for he has cast aside the crape and I see the devil in his eye. Bill used to be on our run as messenger, but a robbery occurred of which he was suspected of assisting in, or at least of allowing himself to be robbed, and was discharged.

But I plead in vain. The conspirators confer among themselves for a few moments, and then my hammock is unhooked and thrown upon the floor, and I am rolled up in it, and into an incredibly small space. The bundle is then tied up tightly, and one of the robbers tries its weight. I am slight of form, and he can easily lift the bundle up, and throw it on his shoulder. How can they get me from the car? How they got in is as yet a mystery to me. The doors are locked on the outside, and could not be broken open with the train at full speed from without. As I lie upon the floor nearly suffocated and in fearful pain from my cramped position and the tightness of the ropes, Bill hisses in my ear, "We are going to throw you over the Rocky Run."

Even death in the form of being cast a living bundle from the cars into the waters of the run, which we cross in a short time at an immense height, is preferable to the agony I am enduring. I think I prayed with my soul then. I have prayed before going into battle, when expecting to be wrecked at sea, and at other times when my life was in danger, but I never prayed before I think with all my soul. Then there was a chance of escape, here was none. My senses quickened with the agony of the moments, were wonderfully acute, or else I was already in delirium. I thought I heard voices at the forward ventilator. I thought I heard him say "Watch close and shoot if there is danger." Of course it was fancy, for the train was going at full speed, and Ned must be at his post on the engine.

Next I heard cautious footsteps on the roof of my car—probably, if anybody, it was a brakeman going over the car to the engine for his lunch can, which was there keeping hot. I lay still a few moments longer, then more footsteps are plainly heard on the roof. This time I was sure there were two or three persons. Ah, I forgot, no doubt, they were confederates watching outside, while the three within did the plundering. All of a sudden the bell-pull overhead rattled as if energetically pulled; the engine whistled brakes, and I felt every brake on the train was put down to a purpose.

The robbers consulted for a moment, and then one said, "It is nothing, they are stopping for a hot journal perhaps." Bill sprung to me and pressing his revolver against my body, hissed, "If they call for you, say all right." Before I could reply, a rasping noise was heard, followed by the report of a pistol, and the fall of some heavy body across my already overtaxed frame. I fainted.

When I came to, Ned was chaffing my hands, and half a dozen men were rubbing my swollen and chafed limbs, while brandy was being placed on my lips. Ned was almost hysterical when I came to, but the craziest of all was little Jack, the wood passer of the engine, who kept shouting, "I shot him, I shot him," till some one knocked him down to make him quiet.

Then it all came out. The robbers had been concealed on the rear of my car, and

had watched me through the grating. On my going to sleep, a slender stick with a sponge soaked in chloroform at one end, had been placed under my nose, rousing me for a moment but to send me into a deeper sleep. Then with a fine saw a portion of the car had been removed, through which they crept, and then closed it behind them. Ned after a while thought he would have a look at me, so crawling over his engine he essayed to open the ventilated shutter, and peep through. Finding it fast he looked through the bell-rope hole, which happened to be a large one, and taking in matters at a glance, he had called little Jack to him, and handing his revolver had given him the message I had heard. Then crossing the car he had obtained the services of the conductor, brakemen and some willing passengers, and having surrounded us as far as they could a fast-moving car, he had pulled the bell and so signalled the fireman to stop. When Jack saw Bill point his revolver at me he thought he was going to shoot me, so forcing the ventilating shutter open he brought him down with a well-aimed bullet, killing him instantly. We took the other two to a town on our route where justice was done them. They got thirty years free board. As for Ned, the express folks were vexed at first, but as I had suffered so much and pleaded so hard for both him and myself, we kept our old places and still do. Christmas day I spent in bed, and also a few days afterwards getting well, but they brought my wife and family to me and we didn't fare so badly after all.

## Misused Words.

MANY women, and even some men, who should know better, are in the habit of speaking of their jewelry when they mean their jewels. The word thus used is of very low caste. Think of CORNELIA pointing to the GRACCHI and saying "These are my jewelry;" or read thus a grand passage in the last of the Hebrew prophets: "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewelry!" As applied to trinkets and precious stones, the word means, at best, jewels in general, not any particular jewels. It is of very late introduction in any sense; not being in Shakespeare, or the Bible or Milton, or in Johnson's Dictionary. The earliest authority quoted for it by Richardson, is Burke, who speaks of "the jewelry and goods" of India.

But, properly, jewels are no more jewelry than shrubs are shrubbery, slaves, slavery or beggars, beggary. Jewelry is properly the name of the place in which jewels are kept, as slavery is the name of the condition in which slaves are kept as beggary is that of the condition in which beggars are, and as shrubbery is that of grounds filled with shrubs. These words belong to a numerous class ending in *ry*, which express place or condition, which is moral place. Such are *belfry*, *library*, *laundry*, *bakery*, *buttery*, *aviary*, *grocery*, *pottery*, *armory*, *infirmary*, *bindery*, *confessionary*. From *greg* we have rightly formed *groggery*; and our translators of the Bible called Judea, the place of the Jews, *Jewry*. Now, we might as well call a knot of Jews, *Jewry*, or whisky toddy and rum punch *groggery*, as a set of jewels, *jewelry*. But *jewelry* is one of a few of those words which have been perverted by careless speakers.

## A Boy's Composition on the Goat.

The following "boy's composition" is the latest. The boy who "manufactured" it is bound to make his mark in the literary world. Who knows but that some day he may be an editor?

"A goat is stronger than a pig, and gives milk. He looks at you. So does a doctor, but a goat has 4 legs, and 2 butt ends. My goat butted Mr. Taft in a bad place and a little calf wouldn't do so. A boy without a father is an orphan, and if he hadn't got a mother he is two orphans. The goat don't give so much milk as a cow, but more than an ox. We saw one at a fair one day with a card tied to his left ear, and he went in on a family ticket. Mother picks geese in the summer, and the goat eats grass and jumps on a box. Some don't like goats, but as for me, give me a mule with a paint brush tail. The goat is a useful animal, but don't smell as sweet as nice bear's oil for the hair. If I had too much hair I would wear a wig as Capt. Peters does. I will sell my goat for three dollars and go to the circus and see the elephant, which is bigger as five goats. Father is coming home to-morrow and the baby has got the croup bad."

## A Witty Retort.

At a court held in Lynchburg, Va., a distinguished member of the bar, appealing to the court for the discharge of his client, wound up with the statement that if the court sent him on for further trial, a stain would be left upon his character that could not be washed off "by all the waters of the blue ocean, and all the soap that could be manufactured from the ponderous carcass of the commonwealth's attorney." To this the ponderous attorney replied that while he deemed it foreign to the case at the bar, he desired to advise the court, if they thought it advisable to boil his body into soap, that they should look to the opposite council for the "concentrated lie" out of which to make it!

## A Handy Witness.

VERY adroit was the march that Lije Loomis stole on the "Statute of Limitations." Lije was the factotum of Guy's Neck. He did a miscellaneous business—as carpenter, cow-doctor, coffin-maker—adding to his other functions, that of undertaking to the county poor-house. He was, withal, an easy, good-natured fellow, free to trust, and a most indulgent creditor.

Among the others whom Lije had trusted to his cost, was Greg Grimes, without exception the greatest promise-maker and breaker in Guy's Neck. I verily believe he would, if possible, have put a creditor off till the Last Judgment, and then, on the score of being a busy day, have begged him to wait till to-morrow.

Greg had wheedled Lije with promise till the latter's claim was "outlawed." Losing patience at last, Lije took his account over to the Squire's, when to his no small discomfort, he learned that unless he could get a new promise from his debtor, with a witness to it, he might whistle for his bill. Such fellows as Greg always know a good deal of law, especially the sharp points of it. Greg would talk as freely and full of promises as ever when he and Lije were alone, but, before others, would evade the subject, or else remain provokingly mum.

One day Lije drove up to Greg's door with his old gray mare and spring wagon, a plain pine coffin—one of those flat-topped affairs deemed good enough for poor folks—being behind the seat.

"Morain', neighbor," said Lije. "Same to you," said Greg; "goin' to plant a pauper, I see."

"Y-a-ess; old Boko took rather sudden leave last night, and went to try the charity of another world. Would you mind gettin' in and comin' along, neighbor?" said Lije; "it's mighty dull goin' to a funeral all alone by one's self."

Gregg didn't mind, but straightway mounted by Lije's side. The two chatted away, after a sort, to prove how cheerful good company can render even a grave occasion.

"I s'pose you haven't forgot that little bill of mine?" Lije at last took the liberty to hint.

"Not by no means," said Greg. "Let's see, now—how much did you say it was? I misremember rightly."

"Even sixty-nine dollars, besides seven years' interest."

"Quite right," Gregg assented; "I recollects now."

"Ef it's at all inconvenient to pay it," said Lije, "don't you put yourself out on no account."

"I've been threatenin' to pay it for a month back," said Gregg; but times he've been tight, an'—an' how would Monday week do?"

"To a dot answered Lije. "I'll send it round," said Gregg.

A curious sound came from the coffin. The ghost of a chuckle, Durdles would have called it, Gregg gave one jump, and lit in an adjacent cow pasture. Looking back, he saw Lije's "prontice, the most mischievous imp in Guy's Neck, but with plenty of sense and of a lawful age to be a witness sitting up in the coffin and laughing like mad!

Gregg took in the situation at a glance. He had been duped into committing himself before a witness.

"It's a dirty, nasty, mean trick!" he exclaimed.

"What is it?" said Lije. "Why, triflin' with a body's feelin's about old Boko, makin' b'lieve he's dead!"

"And so he is," said Lije, "only I was goin' arter the body, instid of fetchin' it away."

Gregg turned off in disgust, Lije bawling after him:

"Don't forget Monday-week; and perhaps it'll save both of us some trouble."

Gregg didn't forget, but has never more than half enjoyed himself at a funeral since.

A family scene, father and mother and baby being the *dramatis personae* on a railway train the other day, gives promise of the good time coming of woman's rights. The woman, who was of stern and determined aspect, was giving her undivided attention to the perusal of a copy of the *Revolution*, while her meek-looking husband took the entire charge of the active and somewhat troublesome infant. During the trip circumstances rendered it necessary to make a partial change of the baby's wardrobe; whereupon the latter produced from a satchel the necessary articles of infantile wear, to the infinite amusement of his fellow passengers, and especially to the undisguised delight of the ladies who observed his movements, proceeded to prove himself adequate to the emergency, with an adroitness and skill that plainly indicated careful and long continued practice.

A young man at Indianapolis, Ind., has been under treatment for what is discovered to be lead colic. It was a long time before the doctors found out where he got it; but at last the terrible truth came out. He had been in the habit of kissing a young woman who improved her complexion by the aid of cosmetics.

A paper has an article headed with the eouandrum, "Why do wives fade?" We suppose it is because they won't wash. Don't it?

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