



CHAPTER VIII. In the big red omnibus that was slowly toiling over the dusty road...

loyal response. "You remember the evening we rode out to the range, and Captain Gray said that there was the man who would win the first prize from Mr. Jerrold—that tall cavalry sergeant who fainted away—Sergeant McLeod. Don't you remember, mother? Well, he did not even get a place, and Mr. Jerrold beat him easily."



"Why poor Mr. Jerrold?" asked Aunt Grace, with laughing interest, as she noted the expression on her niece's pretty face.

And Alice Renwick could not quite control the start with which she read: "Mr. Jerrold is to lead with his old love, Nina Deaubien. They make a capital pair, and she of course will be radiant—with Alice out of the way."

Miss Renwick's cheeks were flushed, and the dark eyes were filled with sudden pain as she answered: "I did not know she was there. She was to have gone to the lakes the same day we left."

She did go, Alice, said her mother, but it was only for a brief visit, it seems. The colonel was not at their cottage when the omnibus reached the lake. Over at the hotel were the usual number of loungers gathered to see the new arrivals, and Alice presently caught sight of the colonel coming through the park. If anything, he looked more listless and dispirited than he had before they left. She ran down the steps to meet him, smiling brightly up into his worn and haggard face.

that somebody else is a brute," he answered, trying to look grave, but with that irrepresible merriment twitching at the corners of his mouth and giving sudden gleams of his firm white teeth through the thick mustache.

"I think you are—very different from what I heard," was all her answer as she looked up in his eyes, twinkling as they were with fun. "Oh, we are to shake hands on it as a bargain? Is that it? Very well, then."

Very improbable. "In early days," remarked Mr. Barnard, "an old fellow named Bennett came to Butte county from Kentucky, and when I was a boy I often heard him tell with all news a story he believed to be true. He said that when a young man he lived in Virginia, and as stores were scarce it was customary for farmers to cut the handles from the woods. They would select a very crooked sapling and trim it up to suit their purpose. By some misfortune he broke a sapling and went in search of a new one. As he went he found a lithe, weakly tree that was crooked, and in a few minutes had cut it down and trimmed it up. When trimmed it was so crooked that it refused to lie still, and began to roll end over end."

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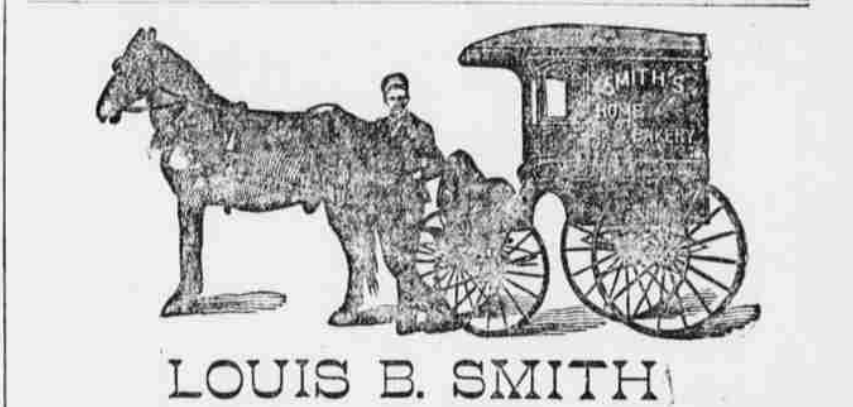
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