

THE DEACON'S REVENGE.

SAN FRANCISCO ARGONAUT.

I first met the deacon under odd circumstances. A persistent touch of rheumatism under my left shoulder, which defied liniments and plasters, sent me to the celebrated Hot Springs, seven miles north of Boomopolis, Southern California. The mud baths at these springs are justly celebrated for killing or curing all the ills that flesh inherits.

Deacon Hardwick would remain in one of these baths an hour, enduring an experience which might have killed a man of less phlegmatic temperament. Then he would try to persuade others to follow his example, greatly to the disgust of the managers, who were afraid that someone would die in the bath, and so ruin the reputation of their establishment. For similar reasons he was unpopular with the attendants.

His appearance was striking. He was tall, awkward and angular, yet dignified. His upper lip was smooth shaven, but on his chin was a heavy growth of beard. The deacon's way of speech was so slow and solemn as to seem affected. I was told that he was a "9er," that his title of deacon was only honorary, having originally been bestowed by his associates in the mines and clinging to him through many changes of fortune, and that his business was real estate. He was said to be very clever in working off mortgages of cactus-bed, sagebrush and hillside upon newcomers. His ungainly, honest appearance favored him, and he soon became the favorite of the chasers in the eye and wore the most remarkable romances without a quiver of his clerical features.

We became fast friends, and I found him an interesting study. It was the deacon's custom to make frequent trips to Boomopolis on business, returning to the hotel for more of his beloved baths. To reach the Hot Springs the traveler crosses five miles of desert country, where the cactus flourishes like the green bayonet, and the coyote trills at night his peculiar cry. Then he climbs "the grade," a rise of 1,000 feet in two miles. This part of the way is over a mountain road, which skirts precipitous and winds in and out among the canyons in a way that makes timid people dizzy.

At this time the great boom in Southern California land—just collapsed, and numbers of men, who had lost all their money, found themselves in a strange land, penniless and friendless. As a result, crime, particularly robbery, was rampant. One bright, beautiful winter afternoon Deacon Hardwick started for the hotel. That morning he had procured at Boomopolis a livery team and driver, and had been taken to different points above the valley, looking at lands which were offered for sale. Having completed his inspection, he was driven to the foot of the grade, and there he dismissed the team. No one else would have done this after a hard day's ride, but the deacon thought the horses were tired, and also that the exercise of climbing the grade would do him good. He had in his hands a little black leather wallet containing deos, and as he walked along in his slow and dignified fashion, his eye bent on the ground, he noticed a gentleman of secure, perhaps a wealthy eastern tourist out for an airing.

At the foot of the grade is a little ranch house, and just beyond the road makes a turn almost at right angles and skirts the edge of the canyon, where the traveler is hidden from view from either direction. In this angle of the way a man was waiting for the afternoon stage, which was about due. It carried the mail for the hotel and sometimes considerable express matter, to say nothing of the passengers. The deacon happened to come along first, and as he turned the corner, plodding slowly along, he heard a smooth, clear, firm, but not impatient voice, say: "Wait a moment, sir. And kindly hand over that gripack and your money."

Glancing up the deacon beheld a big revolver pointed at his head. Deacon Hardwick was surprised and grieved. He was not a coward. He had come across the plains in '48. He had lived in many a lawless community, had seen men lynched, had himself been a target for bullets more than once. If he had been armed he would have fought—as he afterwards assured me. But the appalling fact flushed over him that he had no gun, and that the gentlemanly stranger had the drop on him. The politeness of the latter's address was not a balm for his wounded feelings.

"Come," said the highwayman, in a more threatening tone. "I mean business. Drop your wallet. Give me your money or I'll let you through you." The deacon halted and shook his head at the man. What he said is not material to the recital. Then he turned and ran down the grade. His hat bobbed off and his long coat-tails fluttered behind. It was an unadvised and risky proceeding, but he seemed to be no hope for it—except to give up his money, and this the deacon did not consider for a moment. The highwayman fired twice, and the deacon afterwards stated that the balls whistled by in close proximity to his head. The shots frustrated him. He stumbled, tripped and fell. He bruised his shins, and tore the skin from his wrists. The wallet flew from his hand, and he lay in the road, howling with rage and pain. The murderer advanced leisurely and picked up the wallet. Just then the stage, which was a trifle late, as usual, rolled slowly around the turn in the road. The deacon's assailant leaped down the steep bank of the canyon and rolled headlong among the chaparral. He regained his feet, crossed the rocky bed of the stream at the bottom of the canyon, and disappeared among the bushes on the other side. The deacon lifted his long, bleeding arms toward heaven as he watched his foe depart beyond the reach of effective pursuit, and fairly screamed with impatient fury. The remarks of the passengers on the stage, which picked him up and brought him to the hotel, did not tend to make him better natured. "Gung it was all a fake," it didn't hear any shots. "More scared than hurt." These were some of the whispered comments that came to the deacon's ears. But he set him, indignant and silent until they reached the house.

Then he drew me aside and I helped him to put court-plaster on his wounded wrists. "If I had only had a gun that fellow would never have got out of here alive. I don't mind the pain. It's the disgrace that hurts. I don't see how I was careless enough to leave my gun at home these times," he said, with tears in his eyes. "Still," he suggested, "as I understand it, he had the drop on you before you saw him. Perhaps it is just as well you did not have your gun. He might have killed you."

"Possibly," said the deacon; "but I would have fired as long as I could have crooked a finger. Now I shall be a laughing stock as long as I live. The boys will think it rich—simply rich." "Do you think you see him again?" I asked. "I should know him anywhere. He is short and wiry, dark hair, mustache, no beard, black eyes. And there is a great red, flaming scar across his face—knife wound, I reckon."

"I'll tell you what we'll do," I said. "Let us go to Boomopolis and find him. He will soon see that there is no pursuit and will certainly go there. Perhaps we can arrest him yet." The deacon grasped my hand in both of his and wrung it until it ached. "How can I thank you," he exclaimed. "We'll go tonight, and if we catch him, you will see the prettiest fight of your life."

I prepared myself for the expedition by doing a suit of clothes and leaving my valises at the hotel. I had a perpetual-winding Waterbury watch which I used when on hunting expeditions, and I took it with me, also \$10 in silver and a small plain, but serviceable revolver. We procured horses at the hotel stable and rode into the town in the early evening. Boomopolis at that time was only an infant among the cities of Southern California. There were huge gaps among its business houses, now filled with stately edifices. There were no pavements, and where a hundred globes of electric fire now glare at night upon the passersby, there was then only the dim and fitful gleam of lamps from the windows of scattered stores.

After an elaborate supper at the Transcontinental, prepared by a French chef from Dublin and served by retired cowboys from Arizona, we sallied forth to visit the saloons and gambling places in the search of our robber. We made three or four circuits of the town without success and finally found ourselves in the "Magnolia club rooms." The establishment was really only a single room on the ground floor back of a clear store, arranged for fare and other games of chance. It was lighted by a solitary mammoth lamp, which was suspended from the ceiling over a long, green-covered table, upon which were scattered cards and gold coins. Around the table were seated a dozen men of various sorts and conditions, all intent upon "the game." As many more, including ourselves, were interested onlookers. The room was blue with tobacco smoke, and the door at the further end, which afforded communication with an adjoining bar, was perpetually on the swing.

I was enjoying the character of amateur detective hugely. So far there was a pleasant tinge of excitement—or rather of the anticipation of excitement—and very little danger. But as we scanned the faces of the company without seeing our man, the deacon's brow grew black with disappointment. It was now after midnight. The cigar store was closed, but the bar was kept open all night. Disappointed in our search, we became absorbed in watching the gambler in every man, and as I looked upon the tense, excited faces of the players the contagion of their example seized me, and I felt in my pocket for a coin. Finding nothing but silver, which I did not like to stake, as there was none on the table, I was on the point of borrowing a double eagle from the deacon when I heard a quiet but distinct voice at the end of the room say: "Hands up, gentlemen, if you please."

Glancing around I saw a man standing at the door leading to the bar, a revolver in each hand pointed at us. He was a short, slendy man, with dark hair and a flaming scar across his face. There was no confusion. One of the loungers quietly placed his back against the door leading to the cigar store and drew two revolvers, which he pointed along the table. Two others, evidently confederates also, stood at ease waiting the next order. The rest of us lifted our hands simultaneously. Any one could see that it was a bluff. The deacon's face was white as snow, and his jaws were set like a steel trap. "The gent that are seated will kindly rise," said the voice near the door. The gambler arose as one man. "Now turn your backs to the right about and face the wall," was the next command. We faced about.

"March," said the cool, emphatic voice. "Two feet from the wall stop." We advanced in two rows to the opposite sides of the room and stood, as directed, ranged against the walls. Then the two confederates stepped leisurely to the table and scooped the gold into a couple of little sacks which they produced from their pockets. "Keep your hands up, everybody," came a quick and sharp warning from the door, as some one inadvertently lowered his arms a trifle. "We're not through with you yet," the voice added. Having secured the money on the table, the brigand proceeded to rob our persons. With great show of politeness they requested us to give up our watches, money and weapons. I was one of the first to comply. The fellow tossed my revolver and my few silver dollars into a sack and grabbed at my watch. "Curse the thing!" he said, and threw it on the floor. Just then there was a crashing, explosive sound, deafening in the narrow aisle, and the room then splashed another—and another. Then came darkness, a quick rush of feet, tumult of shouts and groans.

was an eager wolf light in his eyes; one hand still held the revolver, and the fingers of the other worked spasmodically backward and forward, as if he longed to clutch the fallen man by the throat. The fellow tried to lift himself upon his elbow. "I know you, pard," he said. "You're the man I stood up this afternoon. You've held over me this time, I'm gone."

The deacon's eyes softened. He dropped his revolver, put his long arm under the other's head, and tried to turn him into a more comfortable position. "I am sorry for you," he said, slowly and simply. "Oh—it's all—right," gasped the wounded man, evidently speaking with great difficulty. "I—came—into—the—game on a bluff, but—you've called—me—sure."

"Is there anything that I can do for you?" asked the deacon. "Any message—any?" "I should like to see the man," said the deacon. "The deacon lowered his head, and the other whispered something to him. "I'll do it," said the deacon. "I'll do it, as help the God!"

That was all. The crowd of people attracted by the firing and the news of the robbery gradually went away. The physicians summoned to attend the wounded outlaw explained that nothing could be done for him, except to make him a trifle easier for an hour or two. The hours of the night passed quickly, but long before morning the useless, crime-stained life was at an end. The next day in the afternoon, the deacon and I sat on the veranda of the hotel at the Hot Springs, enjoying a sun bath and admiring the diversified landscape before us.

"What did that young fellow say to you?" I asked. "Told me his name. You would know the family if I should mention it. Wanted me to see that he was decently buried and to write to his father and mother."

"And you will do it, of course," I said. "I have given orders for the funeral. That's easy enough. But to write to the old folks is quite another thing. Do you see that turtur dove up there in the air? Look how he sails. And never moves his wings. Isn't it wonderful?"

I looked in the direction indicated, but could see nothing except a wide expanse of clear, blue sky. "Your eyes are better than mine," I said. "It's the mud baths," replied the deacon. "Take me about an hour. They purify the blood, quicken the circulation and keep you young and vigorous."

A DANGEROUS OCCUPATION. Sewer Explorer in Birmingham Who Has Had Many Adventures. From the London Mail. Birmingham is on the eve of losing one of the most remarkable public utility officers the city has ever had. His name is Grubb, and he has spent nearly fifty years in exploring the sewers, good, bad and indifferent, most of them in different places.

On an average Grubb has tramped through six or seven miles of sewers each day, and reckons that his total tramp is close upon 100,000 miles. There is, perhaps, no other man in the world who could spend so long a period under circumstances so unhealthful and say that he has never had a day's illness. He has risked his life over and over again, faced millions of angry and hungry rats, and thrived on an atmosphere which is certainly not better than that of Omdurman. He is now reaching a ripe old age, and has every appearance of leading an active life for many years, but whether the air which most people breathe will suit his constitution is an interesting problem.

came with such force that it shot me upward, and I was rescued. "A few seconds later I should have met a shocking fate. There was so much water in the channel that it forced its way up through the manholes and flooded the entire district."

NO OTHER NATION LIKE THIS Unique and Enviably Financial Position of the United States. It needs the occasional reminder of a debt statement, presidential message, congressional appropriation bill or government balance sheet to impress fully on public attention the unique, enviable and wholly unrivalled financial position which the United States bears among the nations of the world. On Dec. 1 the total debt of the United States was \$1,955,000,000. This is a large debt when measured by ordinary standards, but of relatively small account when considered in connection with the fact that thirty-two years ago the debt of the country was nearly three times as large and the interest four times greater.

The financial position of the United States is not the only country which has a large debt, but it is the only country which is steadily decreasing its debt, while at the same time enormously increasing its resources. In this respect the financial position of the United States is absolutely impregnable, and its credit is steadily on the increase. Great Britain's debt is now about \$77 per capita, that of France \$115, of Holland \$100, and of Italy \$75. The per capita debt of the United States is less than \$10, and the security for its payment is increasing all the time. Again, from another point of view the financial position of the United States is the envy and marvel of the financiers of all countries. To supply the surplus required for ordinary governmental expenses, to meet the interest on the existing debt, to provide resources for new expenditures, buildings, armament, subsidies and various public works, European nations generally, and some South American nations, too, have had recourse to various methods of taxation which may be said to have attained their extreme in two countries, Italy and Portugal. England has an income tax and many stamp taxes, a house tax, a cattle tax, a house tax, a salt tax, a government monopoly of petroleum sales and tobacco dealing, and almost countless local taxes.

In the United States the public revenues have been provided for and all public expenses met by the national debt reduced in addition without recourse to any direct taxation. There are no government monopolies, and the treasury has been kept usually in a plethoric condition from the receipts of customs and internal revenue payments.

Beating Jules Verne's Hero. Prince Khilkoff, the Russian minister of communications, is reported to have stated that, when the Siberian railway is opened throughout its entire length, the tour of the world may be made in thirty days. The various divisions of the journey are covered as follows: Bremen to St. Petersburg, one and a half days; St. Petersburg to Vladivostok, ten days; Vladivostok to San Francisco, ten days; San Francisco to New York, four and a half days; New York to Bremen, seven days; total, thirty-three. Another authority goes one better than that. He proposes to reduce the length of the world's journey to twenty-eight days. The figures given by the Russian minister are evidently based on the actual running speed of the various railway and steamship lines, an estimated average speed of about twenty-five miles an hour from the Russian capital to Vladivostok. But it is suggested that if the traveler had the services of the fastest existing lines on the ocean, and the trains were run at the highest rate of speed consistent with the gradients, curves and condition of the permanent way of railways in the various districts passed over, five days might be saved. Most of the time of the tour would be available for the Atlantic passage, with her average speed of 22.4 knots per hour and a 20-knot speed is assumed for the Pacific passage. To maintain the high averages of the special trains, it is further assumed that speeds of from thirty to forty knots per hour would be maintained on level stretches of country to make up for time lost in crossing mountains. The probable best times that could be made by engaging special trains, assuming the ocean passages to be performed at the speeds mentioned, would be as follows: London to Moscow, 35 hours; Moscow to Vladivostok, 14.1 hours; Vladivostok to San Francisco, 27 hours; San Francisco to New York, 7.1 hours; New York to Plymouth, 12.5 hours; Plymouth to London, 2.5 hours; total, 66.7 hours. This gives a total of 27 1/2 hours for the whole journey.—New York Sun.

The Bishop and the Banbury Bun. A good story has been going the rounds lately of a bishop and a Banbury cake. The bishop of Worcester, passing through Banbury by rail, had bought him of the cakes, for which the place has become famous, and wished to test the deserts of this reputation and encourage the industry of the town at the same time. He called a boy and inquired the price of the cakes. "Three-pence each, sir," the bishop handed him sixpence, and asked to have one brought to the carriage, adding as the boy went off: "With the other three-pence you can turn the other three-pence into a bun, munched his Banbury with evident enjoyment, and handing three coppers to the bishop, exclaimed, "there was only one left, gov'nor!"

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How to Prevent Pneumonia. You are perhaps aware that pneumonia always results from a cold or from an attack of la grippe. During the epidemic of la grippe a few years ago when so many have resulted in pneumonia it was observed that the attack was never followed by that disease when Chamberlain's Cough Remedy was used. It counteracts any tendency of a cold or la grippe to result in the dangerous disease, and is the best remedy in the world for colds and la grippe. Every bottle warranted. For sale by all druggists. Matthews Bros., wholesale and retail agents.

THE LEADER Scranton Store—124-126 Wyoming Ave.

January clearance sale second week Save your dollars for the good things that are to be had here during this event. January is not a month calculated to bring the greatest profits in this store. It is more of an object just now to close out what there is of winter goods and make room for spring stuffs that are soon to appear. It will pay you to watch our announcements closely this entire month. Compare this advertisement with others in this paper.

Fifteen startling bargain items for today and balance of the week The following will be hard to equal in any other store. They are the very things we wish to close out most, and we have consequently cut the price to such a depth that the quickest kind of selling will be the result. Early callers will have best choice.

Ladies' \$5 cloth jackets 1.00 In boucle and cheviot. Not so many of these on hand now; but what there is must go soon. Never sold for less than \$5 here 1.00 15c dress goods, yard wide 8c Quite a little of this on hand, but not so very much when you consider the price. Half wool and a yard wide 8c Ladies' 50c walking hats 5c Several lots of ladies' and children's walking hats and sailors, all in one lot, priced as up to 50c, no less than four weeks ago, now... 5c

Ladies' \$2 dress skirts, at only 89c Several lots all wool skirts, in large and small figures and black and white checks, percale lined, price was up to \$2.50. 89c Ladies' 75c wrappers, special at 33c Fast color calico, cut extra large in blue and red. These wrappers are of the regular 75 cent kind and go only for a few days at. 33c Men's 50c negligee shirts, at only 19c These have collar and cuffs attached, are laundered, well made and come in nice pattern; sizes 16 1/2, 17, 17 1/2, 18; while they last 19c

19c Bohemian glass vases, special. 5c These are identically the same as you have often paid nineteen cents for. Colors are green and blue and decorations are in gold. 5c 25c net top laces for 6c This is a lot in cream and white and of a quality that always brought from 15c to 25c. Special clearance sale price while they last... 6c Men's 10c seamless half hose 3c.. A bargain that you will have to go far and wide to find the equal of. Several hundred pairs of these were sold first day of this sale 3c

25c bisque dolls, special at 10c All of these are jointed, have moving eyes and are the same as we sold during the holidays at 25c. Special during this sale... 10c Men's 29c merino shirts and drawers 12c Excellent value at 29c, as you will see. They are in white only, odd sizes and only limited quantity, so call early 12c Ladies' \$5 silk waists, special 1.98 High class waists in plain and striped taffetas and some very rich brock effects and checks. Price was up to six dollars, special 1.98

15c box stationery, special this week... 5c Extra quality of paper—two dozen sheets and as many envelopes in a box. Real value up to 15c, in white and assorted tints. 5c 59c muslin gowns, special at 33c Only about 200 in the lot so they cannot last very long. Of fine muslin, mother Hubbard yoke, trimmed with lace and embroidery. 33c 10c cambric corset covers at 4c Plain, with high neck and of good quality cambric. Regular price of these was always 10c. During this sale we offer them at 4c

The book sensation of the Year We shall place on sale today one thousand popular books in handy volume size, printed on fine quality of paper, with choice of more than 100 titles by such authors as Scott, Ruskin, Dumas, Goldsmith, Jerome, Dickens, Doyle, Barre, Irving, Hope, Marlitt and many others. Cloth Bound Books, published at 35 cents 8c Also another lot of about 500, 12 mo. size, stamped in gold and published at 50c. The latter have works by such authors as Eliot, Verne, Cooper, Doyle, Scott, Dickens, Barre, Dumas, etc. While they last 10c

Special cut prices in our corset department We shall offer our 75c quality of H. & S. Corsets in all sizes and unlimited quantity, at a price not heretofore known for an article of equal merit. Special during this sale... 49c Another lot—fine quality Sateen Corset (H. & S.) in black, grey and white, regular price, \$1.25. Special 75c

Muslin underwear Biggest sale we ever had—finest qualities we ever showed and the most remarkable values we ever saw—that is the substance of this great underwear sale. Drawers Ladies' Fine Muslin Drawers, having cluster of tucks and trimmed with embroidery; 29c regular price 30c. Special 29c Ladies' Fine Muslin Drawers, having wide cambric ruffle, trimmed with embroidery; 39c regular price 40c. Special 39c Corset Covers Ladies' Plain Cambric Corset Covers, high neck, regular 4c price 5c. Special 4c Ladies' Cambric Corset Covers, high neck, edged with fine embroidery; Special price 12 1/2c Ladies' Cambric Corset Covers, high neck, edged with fine embroidery; Special price 21c Ladies' Fine Cambric V or square neck, trimmed with fine embroidery; regular 28c. Special 29c Gowns Ladies' Muslin Gowns, Mother Hubbard yoke, in five different styles, trimmed with lace or embroidery, very good for 30c. Special 33c Ladies' Muslin Gowns, Empire or Mother Hubbard style, trimmed with lace, regular price 30c. Special 29c Ladies' Muslin Gowns, Mother Hubbard style, having yoke of tucks and insertion, and yoke neck and sleeves trimmed with embroidery; Special 59c Ladies' Cambric Gown, Mother Hubbard yoke of lace, trimmed with cambric ruffle, edged with Valenciennes lace, regular price 30c. Special 29c Ladies' Cambric Gown, Empire or Mother Hubbard style, trimmed with embroidery; Special 79c Ladies' Cambric Gown, Empire style, yoke of embroidery, insertion and wide collar to match, trimmed with embroidery; 89c

Dress goods In order to make a very special bid we cut the price from 10 to 20 per cent. more than we did on the first day of this sale. Look up our previous ads and note the difference. 30c. All Wool double-fold Flannels 18c 20c. Colored Cashmere, special 16c 20c. Black Figured Dress Goods, special 19c \$2.50 genuine Astrakhan Cloaking, special \$1.50 5c. Half Wool Dress Goods, special 8c 40c. All Wool Dress Goods in one lot, choice of any... 25c \$3.00 and \$3.00 Dress Patterns, all this season's goods, choice of any \$3.49

Lebeck & Corin