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The Smiths of Smithville;
AND THEIR

ADVENTURES WITH A ROBBER.

BY PAUL CRETON.

The Smiths of Smithville had for a long time been very much annoyed by the depredations of some unknown individual, whose confused ideas concerning the rights of property, led to the frequent abstraction of divers goods and chattels from the premises of the said Smiths, in a furtive and mysterious manner. Bags of wheat and of oats vanished from the granary, pork from the cellar, and corn from the crib, in one night. A sheep that had just been slaughtered, coolly trotted away; and on another occasion, several gallons of syrup evaporated in a night-time. Milkier stools went off on their three legs, and one morning Mr. Smith's best axe was found to have "cut stick." Log chains became rattlesnakes, and crept off; iron wedges made splits in the Smith property; boots walked away; and the jack rode off on the saw-horse.

Vain were all the efforts of the elder and younger Smith, to discover the mystery of these disappearances, and to out-trap the offender. Despairing to bring him to justice, the Smiths found they could do nothing more than to take measures to insure the safety of their property. Accordingly they built a new granary, with strong walls, a narrow grated window, and a heavy oak door, to which was attached a formidable padlock. This prison-like portion of the barn was built sufficiently large to allow the Smiths to lock up with the grain a great deal of portable property, such as was most likely to tempt the cupidity of thieves.

After the granary was finished, a month passed, during which time the depredations of the robber or robbers were confined to the orchard and hen-roost; when, late one Sunday evening, the elder Smith as he was sitting tipped against the kitchen wall, smoking his pipe preparatory to retiring, thought him that he had neglected to lock the granary before leaving the barn. This was by no means a singular circumstance—considering that the granary was usually locked by the younger Smith—who had that night "gone a courting."

It was a moonlight evening, and Mr. Smith, on approaching the barn, was considerably startled at seeing the door ajar. Certain of having shut the door an hour previously, Mr. Smith thought of robbers. His suspicion was confirmed, when, on a nearer approach, he plainly heard a movement in the barn. Too cautious to endanger his life by boldly attacking the robber, Mr. Smith, with considerable trepidation; resolved to watch his movements, and discover who he was.

Looking through a crack in the east side of the barn, he saw a dim, ghost-like figure glide across the floor toward the granary. A happy thought entered Mr. Smith's brain! Stealing into the barn, he crept silently along by the mow, until near the granary, when—slap! he shut the door, adjusted the padlock, turned the key, and was off for his life!

It is impossible to say what made Mr. Smith tremble so. It might have been the smothered cry of alarm that issued from the granary walls and rang fully on his ears—a cry well calculated to awaken superstitious fears. But Mr. Smith never owned that he was frightened; although, on reaching the kitchen he was as white as a ghost, or as ghosts are supposed to be.

"What's the matter now?" cried Mrs. Smith.

"I've caught the robber!" ejaculated Smith in a breath.

"He's locked up in the granary—give me my boots!"

"Why—why—what are you going to do?"

"Get help! he's a desperate fellow, and it will be dangerous to meddle with him all alone."

It is impossible to describe the excitement of Mr. and Mrs. Smith, on that memorable occasion. The latter took it upon herself to load the old musket, while her husband went for the neighbors.

Mr. Smith exchanged his slippers for his boots, and ran first to Deacon Naffles' house, where he expected to find the younger Smith, who was courting Naffles' daughter. He was surprised to see the house all dark, as if Naffles had all retired to rest, and blown out the candle. He knocked, however, furiously as the occasion required. After some delay, Deacon Naffles came down in night-clothes stared at Smith in astonishment, and demanded his business at that time of night.

"Caught the thief—locked up—in the granary—where's Increase?"

"Ha caught a thief!" cried Deacon Naffles, who, having lost some property as well as his neighbor, was interested in the intelligence—"good enough—keep him till morning!"

"'Tis not do!" replied Mr. Smith in an excited manner. "He's a desperate fellow—break out—I must rouse the neighbors—where's my son Increase?"

"Oh, Sally is sick, to-night—so Increase courted her only about an hour, and went home."

"Went home?"

"Yes," said the Deacon, "half an hour ago."

The elder Smith clapped his hand to his forehead, as if he had been struck, either by an idea, or some weighty substance.

"Gracious!" he exclaimed.

"What?" asked the Deacon.

"I believe," said the elder Smith, "I have locked up—"

"Who?"

"Increase!"

"I bet you have!" cried the Deacon. "I heard him say he had got to carry the buggy-cushions in the granary before he went to bed."

"Look here," whispered the elder Smith, "I beg of you never to mention this—I—"

"Oh, I'll keep the secret!" interrupted the Deacon, trying to preserve a becoming gravity. "The joke is safe, and I'd advise you to hurry home and let Increase out."

The elder Smith turned on his heel and vanished, feeling very weak—probably the effect of the excitement he had undergone.

Let us now look in upon the younger Smith, who was actually shut in the granary. It is impossible to describe his rage on finding himself thus entrapped.—After shouting until he was hoarse and nearly deaf, he closed his teeth angrily, and sat down on a bag of meal, to await the result.

Increase had not been long in the dark dungeon before he heard a noise in the barn. Supposing it was the old man who, having discovered his error, was coming to liberate him, his anger evaporated, and he could not help but laugh at the ludicrous mistake.

But there was a mystery about the sounds he heard, which caused the younger Smith to doubt whether they were made by his father after all. He listened. The key turned cautiously in the lock. Slowly and stealthily the door opened, while Increase scarcely breathed.

Somebody entered noiselessly, touched young Smith's shoulder as he passed, and began to explore the further part of the dungeon. Increase dropped on his hands and knees, and, taking advantage of the noise made by the robber, crept out. Then to shut the door and lock it, was the work of a moment. Somebody was locked up.

Listening a moment, and hearing no sound, Increase became firmly convinced that he had committed no error, but caught a real thief, and he went immediately for assistance.

Shortly after, and very much ashamed of his mistake, the elder Smith sneaked into the barn and approached the granary. It is necessary in this place to observe that the elder Smith locked up his son with the key that belonged to the granary and which he had carried with him, and that Increase locked up the thief with a false key, which the latter had brought with him, and carelessly left in the lock, on entering the granary, and which the younger Smith had carried away.

And now the elder Smith made haste to open the door.

"Increase!" he called, putting his head into the granary.

No sound answered.

"Are you asleep?" Come—don't go to playing any tricks on me—it was all a mistake, for I really took you to be a robber!"

Mr. Smith's voice was stopped by a violent blow on the mouth. Mr. Smith in an instant, was tumbled down amidst a wilderness of barrels, bags, rakes and shovels. Mr. Smith was considerably stunned by the blow and the fall; and when Mr. Smith got upon his feet again, the door was closed and locked. Mr. Smith was a prisoner. I leave the reader to imagine his feelings.

Meanwhile Increase was raising forces to assist in taking the thief out of the granary in safety. Having first told his story to Mrs. Smith, who was exceedingly astonished, he hastened to inform Joe Ferris, a stout fellow, who lived in the woods near by, and who had complained of losing quite as much property as the Smiths. Mrs. F. put her head out of the window, and wished to know what Increase wanted. The young man asked for Joe. After some hesitation, the woman replied that her husband had the headache, and could not get up.

"It's very important," said Increase.—"I've caught the thief, and locked him up in the granary."

"Oh—have you?" said Mrs. Ferris, in a feeble voice. "How fortunate! But as my husband has the headache, I think you had better keep the man till morning."

"No—we'll have him to-night!" cried Increase.

And away he ran.

Now, if the younger Smith thought he was regaling Mrs. Ferris with glad tidings, he was considerably in error. The reader may guess the cause of her agitation, when I inform him that there was no Joe Ferris sick with the headache in the house.

But Mrs. F. was a woman of energy and decision. She caught up a hammer, threw a shawl over her head, and left the house. She was in Mr. Smith's barn, with her hand on the granary door.

"Joseph!" she whispered.

No reply.

"Joseph—it is me—are you here?" she added, knocking on the door.

"Let me out," said the voice within.

Without any further delay, Mrs. Ferris, having thrown the barn-door wide open, so that she could see to perform her operations, commenced hammering the padlock in a most destructive manner.

"Now, Mr. Smith, who was within, was exceedingly astonished at what he heard. He certainly wished to be let out, but he had no desire to have the padlock smashed without first trying other means.—Something like the truth, however, flashed upon his mind, when he reflected that the person who was breaking the lock had called him Joseph, and that the voice was marvelously like a woman's. With great anxiety of mind he waited for the door to open.

At length the lock was torn away, and Mrs. Ferris whispered—

"Come quick, Joseph! There's no time to lose. They'll be here in a minute!"

She caught somebody by the arm, and both stopped, looking each other in the face.

Mrs. Ferris screamed, and turned paler than the moonlight, and dropped her hammer. Mr. Smith was scarcely less astonished; but, recovering himself, he said, rather coolly, considering the occasion—

"You are out late, to-night, Mrs. Ferris. Allow me to see you home!"

She could not refuse his arm; and when she saw that he was conducting her to his house, instead of her own, she had not the power to say a word, or make the least resistance.

The good lady's feelings, on being brought before Mrs. Smith, can be more easily imagined than described. In her fear and confusion, she confessed some startling truths, and with tears, and on her knees, begged her kind, dear friends to be merciful, and not to expose her.—Mrs. Smith recovered from her amazement, and exclaimed, "I never! I never! I never!" and Mr. Smith, who was not the least excited of the three, indulged in some equally sensible remarks.

Meanwhile, Mr. Joe Ferris, who was the man who had taken the younger Smith's place in the granary, and given it up in turn to the elder Smith, went home by a circuitous route, wondering by what strange accident he happened to get caught, and congratulating himself on his escape. He had reached his door, when, hearing his name called by somebody in the road, he turned, and saw three men going by.

"Joe Ferris, is that you?" cried the voice of the younger Smith. "Come on, if you are ready. I've got Bill Hodges and Mr. Blake, and I think we'll be enough for one thief; but the more the merrier, so come on. I knew you would go in for the fun, in spite of your headache."

Joe was quite as much in the dark now, as when he was locked up in the granary; but, concluding, it would be best to put a bold face on the matter, and accompany Increase, he declared himself ready, and jumped over the fence. At first he was afraid of committing himself, but the conversation by the way showing him, as he thought, how the ground lay, he laughed heartily at the queer manner in which the thief was caught, and volunteered to be the first to enter the granary where he was confined, at the same time chuckling joyously at the anticipation of the younger Smith's dismay, on finding, instead of a thief, his own father under lock and key!

With great glee, the men proceeded at once to the granary, where Increase proposed leaving his companions, to go into the house for a lantern, and to see if his father had returned; upon which Joe Ferris laughed all to himself, and advised the younger Smith to be sure and bring the old man, if he was to be found.

"Hallo!" cried Bill Hodges; "the granary door is open! the thief has broke out!"

Increase came back, filled with consternation. Joe Ferris was not less surprised. The strange events of the night were involved in a deeper mystery than ever, when the elder Smith, having heard the approach of Increase and his companions, made his appearance with a light.

"Hallo, neighbor!" cried Joe Ferris, "what is all this about? Increase has been telling us about thieves."

"I declare, father," said the younger

Smith, "after you shut me up I shut up a real thief, and left him in my place."

"I know; your mother has told me," replied the elder Smith. "And when I came to let you out—"

"Oh! I see it all!" groaned Increase.—"He got away!"

"Yes, and shut me up."

"And how did you get out?"

"Why, the thief's wife had the kindness to come and break the lock."

So saying, the elder Smith held the lantern up to the face of Ferris, who turned ghastly white, and trembled as if he had been in an ague fit.

The whole affair was now explained, to the astonishment of everybody in general, and Joe in particular, who was too much astonished to make any resistance, while Increase and his companions were tying his hands behind him.

Ferris was accommodated with lodgings in Mr. Smith's house that night; and, on the following day, a search having been instituted, and all kind of goods found on Joe's premises, he and his wife were both committed to jail to await their trial.

What their sentence was, when convicted of the crime charged against them, I have quite forgotten; but it is certain that the good people of Smithville were troubled no more with the mysterious disappearance of their goods and chattels, and that the Smiths remember, with peculiar satisfaction, the manifold mistakes committed on the night of their adventures with the robbers.

The Sacramento Age relates the following amusing incident of Goat vs. Chinaman:

"We witnessed an encounter between a Chinaman and a goat yesterday, which was probably more amusing to us than to the Celestial. The Chinaman residing near the north bank of the slough had placed a lot of fish on a drying platform, made of twigs, as is usual with that race, and had arranged them with great care. A large he-goat, in his perambulations, wandered around in that direction, and thinking he had found a good place to sun himself jumped upon the wicker platform, which yielded at once beneath its burden, and fell partially to the ground. The Chinaman came out of his little hut greatly enraged, and swearing some Celestial oaths, picked up a club, which he threw at the animal, striking him on his horns, which made him reel as he entered, the neighboring bushes. John went to work picking up his fish, muttering to himself, when the goat, observing his stooping posture, came out, unobserved, and, standing on his hind legs, made sundry conical gyrations, and suddenly with extraordinary impetus, rushed upon the Chinaman, striking him in the most available point, and sending him down a precipice about ten feet high, in the descent of which he turned two or three somersets lighting on his head on soil which had fortunately been moistened by the rain. The goat at once beat a retreat, which was creditable to his discretion, and the Chinaman returned to his work, exclaiming with indignation, 'He goated no good!'"

Hard Times in Illinois.

The following is an extract of a letter from a farmer in Jay county, Ill., to the American Industrial Association:

"People here cannot pay their debts, things are so low; wheat 45 to 50 cents per bushel; butter 8 cents per pound, eggs 5 cents per dozen, and other things in proportion. We would like to have a good girl to help in house work, but to raise the amount of traveling expenses is out of my power. I have over \$2000 due, and cannot command \$18 over and above current expenses; but if you are disposed to send me a girl, I will see that you get the money as soon as I can command it."

A Lawyer Answered.

"What did he say? Come, give us his very words—none of your inferences, sir!"

"I don't like to answer that question." Ho! ho! So you are afraid to answer that question, are you? I knew I should drive you into a close corner. Come, out with it! and none of your shrinking here! I should rather be excused." Then I shall appeal to the Court to commit you for contempt." "Well, sir, what language did he use?" "Why, I asked him to lend me half a dollar, and he said he couldn't for you had robbed him of every cent of his money, and if he couldn't get out of your clothes very soon, his children would starve."

President Harrison a Teacher.

President Harrison taught, for several years, in a humble Sabbath School on the banks of the Ohio. The Sabbath before he left home for Washington, to assume the duties of Chief Magistrate of the nation, he met his Bible class as usual. And his last counsel on the subject to his gardener, at Washington, it may be hoped will never be forgotten by the nation.—When advised to keep a dog to protect his fruit, he replied, "rather a Sunday School Teacher to take care of the boys."

Biddy was bad with the colic. She was sure she was going to die, and that she was. Various remedies were suggested to her, and among them castor oil, which she was asked if she would take. "Indeed," said she, "I would take anything to make me well, if I knew it would kill me."

THE LECOMPTON CONSTITUTION.

Gov. Walker to the Democracy of New Jersey.

HOBOKEN, N. J. March 27, 1858.

GENTLEMEN: I regret that it is not in my power to accept your kind invitation to address the Democracy of Sussex County, New Jersey, at the meeting called for Tuesday next, to express their opposition to the Lecompton Constitution.

That is an appropriate name for that instrument, for it is not the Constitution of the State of Kansas. The Constitution of a State is their first great fundamental law—their Magna Charta—not embodying however, rights, as mere privileges granted by royal power, either to loyal or rebellious subjects, but as the free will of the people themselves. By that people it must be fairly and freely made, and by them presented for the acceptance of Congress; and if it be not the will of the people of Kansas, it is not their Constitution, under whatever specious forms, or fraudulent devices, or transparent forgeries, it may be forced upon them. The Lecompton fiction is not a State Constitution, for that can only be fairly and freely made by the people of a State; but it is a wretched counterfeit, sought to be forced by violence, frauds and forgeries, under the pretended forms of law upon a protesting people. And when did not usurpation, fraud and forgery invest themselves with the semblance of legal forms and powers!

When the British Parliament adopted the obnoxious tea tax and stamp duties, it was done under all the forms of law. It passed the British Parliament; it received the royal sanction; assenting or expectant palace-men, timid or corrupt, gave it their wretched sanction. Nay, more; the royal George (like his Stuart predecessor, James the 1st.) denounced our ancestors, who opposed these laws, as rebels and traitors; but we, the people, who have simply protested against the adoption of such laws, are visited with similar threats and condemnation. Rebels against what? Traitors to whom?—Is it to our country which we love, to the Federal Constitution we revere, to the Union we would perpetuate, to State and popular sovereignty we would fortify and uphold, or is it to our insolent servants, now by our votes exercising a little brief authority, and denouncing the people, their masters, with treason and rebellion!

When the usurpations preceding the Revolution occurred, under the forms of law; the people, asserting their majesty, rose in opposition. First, they petitioned; next they protested, then they denounced; and last they fought for the great principle of self-government. Among the rest, the people of New Jersey then rose to the rescue of their threatened liberty. They conquered, even by bullets, where we may now succeed by ballots only. New Jersey in that day was not only then the headquarters of Washington—the strategic line of military operations—but also the victorious battle-field of the Revolution. From the glorious hills of old Morris, first touched by the sunlight of liberty ere it reached the plains below, from the bloody ground of Monmouth to the decisive triumphs of Trenton and Princeton, the people of New Jersey rose in defense of their rights and liberties.—After a long night of gloom and darkness, victory perched at length upon our standard. Marathon witnessed the birth of Grecian liberty, but Trenton and Princeton not only beheld the dawn of our freedom, but it is hoped also, unlike Marathon, will never witness our decline.

But we are now in the midst of the battle; the bugle notes are sounding to the advance of the approaching columns; the principles of our Revolutionary Fathers are now endangered; the right of self-government is again invaded, and the people of New Jersey are called once more to the rescue. Talk to us not now of any of the Democracy which admits not in form only, but in reality, the power of the people. Talk to us not now of State rights, if, under frauds and forgeries, proved and established, under forms or fictions however specious, the people of a State do not, in fact, make their Constitution. Talk to us not of popular sovereignty, if the people in fact do not establish all their own domestic institutions. Many criminals have escaped under the forms of law; but a sovereign State is not criminal. No miserable quibbles, worthy the lowest Pic Poudre Court, can touch the case of a sovereign State upon the great question of her admission into the Union. On such occasions, affecting the sacred and sovereign rights of the people of a State upon the great question of her admission into the Union. On such an occasion, affecting the sacred and sovereign rights of the people of a State, the great question is: do they present their own Constitution, framed by themselves, and ask, under its provisions to be admitted into the Union? If not, there is an end of the question; and if, under such circumstances, Congress should force the people of a State into the Union against their will, our Government would have become a consolidated despotism, the liberties of the people would have vanished, and State rights have sunk, as undecipherable spots upon the orb of a resistless central power. If this can now happen under the pretext that (wrong and unjust as it may be) the people may hereafter strike off the chains of an usurping minority, that although Congress may now subvert the will of the people, that they may hereafter redress their grievances,

with or without revolution—what then? Shall we strike down the great principle of State and popular sovereignty in the miscalled compulsory admission of a State under the apology that the people may hereafter overthrow the usurpation, which Congress would have forced upon them? Shall we drag Kansas from the camp and collar her into the Union, in the hope that she will hereafter strike off her shackles, rise from her abject degradation, and from a subject become a sovereign State at some future period? If this can now be done; if frauds, and forgeries, and usurpation, can now be indorsed and sanctioned; if a miserable and disgraced minority can be clothed by Congress with the pomp of State sovereignty; if the felon fox can be covered with the Lion's skin; if Kansas can be dragged through the streets of Washington like a captive in an imperial Roman oration, in the hope that the degraded victim will hereafter put on the cap of a freedman, and resume her liberty; if all this can be done by the President and Congress, and approved by the people, then what is the fate of Kansas to day may become that of New Jersey or any other State to-morrow. As well might the empiric seek our approval for the administration of poison to his patient, on the suggestion that such patient might thereafter prescribe for himself some antidote or the burglar excuse the expulsion of the rightful owner from his mansion, under the pretext that he might, perhaps, hereafter resume his lawful possession, as ask that the principle of self-government should now be subverted in Kansas, in the belief that its people at some future period might, perhaps, be able to redress the wrongs now done them, and recover their long lost rights and liberties.

Establish now the precedent, by dragging Kansas into the Union against the will of her people, and under this fatal example I fear the whole fabric of popular liberty will tumble into ruins. Congress and the President will have offered the most tempting rewards, in all the future, for the perpetration of fraud, perjury, and forgery, and for the overthrow of the will of the people. Our moral retrogression and political decadence will have commenced, and these glorious States may soon become broken columns, with their ruined fragments scattered over the opening graves of the liberties of our country and of the world. May the sovereign State of New Jersey, and especially the indomitable Democracy of the glorious old County of Sussex in this hour of peril, stand by the rights and liberties of the people, and teach our political Canutes and their counselors that they must change their position, or the advancing surges of popular indignation will roll over and overwhelm them.

Recurring with unalloyed delight to the many pleasant Summers passed by me amid the lofty hills and lovely valleys of old Sussex, New Jersey, sailing upon her limpid lakes, admiring her splendor and romantic scenery, elevated and invigorated by her pure and elastic atmosphere, wandering along the banks and rapids of the Delaware, which separated her from my own native Pennsylvania, I have thought that here, amid your mountain homes, liberty might find her last entrenchment, and that some of your plains and passes might become as distinguished in defense of popular sovereignty as the classic fields of Grecian or Roman history, or the more recent struggles of the heroic Swiss. May you never have cause to encounter such fearful sacrifices; but if the trial must come, may you fully realize my highest anticipation of the courage and patriotism of the people of Sussex, New Jersey.

Most respectfully, your fellow-citizen.

R. J. WALKER.

A prisoner last week escaped from the Tunkhannock Jail, leaving the following interesting letter addressed to the Sheriff:

TUNKHANNOCK JAIL, March 8th, '58. Most Noble Heated Sheriff:—

With a reluctance I am about leaving this God forsaken hole under your charge, I am almost sorry to leave a family in this way, that has used me as well as all of you have, but circumstances alters cases, although as innocent as ever a man was of crime. I do not like liars and shall never stay any where where I know they are trying to injure me, and beside that I have got up a patent right that will make me a fortune, so I shall get patented immediately and then travel for Canada, I heard that Queen Victoria is soon to be in Canada, and I want to secure all England, that is to unlock, pass out, and lockup, and go where you please. The inventor is myself, and calculate to draw a pension for life.

C. F. HARDER

Up and down o'er hills and meads,
Riding, walking, quick or slow,
Wherever my fancy leads me,
O'er this bright world I'll go
Yes, yes, yes,
O'er this bright world I'll go,
Now 'Tis Vain—

P. S.—If any of you ever get within ten miles of me stay all night.

Your affectionate Prisoner.

Be very kind to your sister. If you haven't got any sister of your own, be kind to somebody else's.