

AMERICAN CITIZEN.

"Let us have Faith that Right makes Might; and in that Faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it"—A. LINCOLN.

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SCAR CHEEK.

Many are the wild scenes that have occurred on the prairies, and among the great chain of mountains that stretch from the frozen sea to the furthestmost point of South America. Some of these, with singular perversity, have crept into print, while others more vivid remain to be recorded.

It is our purpose, in this sketch, to record an incident that occurred on the prairies nearly thirty years ago, and which powerfully illustrates the habits and manners of life of that singular race who stand almost fearful when he looked upon himself.

One day, as night was drawing on, a single person, in the garb of a hunter, was riding over the prairie, on the back of a mule. A glance at the person would have excited wonder and inquiry that he, of all others, should have taken up the profession of trapper. He was young, of delicate features, with a fair complexion, and with a countenance that bespoke an education and refinement such as would have made him a mark anywhere among civilized people. But there was an expression that was visible, on close scrutiny, that showed that he was not what he seemed. Such a look of uncertainty, of sadness and marked that countenance would have haunted a man to his dying day. Certainly, there had been some powerful cause that had driven this young man into the wilds of the Far West.

The day was quite warm, and the gait and slowness of the mule showed that he was wearied with a long tramp. The rider was lost in a deep reverie, and was almost unconscious of what was occurring around him. Now and then he raised his head and looked around him, as if to make sure that he was not stealthily approached by his ever vigilant enemies, the Indians.

"I can travel a few miles before it becomes dark," he soliloquized, looking up to the sky. "Heigho! yonder's some one!"

Directly ahead he saw a single man on foot, walking forward in the direction he was traveling. Recognizing him at a glance as a white man, he quickened the pace of his mule, and also shouting to him to attract his attention, he soon overtook him.

The latter personage was carrying a gun on his shoulder, had pistols in his belt, and was over six feet in height. He had restless, dark eyes, a lithe, muscular frame; but what identified him at once among other men was a large, broad scar that traversed the entire length of his right cheek. It must have been a fearful wound, for it was of such depth and breadth, that it could not in the least be concealed by his beard, which was rather luxuriant than otherwise.

The moment our young friend came up he regretted the meeting. There was a sinister and forbidding look about the man that impressed him most unfavorably; but powerful as was the cause that banished him from the dwelling places of civilized men, he still created an impression in this great solitude, and would have sought the company of almost any man of his own race.

"A fine day, my friend," observed the young man, as he reined up his mule beside the stranger and began conversing with him.

"Yes, rather warm," replied the hunter, as he ran his eye over him; "especially when a man has tramped all day, as I have."

"You must have come a considerable distance?"

"Reckon I have; I've scarcely stopped since sun-up, and it's now about sundown, you see I've had a powerful chance of putting a few miles behind me."

"Anything of Indians?"

"Not a sign all day; seem to be scarce in these parts."

They had now resumed their journey, and were traveling side by side, both going slowly, however.

"Stranger," resumed Scar Cheek; "I don't know how it is with you, but it is just about my camping time."

"It is past mine; I should have halted before had I not seen you, and been anxious for your company."

"Bliged to you, sir."

"Shall we stop here?"

"No; a little way on is the head of the Pawnee Fork; that's about the prettiest place I know on for a camp. If it's all the same to you, we'll camp there."

"Ain't you tired? I should be glad to walk and let you ride my mule."

"Oh, no; I'm used to that kind of work."

Thus conversing in a friendly manner, they journeyed on until they halted and made their preparations for the night's encampment. Wood and fuel were collected; the mule was staked close at hand, and they sat down to their evening meal on the best of terms.

Far different would have been the feelings of these two individuals toward each other, had either been aware of the other's identity.

The evening meal was finished; when Scar Cheek remarked:

"It seems we are not alone in these parts; yonder is a chap who don't seem to fancy us."

Looking in the direction indicated, a single man was observed, rifle in hand, reconnoitering the couple, as if not altogether satisfied with their appearance.

"Shall we not signal him to come forward?" asked the young man.

"No; he will find us out soon enough. See! he has already done so."

Such proved to be the case. The hunter, who was evidently experienced and

cautious, was now seen coming straight toward the camp. The two surveyed him closely as he came up, and saw that he was much older than either of them. He was tall, rather full of frame, with long, black, matted hair, and an habitual scowl upon his features, that made his countenance unexpressing in the extreme.

Upon coming up to the camp-fire he halted with military abruptness; and, before returning the salutation, looked directly into the countenances of those before him. It did not escape the notice of the young man that the scowl upon the old hunter's face increased, until it became positively fearful when he looked upon himself.

"Have you been to supper?" inquired the young man.

"No; was the curt reply.

"Will you take some of our meat?"

"Yes."

He was invited to help himself, and he did so with a gusto that showed he was not wanting in appetite, if he was in manner. He asked no questions, and spoke no words, except in reply to direct observations. The young man saw something in the hunter, despite his savage manner and forbidding appearance, that attracted him toward him, and he resolved to draw him out if possible.

"Do you come from the mountains?" he asked.

"Yes."

"On your way to the States?"

"No."

"Are you going back again?"

"Yes."

"Do you hunt alone?"

"Yes."

"How do you like it?"

"Umph!"

"Why do you hunt alone?"

The old hunter paused in his eating, and turned his dark eye full upon the young man in a manner that was awful. He had evidently had enough of this impudence, and his interlocutor concluded it was best not to draw him out any farther just now.

If the old hunter had been an object of curiosity to the young man, the position of affairs was now reversed. The former appeared to discover something in the latter that excited his curiosity, and gazed at him as if he would penetrate his very soul.

Whatever were the thoughts of the old man, he contented himself merely in looking, and uttered neither a question nor a word, unless directly addressed.

It was growing dark, when Scar Cheek again remarked:

"If we keep on at this rate we shall have them all here before morning. Yonder comes the fourth man."

The person alluded to was upon a mule and came steadily and fearlessly forward, as if no such thing as fear ever entered his head.

"I look ye for red skins," he said, as he rode by, and nodded good-naturedly to them all.

"Where from?" inquired Scar Cheek.

"From the Kaw." (Kansas.)

The new-comer was about fifty years of age, and his gray hair contrasted strangely with his dark, bronzed features, upon which care and misfortune were strongly stamped. He was only half clad in the miserable skins he wore, yet there was a look of good nature and frankness about him that would have impressed any one the first time he saw him.

"Looks rather comfortable here," he observed, as he dismounted from his mule and came forward. "Sartin you was red-skins when I first set eyes on you, and it took me some time to find different."

"We have seen no Indians to-day," replied the young man.

"That's no reason to think they ain't about. I see signs this morning, but none since I come in these parts."

"Do you hunt with them?" inquired the new-comer, in a low, menacing tone, careful that he should be overheard by no one.

"No; I have never been with them until to-day."

While this fragmentary conversation was going on, the trapper was engaged in unsaddling his mule and preparing for the night's rest. He showed a partiality for the young man, and the latter, since his advent among them, had felt drawn toward him, and experienced a strong repugnance toward Scar Cheek and the scowling hunter.

The dismounted trapper, after unsaddling his mule, carefully staked him; and, taking a seat by the fire, produced a short, black pipe, and began smoking it. Before doing so, he carefully examined the priming of his rifle, shaking the powder into the pan, and adding a few more grains to it. Then placing a thin, dry skin over it to keep out the damp, he shut the pan.

The group watched him, but he paid little or no heed to them, while Scar Cheek seemed more interested than the others, and manifested a strange uneasiness. He examined his own rifle, and loosened the pistols at his belt as though they incommoded him.

The young man and the hunter with the scowl looked at each other, but said nothing.

Now that they were all seated around the fire, the four manifested a disposition to engage in conversation. An observer of human nature, however, would have detected that, upon the part of every one, except the young man, this was entirely forced.

It was as if all three were suspicious of each other, and took this method of quieting the others' suspicions. It was noticeable, further, that not one of the four inquired the others' names. This was singular in itself, to say nothing of their suspicious deportment toward each other.

"How are fars down in St. Louis?" inquired the last arrival.

"Sellin' low," returned Scar Cheek.

"Dunno what's to become of us hunters if they get much lower," added the trapper with the black eyes and the forbidding scowl.

"A fellow can't make much more than to go on a decent spree."

"And there is the risk you run from the Indians," said the young man, anxious to keep the conversation going, now that it had started. "I have found that's the worst part of the business. Last spring, when I had got my peltries down to the head-waters of the Kansas, I had to leave them all, and was then just able to get away."

"Woo! that's just the fun of the thing!" exclaimed the hunter with the scowl. "If it wasn't for the knife-stickin' and hair-raisin', I'd give up the profession altogether, and emigrate."

"When you get older," said Scar Cheek, "that'll be the part you'll like about the business. It aakes a fell-w sharp, too."

The ragged trapper took his pipe from his mouth, and looked at the speaker with a curious stare, that made him uneasy and restless again. Then, reaching his pipe, he looked into the coals, as before, and did not raise his eye for a long time.

"I count it rather curious that I have not seen the sign of an Indian to-day," said the young man, this time addressing himself to Scar Cheek.

"No big very curious about it," replied the latter. "I've been further West than this, and have tramped day in and day out, without getting a squint at a red-skin."

"You do not generally go a foot?"

"No; my horse gave out last week, down on the Kansas, and I had to leave him. It ain't the best way of doin' this animal's foot. I'm on the look out for a good one, and hope to catch one before I'm a week older."

"Both of you have hunted and trapped for many years, I suppose?"

The man with the scowl nodded his head, and Scar Cheek made answer:

"Yes, I have been at it a good many years."

"Do you like it?"

The trapper who was looking in the fire, raised his head and looked into the face of Scar Cheek, as if waiting for his answer. The latter showed some unrest as he spoke: "Sometimes I does, and then again I doesn't. I've been at it so long, however, that I s'pose I'll stick to it till I go under."

The trapper smiled, and though satisfied with the answer, it was observable, and no doubt noticed by this man, that although he pleased the others with questions, yet they failed to ask a single one of him.

"You are alone, also—that is, you have no animal," pursued the young man, addressing the scowling hunter who responded:

"Yes! Is it your own choice?" asked the querent.

"Injint! exclaimed the scowl. "A good reason; you seem to take it philosophically," said the young man; "I could scarcely get along without mine; you are a yunker yet, said he of the scowl. "I know; this is a sad life for me; and the old look of woe came back to the face of the young man, as he turned and gazed into the embers before him. Tears trickled down his face, and he dropped upon his hands. The silent ragged trapper, without turning his head, looked steadily toward him. There seemed to be something in that young, sad face, that stirred his soul to its very depths. His brows contracted, and he set his lips as if to keep back his feelings, but he never uttered a syllable. His breath seemed to be deeper, and he grasped his rifle, as if it might escape him.

Scar Cheek and his companion, who sat on the other side of the fire, occasionally exchanged glances, and smoked harder than ever; but neither of them spoke to the other, nor to the other two; and the silence became really painful. The young man remained, for some time lost in his sorrowful reverie; and, for several minutes, the ragged trapper never removed his gaze from him. The group formed a circle for a palmeto. Between the three eldest there was, evidently, the greatest mistrust—not the natural mistrust which individuals feel toward each other when their mutual intentions. Under ordinary circumstances, these men, meeting as they had, among the great solitude, would have been attracted together as brothers. But there was something more than this. There was some dark secret in their past lives, which rose like a wall of blackness between them. Some of these had encountered each other before, although the youngest of the four failed to suspect it. The conversation which we have stated, as has already been hinted, was not spontaneous but forced. The impulse of each and all was to silence, and the conversation now fell dead. The ragged trapper, who had disdained to join in it for some time, maintained precisely the same position as before, while the youngest appeared to love the communion of his own thoughts better than anything else, and made no attempts to resume the discourse which had ended so suddenly. Scar Cheek and his comrade smoked, and occasionally looked at each other, but neither broke the profound silence. Far in the distance the wail of the wolf was heard; and, after a while, it was answered from another quarter; but it excited no remark from the group of hunters. Like statues they maintained their several positions. The night wore on; and all, save Scar Cheek, were unconscious of the passage of time. At length he began to look from one to the other, as if to receive some suggestion from them; and, observing the same stolid, absent look in each, he said:

"It's gettin' purty late into the night; and I propose we set our watch and turn in." This remark aroused them all, and each arose to his feet, as if by yawn and stretch before lying down. After consult-

ing together for several minutes, the manner of watch was agreed upon. It was decided that it should be equally divided among the four, each standing guard for two hours; the old trapper taking the first watch, the young man next, and Scar Cheek and he with the scowl following. The latter, from the lateness of the hour, it was certain, would find his watch compressed more of day than of night. This, then, being decided, the three men lay down in their blankets, and the old ragged trapper took his position as sentinel.

It was a bright, moonlight night, and over that barren, wild waste of prairie not a sound was heard, as the three lay sleeping upon the ground. The moon was nearly overhead, and its light revealed objects at a great distance. The old trapper scanned every portion of the prairie visible, but saw nothing to excite suspicion. The two mules could be seen upon the ground—they, too, were asleep. He alone was awake and conscious, and the emotions that were surging through his bosom would have driven away sleep for many a night. Trailing his rifle, he paced slowly backward and forward, looking out upon the prairie, and then gazing upon the forms by the smoldering fire. Frequently he stopped short in his walk, and muttered, brokenly:

"It cannot be he," he said; "but it is so long ago, and that scar may have disguised him." He resumed his walk, but shortly paused again. "That boy, too; but he has all along seemed to think so much of you. But 'tis just like him, always doing something out of the way."

Richard Wilkins was too sick at heart to reply. He turned to the desk and endeavored to concentrate his wandering thoughts upon his work, but in vain. The pen dropped from his fingers, and leaning his head on his hand he gave full scope to his sorrowful and indignant feelings. When the two gentlemen emerged from Mr. Beale's private room he started like one guilty of a secret crime, and snatching the pen, pretended to be all absorbed in his duties. His flurried manner, so different from his usual quiet composure, was noticed by his employer, who drew his own conclusions therefrom.

Mr. Oglethorp was returning to his home in Baltimore. His friend accompanied him to the steambank, and on returning cautiously observes his two clerks as he sauntered back and forth through the store. Philip's appearance indicated nothing unusual; but Richard, though he had previously regarded his customary composure, could not prevent a slight hesitancy and constraint when replying to Mr. Beale's casual remarks.

Several days after, Mr. Beale brought Richard a letter to seal and deposit it in the postoffice as he went to dinner. At the same time he sent Philip to a neighboring store on business, which would detain him some little time; he then returned to his private room. Left to himself, Richard gazed on the superscription of the letter, long and earnestly. "D. Oglethorp, Esq., Baltimore"—the words seemed burned into his brain. What would he not give to know the contents of that letter? Doubtless it related to the nephew that was to supplant him—Richard hesitated, turned the letter over and over. Which could he not glance in to it? It was sealed—he would betray no confidence by doing so—most of the business letters were given him to answer, and certainly to one living would he reveal the contents, whatever they might be. These reflections overcame his strong repugnance to the act, and with trembling hand he opened the letter and read:

"DEAR SIR: I wish your nephew to arrive, if possible, by Tuesday, the 30th, as on that day young Wilkins' year will have expired, and it is desirable that his successor should be on the spot to enter immediately on his duties.

Truly yours,
J. BEALE."

The blood rushed to Richard's brow as he read. For an instant he forgot the consequences to himself of the threatening blow of indignation of his employer's duplicity.

Four years ago, he murmured, bitterly, ay, four years next Tuesday, I entered this store. Not once since that day has he had occasion to reprove me for the slightest neglect or oversight, stern and exacting as he is. I have given no cause for complaint, and that is the end—this is my reward. I am to be discharged to make room for one of his friend's connections' connections; I am thankful I opened the letter—now I can prepare for his treachery.

With a calmness that surprised himself, the clerk sealed the letter, and dropped it in the post-office as directed. On his way back to his employment he called at the counting room of a merchant, whom, as one of Mr. Beale's acquaintances, he well knew. Richard wished to make inquiries in an indirect way, for a situation, but while he was striving to form some question to this end, the gentleman came to his relief, by asking if he knew any young man in need of a situation whom he could recommend to

THE MERCHANT'S TEST.

"I look, I am afraid the old man has taken it into his head to send you adrift."

"Why, what can you mean, Philip?"

Only that he was talking very earnestly with Mr. Oglethorp as I went into the room just now, and they ceased very discreetly on my entrance. I took the liberty of waiting outside the door till the conversation was resumed, and I heard enough to satisfy me that Oglethorp has a nephew who is about to take your place?"

"What did you overhear?"

"Merely a sentence from each. Oglethorp said: 'So you think my nephew will have no difficulty in filling the place of your head clerk,' the Beale replied: 'None whatever, and the other clerk, Philip Warden, has been in my establishment a long time, and he can give him a little insight into our business affairs if need be.' I did not wait to hear more, but that is enough I should think."

"So it would seem," was the reply, in a tone of deep despondency.

"It is mean in the old man to discharge you, and equally strange; if it was me now, I should not think it so odd, but he has all along seemed to think so much of you. But 'tis just like him, always doing something out of the way."

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him, as he had a vacancy for a clerk. Richard eagerly offered himself. Mr. Curtis was surprised that he should wish to leave his old place, but gladly accepted him, having long admired the integrity and strict application of the young man, whose prizes he had frequently heard from Mr. Beale. The yearly salary was named; it was one hundred dollars more than Richard was now receiving; and having engaged to enter upon the duties of his new place on the following Tuesday, he went with a light heart to his old employment. He did not mention his intention to Mr. Beale, so the week passed without Mr. Curtis visiting the store. He hoped he had not met his employer, for Richard had a wish that the latter should not hear how his treacherous scheme had been defeated till the last moment.

On Monday evening Richard knocked at the door of Mr. Beale's room, and in as few words as possible requested the wages due him, as he was engaged to go to another house on Tuesday.

"I have known of your engagement since Wednesday," said Mr. Beale; "Mr. Curtis informed me of it. May I ask the motive of this secret and unusual proceeding on your part? I believe I gave you no cause for so sudden a determination to quit my employment, did I?"

"No cause!" Richard repeated, bitterly.

"Oh, no, sir, no cause, of course—the clerk is only the dupe, the slave of the merchant, and has no right to complain of any conduct, however injurious, of which he is the victim."

"Your sarcasm is rather out of place, young man," replied Mr. Beale, coolly.

"I asked if I had given you any cause of offence. I know I have not; you falsely imagine that I have, and thus imagine that I have, and thus imagine, you have done yourself a great injury—Nay, no questions, I will tell you all—On the day that Mr. Oglethorp was here I noticed a great alteration in your looks, your words, your whole conduct. I suspected at once that Philip had overheard your conversation, and repeated it to you, in consequence of which you were disturbed in mind. This was natural, and I was far from blaming you; but it afforded me an opportunity for a test which I had peculiar reason for desiring to apply. I penned a brief note to Mr. Oglethorp, gave it to you to seal and deposit it in the postoffice from that window. I thought the temptation would prove a severe one, and if you arose superior to it, I need never have any fears concerning you. I was right, the temptation was strong—too strong for your honor or integrity to withstand. I saw you open the letter—it was enough. I did not at all wonder when I heard of your applying for a new situation; you thought that I was acting treacherously to you, and that you would outwit me."

Mr. Beale ceased, and looked fixedly at Richard, whose whole countenance was suffused with blushes as the true nature of his conduct was brought thus coolly to his view. In his indignant feelings he had not till this moment thought of his dereliction of principle in opening a letter not intended for his inspection; now he was overwhelmed with shame and remorse, for he was naturally upright and ingenuous.

Mr. Beale saw his confusion, and turned to his desk to pay what was due of Richard's salary, but first taking some papers from a secret drawer, threw them on the table before the young man.

"All this is an end now," he said, "but you may see how unjust your suspicions were to me, how injurious to yourself, as I said awhile ago."

Richard's eyes were intently bent upon the papers. One was in the merchant's hand writing, a notice of Richard Wilkins having been admitted as a junior partner into his own and established business firm; the others were necessary business papers relating thereto, Richard continuing gazing at them as if fascinated, till the merchant's voice broke the spell.

"Well, young man, do you understand the matter now?"

"Oh, sir," said Richard, turning his eyes imploringly on him, and then unable to repress his tortured feelings, he bent his head on the table to conceal the fast gushing tears.

"Regret is unavailing," said Mr. Beale in his clear, cold tones. "I had every reason to place confidence in you—During these four years I have observed your conduct closely. It was such as to satisfy me; and resolving to reward your strict integrity and faithfulness, I had decided to take you into partnership, as you see by these papers, prepared nearly two months ago, and only awaiting the signatures and date. My friend Mr. Oglethorp, had frequently mentioned his

new, whom he much desired me to employ. At his last visit I agreed to do so. It was my intention to give you an agreeable surprise to-morrow, and therefore I desired to keep all my arrangements secret; fortunately, as I now see, I am, when enabled to do so, the strongest of your principles."

"Oh, if you could only forgive me, Mr. Beale," exclaimed Richard, imploringly. "It was my first error in this regard—I am sure it will be my last."

For all answer, Mr. Beale quietly pushed the money he had counted over to Richard, and picking up the papers, tore them into small fragments. The young man looked sadly at them, but knowing that remonstrance or entreaty was alike unavailing in the stern man, he by a strong effort conquered his emotion, and taking up his money, bowed his thanks and farewell to his late employer, and turned to leave the room. As he laid his hand on the door knob, he paused and asked, in a still faltering voice, if Mr. Curtis was informed of all this.

"No, I did not think it necessary to speak of it," said Mr. Beale, "for I had reason to think it was your first departure from the straight road; and though all business connections between us has ceased, yet I would not injure your reputation by revealing an act which I thought you would regret. You will find Mr. Curtis a more indulgent employer than the one you are leaving; your salary will be larger than it has been here, so that on the whole, perhaps, you are no loser, and I hope for your sake that your first error will prove also your last."

Richard sadly left the store. On the morrow he entered on the duties of his new situation. It proved agreeable, and the addition to his previous salary was of great use to him; but what could silence remorse for the act by which he had not only lost so much in a pecuniary point of view, but also sank immeasurably in his own estimation. He profited by the lesson, however. Years after he found himself in a position prosperous and envious as that which he had forfeited in early manhood; but to his dying day he never tried to banish the humiliating but salutary recollection of his first and last deviation from the straightforward path of honor and integrity.

—At our school feast, writes the Superintendent, every body had exhibited a tolerable appetite, but one boy had eaten to repletion, so that when I saw him suddenly turn very pale, and attempt to rise from the table, I began to fear that he had made himself ill.

"What's the matter, my good boy?" inquired I, while a sympathizing throng of philanthropic ladies, who had been acting as waiters upon the company, gathered around the sufferer. "Do you feel unwell?"

"My stomach aches, Sir," replied the boy, with great distinctness.

"Dear me!" said I, almost suffocated with my endeavors to repress laughter; "don't you think you had better go home?"

"No, no, Sir," replied the lad, with determination. "It will ache a precious sight more afore I ha' done us him!"

And I am bound to say that he did not submit to the threatened diatation, but devoured two slices of cold pudding in addition to his precious supplies, as well as an enormous hunch of bread and cheese.

—Cousin Charley is the most precious youngster that it was ever my lot to know. Last summer he and my little sister paid me a visit at my farm in Orange County. One day when I was taking them out for a drive a robin rose breast flew past and alighted on a fence near at hand.

"Oh, what a beautiful little bird!" exclaimed Jennie.

"Yes," I said; "but it's a very naughty bird; it eats up all the cherries."

"What is its name?" asked Jennie.

Charley who had been listening attentively to what had been said, turned toward me with a self-satisfied expression on his little face and shouted out: "I know; it's cherry peck'toral; isn't it cousin?"

—It is related of Rev. Mr. Robin, of F—, that he once entered a store and bought, among other things, some eggs. One of the by-standers observing him put them in his pocket, told him to be careful not to sit on them. "Yes," said the divine; "but did you never know a robin to sit on hen's eggs without hurting them?"

—"I said a coquetish young lady to her cousin, prematurely bald, 'why is your head like heaven's?'" "Don't know, I'm sure," replied the swain; "unless, indeed, because it has a shining crown."

"Good, but not correct. Because there is no more dying or parting there?"