

Juniata Sentinel and Republican.

B. F. SCHWEIER.

THE CONSTITUTION—THE UNION—AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAWS.

Editor and Proprietor.

VOL. XLVI.

1892.

MIFFLINTOWN, JUNIATA COUNTY, PENNA., WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 1892.

NO. 16.

LEFT UNDONE.

It isn't the thing you do, dear.
It's the thing you've left undone.
Which gives you a bit of heartache.
A little heartache, I mean.
The tender word forgotten.
The letter you might have sent, dear,
The love you might have sent, dear,
Are your haunting ghosts to-night?

The stone you might have lifted
Out of a brother's way.
The hand you might have clenched
You were hurried too much to say;
The loving touch on the hand, dear.
The love you might have sent, dear,
That you had no time nor thought for,
With thoughts enough of your own.

The little act of kindness
Those chances to be angels.
Which mortals sometimes find—
The little acts of kindness silence—
Each child, their selfish wraths—
With thoughts enough of your own.
And a bright sun has dropped on faith.

For life is all too short, dear,
And sorrow is all too great.
To suffer our slow compassion
Is the worst thing we can do,
And it's not the things you do, dear,
What's the best thing you can do,
At the setting of the sun.

Hearth and Hall

THE SILVER BULLET.

In 1869 Lawrence Nutting was a United States Marshal in the southern district of Virginia. The State was at that time fairly overrun with outlaws of all classes. Bushwhackers, highwaymen, counterfeiters and robbers roamed the land in the country side among the mountains and upon the lonely roads; while gamblers and desperadoes swarmed in and about the settlements. Crime was frequent, and the life of a United States officer was a series of stirring adventures involving great danger, and demanding as great tact and personal bravery.

But Nutting proved himself worthy and fit for the office. A young man of temperate habits, quick wit, splendid physique and dashing courage, he was never at a loss how to act, and the vermin that infested that region soon learned to hate and fear him intensely.

Many were the expeditions which the officer had led, many his escapes, and many the prisoners safely captured, while his wife, a widow, one man evaded him. The shrewdest and most moonshiner of all was still at large; despite all his efforts Nutting had not yet secured Ruloff Allen.

This man was known throughout the State. His career had been that of a criminal from his birth. In the fastness of Southwestern Virginia he manufactured whisky on a grand scale, and was the owner of a dozen or more queer stills, and snapped his fingers at the law.

Several times had Nutting sought this quarry; twice he had actually caught him, yet twice he had escaped, and at the time of which we speak he was still free.

Nutting sat at his office window one evening musing, half dreaming, when there fell a light touch on his shoulder. He started up quickly. A stranger stood before him.

"The United States Marshal?" said Nutting, "and we are here."

"Yes, sir," said Lawrence, rising.

"Be seated. What can I do for you?"

"I would speak with you alone," he said, as he glanced around. "I have matters of importance to communicate."

"This office is out of hearing of the street," said Nutting, "and we are here ourselves. You can speak freely."

"Dey mought miss, massa. You deon't deall cares for his own, an' his bullet is made by his help, at night, in de graveyard, an' can't miss."

"I would speak with you alone," he whispered. "Ise made 'em."

"And did they do their work?" said Nutting, laughing lightly.

"Dey did, massa."

The officer now opened a drawer in his desk, and took from it an old-fashioned dueling pistol, which he had picked up somewhere, and fitted the bullet into its rusty muzzle.

"It's just the thing, uncle. Bring me my flask, and I'll load it with the suicide bullet. It's best to have it handy if I get the blues. And he laid again.

The servant obeyed.

"No use to fix 'im, massa. Twon't only kill de one who it's made for, shan't ye couldn't shoot yourself wid it, nōbow."

"Well, uncle, I'll load the smooth bore, any way," said the Marshal, suiting the action to the word, and this afternoon we'll try it at a mark. If I miss a half dollar a dozen paces, I'll give up that you're right. If I hit, your 'suicide bullet' is no better or worse than I loaded it."

"I like that mass, but you won't hit," replied the old darky.

Just as Nutting completed the loading of the weapon a visitor called, and it was thrust hurriedly into a pigeon-hole in the desk. His visitor's business detained him from the office until night, and the plan of the morning was forgotten. The dueling pistol with its silver missile lay unnoticed for months in the desk.

The days and weeks passed, summer came and went, and fall ripened the year. A dozen times had the Marshal organized expeditions and scoured the country, seeking the notorious Allen, but each time he had returned unsatisfied. One final effort, however, was to be made.

"I am armed; you are not. I am fully as desperate a man as the report makes me. I am as strong as you are. Do not try to arrest me, for I shall then be obliged to kill you. I am here for a private talk, but it was necessary you should know who I am. I will not molest you if you will do the same by me, and give me fifteen minutes to escape when we have finished."

Nutting measured his chances. Unarmed, in the presence of a man to whom murder was not new, he deemed prudence the better part, and replied:

"I agree."

"Good," said Allen, removing his own pistol bolt. "Your word is equal to mine. We shall be both unarmed. And now I will tell you a story."

Then he drew his chair still nearer the marshal, and as the twilight fell and night descended he told of his life—a weird, strange history, every line intense with the throbbing passion of a lawlessness which made the man what he was.

The other listened breathlessly; the darkness shrouded both, and the cigars were finished long before the story was ended.

At length, however, the visitor paused, and then concluded as follows:

"So have I lived. As a wild man almost; and that life has for the past five years been more a mania than ever before, but with a method. I am and have been seeking money and

money only. Not so widely different, you may say, from all the world, except that my search was without the pale of the law. And now the end has come. I am rich. I have enough, and now I desire to return to civilization. You can permit it—you can prevent it. I am an outlaw. Very well! I will cease outlawry, I will turn over my stills to the Government, I will swear a great oath—and keep it, too—for my own interests demand it to become a worthy citizen, and I will accept the prodigal son and kill the fatted calf of pardon, all will be well. I came here to ask you to intercede for me. Will you do so?"

Nutting hesitated a moment. This man was a veritable Robin Hood. Could he trust him?

The other spoke again:

"Such assistance from an official is what I need, and I can pay well for it. If you will get a free pardon for me I will give you five thousand—"

"I cannot do that. I do, said Nutting.

"I reckon not—as ye never see me before. I am Mrs. Allen—Bethsheby Allen—and my boy, he's Ruloff Allen. Ye hear'd of him, mebbe?" and she paused and gazed cunningly into her listener's face.

"Yes, I know him," and the man's brow darkened.

"Wall, now, I tell ye. It seems ye on a raid after him to-morrow—ye see I know a thing or two—an' ye've got the boy badly cooped up on this side. Not but what ye may ketch suthin' besides moonshine. My boy is smart, he is, tell ye, an' he'll tote ye round considerable afore ye gather him in; but he's cooped all the same, and I'm afraid ye'll get him. I'm mummy, ye know."

The old hog paused and wiped her eyes. She was a woman, even yet, and Nutting's heart softened toward her.

"What can I do in this matter, Mrs. Allen?" began the marshal.

"Your son is a—"

"Never mind what he is—you can save him. He's trapped, caged, cooped. But he's my boy an' I want ye to let him go. Take his stills at his whisky, take everything—but let him go! I give ye a word—it's good—Bethsheby Allen never broke it, yet that in less than three day's we'll be done."

"My dear madam, what you ask is impossible. I'll try not to hurt your son, but capture him I must and shall."

"But if he should capture you, what then?"

At these words the green glasses fell, the hood was thrown back, the bent form became straight as a lance, and before the eyes of the dazed officer Ruloff Allen himself stood, a look of dead hatred on his face, a heavy blow to his outstretched hand.

Silence reigned a moment as the young man gazed into the deadly eye of the old man.

"I came here to give you the last chance, and me the same?" hissed the moonshiner.

"The chance is lost to both of us. I go back to the mountains and outlawry—you retire from active service. Can you pray? If so, do it now. In three minutes I shall kill him."

"Slowly Nutting's eyes ran about the room. Escape was impossible—he help would not come. A single cry, and then the hood was off, and the heavy cartridge belonging to his own pistols which lay on the table near him.

"Dey mought miss, massa. You deon't deall cares for his own, an' his bullet is made by his help, at night, in de graveyard, an' can't miss."

"I would speak with you alone," he whispered. "Ise made 'em."

"And did they do their work?" said Nutting, laughing lightly.

"Dey did, massa."

The morning following, as Nutting entered his office, his aged servant bowed low before him, extending his brown and wrinkled hand, and said, in an awe-stricken voice:

"Foun' dis on floor, massa. Suppose you ain't bad, ting, mass, bad—ef ye 'low old nigger to say so?"

The Marshal leaned forward in surprise. Lying in the outstretched palm of the black was a silver pistol bullet.

"Whr uncle," said he, taking it, "that is not mine."

"Not your'n massa! Tant de Lord! Ise pleased, I is, mass. Foun' it yester, dough. Dat ar's a seweise bullet, mass," he continued, lowering his voice to a whisper, while his eyes rolled like ships in the midst of white and seething billows. "I know 'em! My ole massa he had one cast, an' carried it many years. Dey neber kill no one but de fellers deys made for. Massa John, dough, he didn't get a chance for to use 'em," and the old man chuckled.

"A suicide bullet," said Nutting, with a smile, as he examined the bullet.

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