

ROBBERS OUTWITTED.

BY MYRON B. GIBSON.

The war had made able-bodied men so scarce that in the fall of 1862 the freighting and purchasing of supplies for a small settlement on the Minnesota river devolved upon four young fellows from fifteen to seventeen years of age. They had made several trips with loads of wheat to the nearest town on the Mississippi, and laid in a winter's supply of provisions for the whole settlement, and on this, their last trip, were to sell their wheat for cash and bring back loads of freight for an old Frenchman who kept a trading post near the settlement.

Al Talman, the oldest of the boys, who was entrusted with the buying and selling, sold the wheat for a high price, and, counting the gold he received for it, dropped it into a buckskin purse and thrust it deep in his pocket, taking little notice of the crowd about the warehouse office as he did so.

While the boys were loading the trader's goods into their wagons, a well-dressed stranger sauntered up, and after cracking a joke or two, carelessly inquired where they were freighting.

"Out to the Le Sueur settlement," replied Al.

"Is that so?" exclaimed the stranger. "Why, that's the very place I want to reach! I've an uncle out that way somewhere," he continued, as he glanced at the name on the boxes and barrels. "Let's a trader by the name of Verdier. Do you know him?"

"I guess I do," replied Al. "Why, these are his goods we are loading with. See his name here on this box?"

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed the fellow, stepping up to examine the name as if he had not read it before. "Antoine Verdier! That's the name sure enough. And say, my young friend, can you carry me out there with you?"

"Of course I can," answered Al, glad to be of service to a prospective neighbor. "I suppose you'll take up land and go on farming like the rest of us?"

"That's just what I want to do," replied the man. "Is there any good government land near my uncle's place?"

"Oh, yes, plenty of it," said Al, "and the folks will all be glad to have another neighbor."

"I'm glad to hear that," said the stranger. "I came up on the boat just the other day, and was afraid I'd be too late to get any good land. I'll go up to the hotel now and get my things ready—that is, unless you'd like my help about loading."

"Never mind that," said Al. "You go and get ready, and we'll soon have these things aboard."

"Say, Al," spoke up Frank Gibbs, as soon as the man was out of hearing. "I believe that fellow is lying. If I'm not mistaken, I've seen him hanging around nearly every time we've been here."

"I wouldn't wonder if Frank was right, Al," added August Shaefer. "I think myself I've seen his face before."

"Oh, pshaw," said Al, who did not relish this imputed want of sagacity on his part. "It's some other fellow that you've seen. What's the difference, anyhow? I guess four of us needn't be afraid of a fellow of his size."

"Yes, but we ought not to take any chances," persisted Frank. "All that money and these goods are enough to tempt robbers if they knew we had them aboard, and you know the folks warned us not to take up with strangers."

"That's so, they did," admitted Al. "But I don't see how we're going to get out of it now."

"Just in time, ain't it?" said the man, stepping briskly up with his bundle, as the boys were ready to start, and climbing into the seat side of Al. "I thought I'd get back in time to eat dinner with you, so I brought along some sandwiches."

"Time enough yet," said Al. "We're loaded heavier than usual, and thought we'd cut as we rode along, to save time."

"A very good plan," assented the stranger, who was soon sampling Al's doughnuts, while the latter returned the compliment by helping himself to the stranger's sandwiches.

The goods of the trader consisted of the dry goods, groceries, medicines, ammunition, etc., commonly kept in backwoods stores, not omitting the baleful "fire water" that rendered barter with the Indians so profitable to unscrupulous traders.

"What's that uncle's got in there?" asked the stranger, pointing to a box, the lid of which had become loosened.

"Some kind of liquor, I guess," replied Al. "I see it's full of bottles."

"Well, if that's the case, we must have something to wash down this lunch," exclaimed the stranger, as he leaned over, tore off the lid and began handling over the bottles.

"Hold on!" cried Al. "These things don't belong to me, and I'd rather you'd let them alone!"

"Oh, never fear!" laughed the man, as he continued rummaging among the bottles. "I'll make it all right with uncle. Why, he wouldn't like it at all if I didn't help myself to anything of his."

The box contained all sorts of drugs and medicines, but at last the fellow found what he wanted and held up a large bottle labeled "brandy."

"Here we have it!" he shouted, and, after Al and the other boys had declined to drink, the fellow took a long pull at the bottle and set it back in the box. He did not forget where he put it, however, but paid his respects to it quite often during the afternoon.

Al carried a shotgun in his wagon, and when they stopped to make camp at the upper end of Smoky Hollow that night, the stranger, with Al's permission, shouldered the gun and started up the bluff to kill some partridges, while the boys fixed camp and cooked supper. The boys waited some time after supper was done, and then, as it was getting quite dark, they spat out the fire and began eating, expecting every moment to see the stranger walk into the camp. But

no stranger came, and the boys began to grow uneasy. Thinking he had perhaps lost his way, they built a huge fire and shouted loudly, but their own voices, echoing from the hillsides, alone answered.

The younger boys became frightened as they remembered their first suspicions, but Al, although a great dread had sprung up in his own bosom, laughed to scorn the fears of his companions, and set about stretching a big canvas over his wagon as usual, weighting it down on all sides with rocks, and forming a snug tent for their beds, which they spread on the ground between the wheels of the vehicle.

Reassured by his confident manner, the tired boys were soon sleeping soundly, when Al slipped quietly out of bed and paced silently up and down the road. Not a sound could be heard save the clamping of the horses at their feed boxes; and after untying a sack of horse feed and shoving the money down among the oats as far as he could reach, he tied up the sack again and crept back to bed, but not to sleep. Several farmers had been robbed in the vicinity of Smoky Hollow that autumn, and the more Al thought of it the more he became convinced that his passenger was a spy acting for the band that committed these crimes. He lay awake for hours. No sound but the hootings of owls broke the stillness, and he was just falling into a doze when the rush and clatter of a troop of hard-riding horsemen came to his ears.

"Boys! boys!" he whispered, as he shook his sleepy companions. "Wake up quick! Somebody is coming, and I'm afraid it's robbers. Now, mind what I tell you," he continued, as the sleepy lads sat up and stared at him by the light of the lantern. "That scamp was spying, sure enough. Hear them coming? But don't you get scared. I've hidden the money, and if we keep our wits about us we can stand them off in some way."

At that moment a wild yell, accompanied by several pistol shots, rang through the woods, and half a dozen riders dashed into the camp and surrounded the wagon tent just as the boys came stumbling out.

"Throw up your hands!" ordered the leader, as he and one of his men, easily recognized as Al's passenger, covered them with their pistols while the other four dismounted and began searching the other boys for money.

"Look here now, my young friends!" shouted the leader, when the men reported the result of their search, "our time is precious, and we ain't the kind of men to be fooled with, so the sooner you hand over that gold the better it will be for you!"

"What gold are you talking about? We haven't a dollar in our pockets, not one of us," boldly answered Al, who did not know the spy had seen him receive the money.

"That may be," replied the robber, "but if you haven't got it in your pockets it's hid about your wagons somewhere. There's no use of your trying to bluff me. My man here saw you get the money and watched to see that you did not spend it, so just fork it over, and be lively about it; do you hear?"

Al heard all too plainly. "If that sneaking blackguard knows where there's any gold, let him find it!" he answered, hotly.

"I'll do that in a hurry, cap," replied the man, who was about to throw himself off his horse when the leader checked him.

"Keep to your horse, Bill!" he ordered. "You're sure they had the money when they left the landing?"

"As sure as I sit on this horse," answered the spy. "That feller there, the tall one, had it in his pocket in a buckskin bag."

"Do you hear that, youngster?" said the chief, turning upon Al. "Now we're here after that gold, and what's more, we're going to have it. Will you hand it over or must I make you do it?"

Al hesitated. He knew he had desperate men to deal with, but was determined not to yield until obliged to.

"Look here," thundered the ruffian leader, exasperated by the lad's stubbornness, "I've fooled away all the time I'm going to with you, young fellow. Do you see that horse there?" pointing his pistol at one of the teams.

"Well, I'll give you just one minute to hand over that gold, or down goes that horse; and if that don't convince you, I'll down the next, and the next, and every hoof you've got. And if that don't fetch the money," he added, with a fierce oath, "I'll take a shot at you!"

Al saw the fellow meant what he said, and, as further resistance would have been foolishness, he untied the sack of oats and handed the money to the robber, who, after counting it, put the purse in his pocket.

"All right, boys!" he called out. "And now, my young friends, when we've troubled you for a look at some of those goods, we will bid you good night and be off. You see, our outdoor occupation demands warm clothing and plenty of powder and lead, and if you have such things aboard, you will save much damage to the rest of your loads by showing us where we can find what we want."

"You might as well do it, Al," whispered Frank. "They're bound to have it, anyway, and will only tear things to pieces if you leave them to hunt for it."

"All right," said Al. "I'll show you." Boxes and barrels were quickly opened, and each robber soon had a bundle of clothing, blankets, ammunition, etc., strapped on behind his saddle.

All this time Al had been trying to conjure up some plan to outwit the thieves and save the money and property in his charge. He felt that his own carelessness had brought this disaster upon them, and would gladly have embraced any opportunity, no matter how hazardous, to retrieve that reputation for shrewdness and sagacity that had won for him this position of trust and responsibility, to which all the other young men in the settlement had aspired. But the robbers were well armed, and far too cautious to allow

their victims any visible chance to turn the tables upon them. When they had secured as much plunder as they thought safe to burden their horses with and swung themselves into their saddles, Al's wrath and despair knew no bounds. He stood before the tent-covered wagon, with the lantern in his hand, watching the robbers as they mounted, when the spy suddenly called out to the leader:

"Oh, say, cap! I almost forgot about it, but they've got some good spirits in that tent wagon, and we must have a drop before we go."

"Is that so, Bill?" responded the leader.

"Needn't take my word for it, cap," replied the spy. "Here, young fellow," he ordered, turning to Al, "go and bring out that bottle of brandy, you know it all right with uncle, you know." And while Al went into the tent with the lantern the man, with great glee, told his mates how he secured a ride with the boys by making them believe the trader was his uncle.

No sooner did the fellow mention it than Al started for the brandy, his first thought being that perhaps if he could find enough liquor the robbers would make themselves hopelessly drunk as soon as they reached their own camp; but while clambering into the wagon a daring idea flashed into his mind.

Reaching the box containing the spirits, medicines, etc., he searched among the bottles, while the highwaymen were laughing uproariously at the narrative of the spy. Bottle after bottle he snatched up and held to the light of the lantern.

"Come! Come! Don't be all night in there!" shouted one of the robbers. "Just then! Al found what he wanted—a small vial labeled 'Laudanum.'"

"Wait till I find it, won't you?" he shouted back, and, quickly emptying the contents of the vial into the brandy bottle, he replaced the cork, gave the bottle a good shake and came out with it in his hand. "Here it is," he said, in as quiet a manner as he could command, as he handed it to the spy.

The woods rang with laughter as the bottle went from mouth to mouth, and each robber drank to the health of Bill's uncle. All were in too good humor over the success of the expedition and Bill's joke to notice the agitation which Al found impossible to conceal. He trembled lest Bill's potations during the afternoon had drained the bottle so low that it would be empty before it reached the leader, who was the last to drink.

There was enough to go round, however, and when the robber chief had swallowed the last drop he dashed the bottle against a tree.

"Your uncle keeps pretty good liquor, Bill," he laughed, "only I don't just like the flavor. Say, young fellow, bring us out a few bottles to take along with us, and we'll be off."

"All right!" said Al, now anxious to detain them. "There's plenty of it, and it will be all the better for the Indians if you drink it instead of me."

Going back into the tent he opened a case of whisky, and, after poking about as long as he deemed safe, with the robbers shouting to him to hurry up and not keep them waiting, he emerged with half a dozen bottles in his arms.

"Bully boy!" shouted the chief, delighted at the prospect of plenty of liquor for some time to come. "You know how to treat gentlemen, after all, if you were a little crabbed at first. And now," he went on, as he and his men stowed the bottles away in their bundles, "since you're so clever I'll give you a bit of advice. The next time you come home from market with a bag of gold in your pocket, beware of strangers, especially chaps like my man Bill here, who want to ride out in the country to their uncles'."

At this they all roared with laughter, and, putting spurs to their horses, dashed out of sight in the darkness.

Al gave a shout of delight when once the robbers were out of hearing, and lest he lose track of them in the darkness and give them time to recover from the effects of the laudanum, he hastily explained to the other boys what he had done, and mounting four of the best horses, they rode swiftly in the direction the robbers had taken. Scarcely a mile away, the prostrate form of one of the band was found stretched across the road, and a little farther on their horses grazed in a group by the wayside, while the highwaymen, wrapped in deathlike sleep, lay curled up under the trees.

The boys bound the sleepers' hands and feet, then, returning to camp, they unloaded one of the wagons and, hitching a team to it, came back along the road and picked up the unconscious robbers. It was hard work getting some of the heavy fellows into the wagon, but Al was afraid the laudanum might prove fatal; and leaving Truman and August to look after the camp, he and Frank drove with a speed back to the landing. They stopped several times at watering-places and dashed cold water over the faces of their prisoners, and when, at break of day, they arrived at the landing, all had gained consciousness.

Their friends at the settlement were much alarmed when the boys failed to return at the usual time, but when they arrived a day later and related the cause of their delay and his happy ending, all the people gathered together and a great supper was served in honor of the plucky lads. The stolen gold and the goods of the trader, which the authorities retained as evidence against the robbers, were eventually returned to their owners.—N. Y. Ledger.

—Giving Him Hope.—The pretty girl was lavishing a wealth of affection on her mastiff and the very soft young man was watching her. "I wish I were a dog," he said languidly. "Don't worry," she replied, "you'll grow."—Detroit Free Press.

—The trouble with culture is that it has to stop at the surface.—Ram's Horn.

Steering Clear of Sin. Milkman—Johnny, did you put water in the milk this morning? New Assistant—Yes, sir. "Don't you know that is wicked, Johnny?" "But you told me to mix water with the milk."

"Yes, but I told you to put the water in first and pour the milk into it. Then, you see, we can tell the people we never put water in our milk."—Texas Siftings.

A Fair Partnership. Stranger—Boy, there's a dime museum somewhere around here, I understand. Do you know where it is? Boy—Yessir. I wish I had a dime ter get in.

Stranger—Well, you conduct me to the place, and I'll give you the dime. Boy—All right. That's a fair partnership. You furnish th' capital, an' I furnish th' brains.—N. Y. Weekly.

Has It Come to This? We have boiled the hydrant water. We have sterilized the milk. We have strained the prowling microbe through the finest kind of silk. We have bought and we have torrowed. Every patent health device: And at last the doctor tells us That we've got to boil the tea.

—Chicago Record.

TOO MUCH COMPETITION.

Tillo—What are the wild waver saying? Willa—Can't hear them. The bathing suits are too loud.—St. Louis Republic.

Disappointment. "He comes not." The forsaken bride wept amid the gorgeousness of the wedding feast. "He comes not," she wailed. They tried to tell her that he was unworthy, but she heard them not. "My dreams of wedded bliss—" Her voice rose to a shriek. "—are shattered. I will have to keep right on wearing shoes two sizes too small for me."—Detroit Tribune.

An Active Woman. Husband (breathlessly)—I must rush off on very short notice, for an extended trip, and I can take you along if you can get ready. Do you think you can do it in two hours and a quarter? Wife—Easily. I can pack the trunk in five minutes, and that will leave me two hours and ten minutes to dress.—N. Y. Weekly.

No Danger. Mrs. Smythe—There's that Johnnie, now, without a single thing to do; the devil will surely find work for his idle hands! Smythe—Don't you worry! Even the devil couldn't get a hustle on that boy.—Truth.

She Was Particular. "Let us go to the beach and bathe," said Mrs. Wiffells to Mrs. Taddells. "Thank you, but I prefer not. I think it is unsanitary under present conditions. When individual oceans are provided for bathers I will go in."—Judge.

No Comparison. Cleverton—Do you regard an engagement as serious a marriage? Dashaway—More so, old man. The most serious thing I ever did was to become engaged to three girls at the same time.—Brooklyn Life.

How the Trouble Began. "I wouldn't wear bloomers for anything," said the thin girl. "Neither would I—if I were you," replied the plump girl. And that's why they do not speak now.—Chicago Post.

A Slight Alteration. Ada—Do you think the word "obey" should be omitted from the marriage service? Ida—Omitted? Certainly not. It should merely be transferred to the other party to the contract.—Truth.

When Adam Married. Two children are "making up" conundrums at a party. One asks: "At what time was Adam married?" "Give it up." "Oh, on his wedding Eve."—Philadelphia Lutheran.

Ménage au Pedestrians. "Beverly ought not to be allowed to ride a wheel." "Why not?" "He's so thin you can't see him when he's coming toward you."—Chicago Record.

The Street Car Ads. Time was, when truths they wished all men to heed. Verse written so that "who runs may read." But now we very sensibly decide To put them where one who reads may ride.

—L. A. W. Bulletin.

Too Soon. "Does the widow refuse to be comforted?" "Oh, I fancy she hasn't had any chance yet!"—Puck.

Not a Success. Wife—What do you think of Bridget's cooking? Husband—I think if she tried to boil water she'd burn it.—Truth.

Quite Naturally. Mills—What parts do you take in this new marine drama? Bills—Oh, divines roles.—N. Y. World.

LITTLE CULLINGS. A NEW restaurant was opened at El-Hawood, Kan., a few days ago by Mrs. Feeder.

THE color of snuff depends on the extent to which fermentation has been allowed to go.

CAMELS are probably the only animals that cannot swim. Immediately after they enter the water they turn on their backs and are drowned.

PHILADELPHIA vegetarians are going to form a colony in the city limits, where, they can, by cooperation, be enabled to live according to their dietetic ideas.

A PHILADELPHIAN who regularly visits a barber shop on Ninth street has a bizarre horror in the shape of a mustache which measures twenty-two inches from tip to tip.

SEVERAL Georgia watermelons weighing more than fifty pounds have been brought to market this season, but it is likely the record will be carried by one weighing a trifle over seventy-five pounds, cut recently on a Thomaston farm.

IT is said that cut flowers will keep very fresh if a small pinch of nitrate of potash or common saltpetre is put in the water in which they stand. The ends of the stems should be cut off a little every day to keep open the absorbing pores.

ANATOMISTS to separate the bones of a skull frequently fill it with small beans and place the whole in a basin of water. The beans swell and slowly split the skull. The force which beans are capable of exerting under these conditions is equal to the average pressure in the boiler of a steam engine.

Mrs. ZOE MARCOE, aged seventy years, of Fond du Lac, Wis., has just brought suit for breach of promise of marriage against Francis P. Hant, aged eighty-one years, or Martinette. Mr. Pellant avers he is and always has been ready to marry the lady, but there seems to be some difficulty interposed by his children.

FRENCH GOSSIP. STEAMERS of 1,000 tons can now go up the Seine to Paris with their own steam.

An international conference on the protection of wild birds useful to agriculture was held in Paris in the last days of June.

LORD DUFFERIN has been obliged to discharge all the French servants at the British embassy in Paris, as they have repeatedly been discovered tampering with dispatch boxes.

CABLES will connect the Eiffel tower with turrets of the Trocadero palace, during the 1900 exhibition, and upon them light passenger trains will be run by gravitation.

FRANCE proposes to put an end to racing by ocean greyhounds by enforcing the regulations of 1888, limiting the speed at sea. A new bill drawn up by the marine ministry, imposes heavy penalties for excessive speed.

IN France the Budget committee has decided to remove the taxes on wines, beer, cider, and other "hygienic drinks," and to increase the duty on spirits with the exception of alcohol used in the arts. The manufacture of alcohol will be a state monopoly.

BEER farming has become a nuisance to the sugar refiners at Gennevilliers, near Paris. The bees swarm in the refineries and alight on the workmen. Every live, the manufacturers assert, carries off five dollars' worth of sugar a year; that they can endure, but not the incessant buzzing and the irritation of the workmen.

THE OPERATIC STAGE. HERR GUBA, the baritone, the original Wotan in "Der Ring des Nibelungen," has been discharged from the Munich Hoftheater, as his voice is no longer fresh enough. He will confine himself to concerts.

"LI MASO," a five-act comedy in Provençal, by Alphonse Tavan, one of the founders of the Felibrige, the society for the renewal of Provençal poetry, has been given with great success at Vaudeville.

SAINT SAENS has composed the last two acts for a grand opera, Fregedeone, of which his friend Ernest Geraud had written the first two at the time of his death. It will be given soon at the Grand opera.

AT the Theatre Libre next season operatic pieces will be given as well as plays. A curious performance of King Lear is also promised with a novel arrangement of scenery that will make possible the sudden transformations necessary to present the scenes in their original sequence.

"TANHAUSER" was given nine times out of the fourteen performances of grand opera in Paris during the month of May, the receipts averaging 22,000 francs a night, 5,600 francs more than the average of the other operas, which were "Faust," "Sigurd" and "Samson and Delilah."

THE WORLD'S WONDERS. The tunnel at Schemnitz, Hungary, is the longest in the world. It has a length of 10.37 miles, costing over \$3,000,000 to construct. Completed in the year 1888, it was commenced in the eighteenth century.

The smallest city in the world is the miniature place known as Stewart City, Alaska, U. S., its three inhabitants being, respectively, mayor, chairman of the board of aldermen and president of the common council.

The most remarkable whirlpool is the maelfrost of the northwest coast of Norway and southwest of Moskopsod, the most southerly of the Lofoden isles. It was once supposed to be unfathomable, but the depth has been shown not to exceed twenty fathoms.

The longest bridge in the world is the Lion bridge, near Saugang, China. It extends 54 miles over an arm of the Yellow sea and it is supported by 300 huge stone arches. The roadway is 70 feet above the water and is inclosed in an iron network. A marble lion 21 feet long rests on the crown of every pillar.

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