

## THE SECRET OF THE CAVE.

AT THE time my story begins, the hunters and the Indians, making the vicinity of Wind River Mountains their home, had a strange superstition, founded on a tradition that had been handed down from father to son for many preceding generations. It ran very nearly as follows: That amid the loftiest peaks of the snow-covered range referred to, was situated a cavern, which—as the story is—was supposed to be inhabited by a supernatural being, who possessed the power of taking away the life of any adventurer, who was sufficiently audacious to intrude on her, or his, or its domain—for it was not clearly established what form it was usual for them to assume, for the reason that no one as yet, had ever gazed into the cavern's mysterious depths; at least, if any had, they never came back to reveal its secret. No one, however, of the present generation had been able to record the death of any person caused by visiting this spot. Yet it was considered a fact, impossible of denial, that, many long years before, persons had been found lying murdered in its vicinity, but having no visible wound. These circumstances combined to make it a place talked of by few, visited by none, and hardy would that person be who dared to dispute its existence, for the ridicule and taunts of the sturdy mountaineers would either compel him to visit the spot, or stand before his associates a confused braggart and coward. Thus weeks rolled on, when, one bright beautiful day, soon after the genial sun of spring had released all nature from the icy grasp of winter, and brought the mountain streams, leaping joyfully in their freedom, from the snow-capped summits of the rocky range to the little community, situated at its base, was thrown into a state of gossiping excitement by the advent of a stranger among them. The new-comer was a man of slight stature, but with a frame that showed him to be athletic, as his flashing grey eyes denoted him to be fearless. On the instant of his arrival he was, of course, the centre of attraction, the observed of all observers, and was soon ensconced in the best house of the village, with a general invitation from the hospitable mountaineers to stay as long as he could make himself comfortable and happy. After a stay of about two weeks, he had made up his mind to proceed on his journey; and, in order to beguile the hour till starting, the guide, who had volunteered to accompany him related some of the many legends of his wild, rocky home, and, among others, the one we have referred to. As the mountaineer concluded, Ed. Webber—for that was the listener's name—exclaimed:

"Impossible! the people here do not believe this? Surely they seem too sensible."

"Don't they, though?" interrupted the guide, called by his comrades, Phil Hibbs. "Stranger, I don't wish you no bad luck, but I wish you'd go up thar, p'haps you might b'lieve an' ag'in you moughtn't, but this critter's got an idee that you mought."

"Well Phil," replied the other, "I expected, ere this, to have been many miles nearer Salt Lake City, but now you challenge me to visit this place, see it, I will, let the cost be what it may."

Having expressed this determination, he started for the settlement, for the purpose of carrying it out, all his companion's entreaties to the contrary notwithstanding. They soon again had the villagers gathered, and Webber told to them his purpose in assembling there. They used their utmost endeavors to prevent him, but all to no purpose and finally his taunts, and offers of reward even induced six of them to agree to accompany him.

Ed. now gave directions for them to procure a basket of provisions, a coil of stout rope, and two long iron shod poles similar to those used by the mountaineers of Europe; for it was his intention to start immediately, it being near noon. Having seen all the arrangements completed to his satisfaction, and the men well armed, according to the custom of the time, with rifle, bowie-knife and lariat he started toward the mountain, followed by the guides and their weeping friends and relatives. Arriving at the base of the mighty range, Ed. parted with the villagers who accompanied him thus far—and bidding those of his party to be of good cheer, they moved slowly up the mountain side, amid a general "God speed you" from those around. Onward and upward the adventurers toiled, the way every moment becoming more difficult and broken.—Ere the sun had reached the point distant an hour from the meridian, the small party might have been seen at the line which separates the verdure of summer from eternal snows. Here they paused, in order to regain their energies. In a few moments they were again on their feet, and moving forward under the guidance of Phil, he being the only one of the party who was informed as to

the exact location of the cavern. They now, instead of ascending, took a course parallel with the summit of the mountain, keeping along the "frozen edge." The track was now easy, compared with that they had just passed over, and some six miles slipped by before they had been noted. The party were now in high spirits, and they passed swiftly on, making the huge crags answer them in return, as they gaily chanted some hunting chorus, when an apparently unsurmountable difficulty presented itself, falling coldly upon their newly-formed hopes. They had reached the side of one of those numerous gorges, with which the North American mountains are so thickly strewed, through which many feet beneath them, a mountain stream, swollen by the melting snow, to thrice its usual size, surged wildly. This they saw no visible way of crossing, and surely it was not fordable, for huge trees, logs, and even rocks whirled by, hurled hither and thither by the impetuous stream, as though they were but straws.

As they gazed into its angry depths, and listened to the grand music it discoursed, as it went roaring by, all lost their courage, save the stranger and Phil his guide, and avowed their determination of instantly retracing their steps, and of proceeding without delay to their homes. Webber was now placed in a disagreeable position, left almost alone, and with a deep and rapid river flowing between him and the object of his search. Yet, seeing that Phil still remained true to him, and as he was—to use a common phrase—"as obstinate as a mule"; he resolved to proceed, if it was in his power. So having taken leave of their recreant associates, the two started up the bank of the river, for the purpose of finding a place more suitable for making the attempt of crossing. After reaching a place some distance above the starting, and seeing that night would speedily surround them, they made up their minds to encamp until the following day. They slept but little during the night, owing to the extreme cold and scarcity of wood at that high point. And the gray of dawn found them stirring. Raising to their feet, they partook of a slight repast, formed of several handfuls of parched corn, and hugh draughts of clear water, and, proceeding further up the stream, soon came to the place, which Phil pronounced passable. The gully, or ravine at this point, was of the width of thirty feet, and after several vain attempts, Phil succeeded in fastening his lariat to a crag on the opposite edge, and instantly seizing the cords in his hands, went across hand-over-hand, Ed. in the mean time having securely fastened his end, in a similar manner, as soon as Phil landed. Webber followed, and the two friends stood again together with nothing interposing between them and the cave. Leaving the rope still tied, so that they could return, they proceeded on their way, and a brisk walk quickly brought them to the entrance of the cave. They now adjusted their shoes, the soles of which were filled with long spikes, in order to prevent slipping; and preparing some torches from the branches of the mountain pine, they boldly entered. Surely it was not singular that such fearful stories were told about this place, for the hollow echoes of their own footsteps fell upon their ears, they sounded throughout the gloom like unto demonic laughter. But it did not terrify Webber, he kept steadily on, followed by Phil, who—to use his own expression—"was goin' to get out o' the place quicker 'n lightning, ef any o' the devils did show thar faces." As they passed along holding their torches high above their heads, in order to throw their light in advance of them, Phil was every moment startled by the new and grotesque figures which were presented to his view. The walls of this cavern were formed of solid rock, and in some places were coated with grayish substance, seemingly caused by the water which trickled from the splendid stalactites which formed the roof, while here and there rose from the bottom of the cave beautiful stalagmites, glittering with the light of the torches as of diamonds, and assuming all manner of fantastic shapes. The friends had proceeded thus for about ten minutes, when the passage branched off in two directions, one taking a course almost parallel with the one they were in, and the other leading to the right.

"I guess we'll keep straight ahead, Phil," exclaimed Webber, and "phil, phil phil!" shouted a voice from the inmost recesses of the cave.

"Thunder and lightning!" ejaculated Phil, scared so bad that he was almost incapable of action.

"Lightnin—light-nin!" replied the voice, the last intonation dying away to a whisper.

"I know'd it! I know'd I'd be gettin' into some sich scrape ef I'd cum along with you!" cried Phil; the cave meanwhile resounding as with the din of a hundred voices, all shouting—"Along with you!"

Phil was now ready to drop, so great was his consternation. But Webber, seizing him by the collar and shaking him violently, said: "Coward, what's the matter with you? It's nothing but the echo, and one called repeating, I suppose. Listen! now, and you will hear the last word I speak repeated three times!"

"Times, times, times!" came back from the voice.

"There!" exclaimed Ed, triumphantly; "did you hear that? Come pick up your torch and follow me!" So saying he led the way along the passage, when suddenly Phil cried out: "No it wasn't an echo. Look! look! It's the devil himself. Don't you see him?—See! see there!" He pointed to a small side-niche, and sure enough, there stood a figure that made even Webber start.—It was about twelve feet in height, arrayed in spotless white, and in the act of moving forward.

"It's coming!" exclaimed Phil.—"Let's run!"

As he said this, he turned to flee, the report of a pistol rang upon his ear, accompanied by a loud crash. He waited to hear no more, but bounded forward, like a terrified antelope, toward the mouth of the cave. The next moment he was seized and thrown upon his back by Webber, who producing a stout cord, proceeded to bind the terrified man, who seemed to think of nothing else but the horrors that surrounded him. He was soon so securely fastened that he could not move hand or foot.

"Now!" exclaimed Webber you cowardly devil, do you mean to go quietly, or must I keep your hands tied behind your back, and with a pistol at your ear, force you to do so? The figure has gone: you have nothing more to fear.

"You kin hold a pistol at my ear, an' fire too, ef yer a mind to—I ain't afeerd of a bullet, but ye can't get me to go any further in this ar hole to be swallowed alive!"—sullenly responded Phil.

"Well, then I'll carry you up as far as where the figure fell, and let you see that it's nothing but stone; then if you won't follow, I'll take both the torches, and leave you in the dark until I return!"

So saying, he raised the scared Phil, and bore him to the place where he found a large pile of substance similar to that covering the walls. Throwing his burden down upon the top of it, he said:

"There, fool, do you see what it is? Now, will you accept my proposition to stay here until I explore the remainder of this place?"

Receiving no answer, he picked up the torch, and prepared to leave, but he had not proceeded far however, when Phil cried out piteously: "Oh, captain please don't leave me here! I ain't afeerd to fight mortal man, but I can't fight the devil, nohow!"

"Well stay here then!" replied Webber as he again turned.

"Hold on a minute; I'll go. Shoot me ef I don't! Then ef we do meet the old fellow, he can take us both."

Upon hearing this, Webber returned, and quickly released Phil, who, on gaining his feet, gave himself a shake, saying: "I'm ready now. Show us the way!"

Webber now felt assured by Phil's manner that he would not desert him; so he walked quickly on, with Phil resolutely following. The way now began to descend, and soon became so steep that they kept their feet with difficulty. They proceeded thus about one hundred yards, when further progress was ended by their reaching a yawning chasm lying directly across the path.—On throwing into it a piece of rock, the hollow echo that came back told them of its great depth. They now fastened one of the torches to the rope and lowered it into the darkness. As it approached the bottom, Webber, to his extreme horror, discovered a heap of grinning skeletons. Turning to Phil, and pointing down, he exclaimed:

The is the spirit which protects this place. It is more than likely that those who have heretofore attempted to explore this place, have lost their footing here, been precipitated into that hole, and thus met a most horrible fate. But let's retrace our steps and explore the other passage, I have no desire to look further here!"

They accordingly went back to where the other passage branched off, and entered it, neither speaking. They had proceeded a short distance, when Phil cried out:

"Look here!" at the same time pointing to a small cavity, in which appeared a small door.

"Ah!" exclaimed Webber, "perhaps this solves the mystery!" And stepping up to it, with a vigorous kick he threw it from its rusty hinges far into the room. On entering, what was their surprise to see, leaning against the wall, a table with a drawer in it, underneath was an earthen jar, to all appearance of European manufacture, while on the

opposite side lay a pile of skins, enveloped in whose dusty folds was a human skeleton of so contracted an appearance that the hunters at once knew its owner died in the greatest agony.

In the meantime, Phil had been examining the table and now handed to Webber a roll of parchment, who on rubbing off the mould and dirt, seemingly the accumulation of years, found thereon inscribed—"Confession of Robert Donevan." The substance of it was, that the man had long years before been a pirate, and, on being driven from the seas, had taken refuge in this lonely cave his hand against every man's as every man's hand was against him. Here he had lived for a number of years, subsisting on roots and the few animals he could kill. His victims were chosen of those travelers who sought shelter in the cave, and while they were sleeping he would steal from his hidden chamber, and slay them by means of a small needle, inserted in the region of the heart; this would kill them instantly, yet leave no perceptible wound. Once dead, he would cast their bodies either into a pit or carry them outside on the mountain, as the whim took him. The murderer himself had evidently met that horrible death—starvation. Thus was the problem solved, and the two proceeded to the village, where Webber, "for and in consideration" that the villagers would furnish him a helpmate, agreed to spend the remainder of his days.

## SUNDAY READING.

## A TEMPERANCE STORY.

A GENTLEMAN, who for years has been more or less under the influence of liquor, and whose red nose and bloated figure stamped him as an inebriate, had gone home to his wife and children in his usual condition. He was not unkind in act or in words. It was his delight to play at games with his little ones, as he was able, and to entertain them with wonderful stories. On this occasion the family were all together in the sitting-room, and the usual games having been played, little Freddie, a lad about six years of age, had climbed upon his father's knee, and was asking him all sorts of boyish questions. He talked as a child will—of what he would do when he was a "big man," asked if he would be like papa then; and finally, after a long and serious look into his father's face, with every shade of childish curiosity in voice and glance, put to him this bewildering query:

"Papa, when I grow up to be a man, will my nose be red like yours, and my face all swelled?"

Ah! why should that swollen face grow redder than 'twas wont to be? Why should his arms so quickly draw that boy to his breast? And why should tears flow and voice tremble as he replied in words and tone that made mother's heart glad:

"No, Freddie! please God, you won't be like me when you get to be a man; and neither will your father, my boy, for from this hour he will lead a sober life."

"Be like him!" He had not thought of that before, and the bare possibility staggered him. All the love in his father's heart cried out against such a fate. That boy, his pride, going about with a bloated face and poisoned breath? No, no! he was not prepared for that! Never before had he seen his own looks so clearly; they were reflected in the boy's—the boy grown to manhood; and honor, affection and reason came to the rescue. The child had preached a sermon no orator could deliver, and innocence and ignorance had accomplished what learning and logic had aimed at in vain. Those words "WENT HOME."

## Wooden Swearing.

The Sunday school in Rockville was assembled for their monthly concert. The lesson was about swearing, and when the children had repeated their verses, the minister rose to talk to them.

"I hope, dear children," he said, "that you will never let your lips speak profane words. But now I want to tell you about a kind of swearing which I heard a good woman speak about not long ago. She called it wooden swearing. It's a kind of swearing that many people besides children are given to, when they are angry. Instead of giving vent to their feeling in oaths, they slam the doors, kick the chairs, stamp on the floor, throw the furniture about, and make all the noise they possibly can. 'Isn't this just the same as swearing?' said she. 'It's just the same kind of feeling, exactly, only they do not like to say those awful words; but they force the furniture to make the noise, and so I call it wooden swearing.' I hope, dear children, that you will not do any of this kind of swearing either."

It is better to let alone wooden swearing, and all other kinds of swearing.

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## ASSIGNEE'S NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given that John A. Nesbit, of Madison township, Perry county, Pa., executed a deed of voluntary assignment in trust for the benefit of creditors of all his estate real and personal and mixed, to the undersigned, on the 29th day of March, A. D. 1880.

All persons knowing themselves indebted to the said Assignor will make payment and those having accounts will present them for settlement to

ANDREW ADAR, Assignee.

March 29, 1880. Chas. H. Smiley, Att'y.