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A Grand Old Poem.

Who shall judge a man from manners?
Who shall know him by his dress?
Paupers may be fit for princes,
Princes fit for something less;
Crumpled shirt and dirty jacket
May beclothe the golden ore
Of the deepest thought and feeling—
Satin vests could do no more.

There are springs of crystal nectar
Ever welling out of stone;
There are purple buds and golden,
Hidden, crushed, and overgrown;
God, who counts by souls, not dresses,
Loves and prospers you and me,
While He values thrones the highest
But as pebbles in the sea.

Man, upraised above his fellows,
Oft forgets his fellows then;
Masters, rulers, lords, remember
That your meanest hind is a man:
Men by honor, men by feeling,
Men by thought, and men by fame,
Claiming equal rights to sunshine
In a man's ennobling name.

There are foam-embroidered oceans,
There are little weed-clad rills;
There are feeble inch-high saplings,
There are cedars on the hills;
God, who counts by souls, not stations,
Loves and prospers you and me,
For to him all famed distinctions
Are as pebbles in the sea.

Tolling hands alone are builders
Of a nation's wealth or fame;
Titled laziness is pensioned,
Fed and fattened on the same;
By the sweat of other's foreheads
Living only to rejoice,
While the poor man's outraged freedom
Vainly lifteth up its voice.

Truth and Justice are eternal,
Born with loveliness and light;
Secret wrongs shall never prosper
While there is a sunny right;
God, whose world-hard voice is singing
Boundless love to you and me,
Sinks oppression, with its titles,
As the pebbles in the sea.

A Midnight Struggle.

In the early autumn of the year of 1849, about half an hour of sunset, I drew rein in front of a large double log-house, on the very summit of the Blue Ridge mountains of Eastern Kentucky.

The place was evidently kept as a tavern, at least so a sign proclaimed, and here I determined to demand accommodation for myself and servant Bose, a dark-skinned body-guard. Bose and I had been playmates in child and boyhood, and I need hardly say that the faithful fellow was attached to me as I was to him, and on more than one occasion he had shown his devotion.

There had been a "shooting match" at the Mountain House that day, and, as I dismounted, I saw through the open window of the bar-room a noisy, drunken, and evidently a quarrelsome set of backwoodsmen, each of whom was swearing by all possible and impossible oaths that he was not only the best shot, but that he could out-fight, out-jump, out-wrestle, run faster, jump higher, dive deeper and come up dryer than any other man "on the mountains."

"I say, Mars Ralph," said Bose in a low tone as I handed him my bridle rein. "I don't like the looks of dem dar. S'pose we goes on to the next house; taint fur."

"Nonsense, Bose," I replied, "these fellows are only on a little spree over their shooting. We have nothing to do with them nor they with us. Take the horses round to the stables and see to them yourself. You know they've had a hard day of it."

And throwing my saddle-bags over my shoulders, I walked up the narrow path to the house.

I found, as I have intimated, the bar-room filled with a noisy, turbulent crowd, who one and all stared at me without speaking as I went up to the bar and inquired if I and my servant could have accommodation for the night.

Receiving an affirmative reply from the landlord, a little red-headed, cadaverous-looking man, I desired at once to be shown to my room, whither I went, but not until I had been compelled to decline a score of requests to "take a drink," much to the disgust of the stalwart bacchanals.

The room to which I was shown was at the far end of along two story structure, evidently but recently added on to the main building, which it intersected at right angles. A gallery extended along the front, by means of which the rooms were reached.

I found my apartment to be large and comparatively well furnished, there being, besides the bed, a comfortable cot, half a dozen "splint bottomed" chairs, a heavy clothes press, and a bureau with glass.

There were two windows, one along side the door, and the other in the opposite end of the room.

The first mentioned door was heavily barred with stout oak strips, a protection, I presumed, against intrusion from the porch, while across the latter door was drawn a heavy woolen curtain.

In the course of a half an hour Bose entered and announced that the horses had been properly attended to, and a few minutes later a bright-faced mulatto girl summoned us to supper.

Supper over, I returned to my room, first requesting to be roused for an early breakfast, as I desired to be on the road by sunrise.

Thoroughly wearied with my day's ride, I at once began preparations for retiring, and had drawn off one boot, when Bose came in rather hastily, looking furtively over his shoulder, and then cautiously closing and locking the door.

"Mars Ralph, dars gwine to be trouble in dis house afore morning," he said.

And I saw in a moment that something had occurred to upset the faithful fellow's equilibrium.

"Why, Bose, what is it? What do you mean?" I asked, barely restraining a smile.

"I tole you, Mars Ralph, we'd better trabbel furder," was the rather mysterious reply. "You see dat gal dere tole me dere would be a muss if we stayed in this old house all night."

By close questioning I elicited the fact that the girl had really warned him that four men whom I had noticed together were a desperate set of villains, and probably had designs upon our property, if not our lives.

The girl had seen two of them at the stable while I was at supper, and by cautiously creeping into a stall, next the one in which they stood, had heard enough to convince her that they meant mischief. Subsequently to this she also saw the landlord in close confab with the entire party, and from his actions judged that he was urging the men to their nefarious work.

"I tell you, Mars Ralph, dem people ain't arter no good—now you heard me," persisted Bose.

I had begun to think so myself; but what was to be done? The situation was full of embarrassment, and I felt that nothing could be done save to wait and watch, and, by being on the alert, defeat their plans by a determined resistance.

I found that from the barred window, in which there was a broken pane of glass, a good view of the stables could be had.

Then for the other window.

I crossed the room, drew aside the heavy curtain, and raising the sash, looked out.

A single glance was sufficient to cause me a thrill of surprise, and I gave a low exclamation that instantly brought Bose to my side.

Far below I could see the faint glimmer of water, the low murmur of which came indistinctly up from the depths, while on a level with that should have been the ground, I dimly saw the waving tree-tops, as they gently swayed before the fresh night breeze, and knew that the window overlooked a chasm, the soundings of which I could only guess at.

In other words, the house, or that portion of it, was built upon the very verge of the cliff, and solid rock forming a foundation more lasting than any that could be made by the hands of man.

I leaned far out and saw that there was not an inch of space left between the heavy log on which the structure rested and the edge of the structure; and then I turned away with full conviction that if escape must be made, it certainly would not be made in that direction. There was nothing especially strange in this; there are many houses so constructed—I had seen one or two myself—and yet when I drew back into the room and saw the look in Bose's face, I felt that danger quick and deadly was hovering in the air.

"Without speaking I went to my saddle-bags and got out my pistols—a superb pair of long double rifles, that I knew to be accurate anywhere under half a hundred yards.

"Dar! dem's what I like to see!" exclaimed Bose as he dived down into his bag and fished out an old horse pistol that had belonged to my grandfather, and which I knew was loaded to the muzzle with No. 1 buckshot. It was a terrible weapon at close quarters.

The stables in which our horses were feeding could be watched, and by events transpiring in that locality we would shape our actions. I found the door could be locked from the inside, and in addition to this, I improvised a bar by means of a chair-leg wrenched off and thrust through a heavy iron staple that had been driven in the wall. Its fellow on the opposite side was missing.

We then lifted the clothe press before the window, leaving just room enough on one side to clearly see, and, if necessary, fire through; dragged the bureau against the door with as little noise as possible, and felt that everything that was possible had been done.

A death-like stillness reigned over the place, broken only once by the voice of the colored girl singing as she crossed the stable yard.

I had fallen into a half doze, seated in a chair near the window facing the stables, where Bose was on the watch, when suddenly I felt a slight touch upon my arm, and the voice of the faithful sentinel in my ear.

"Wake up, Mars Ralph; dey's foolin 'bout de stable

doo' arter de horses, shuah," brought me wide awake to my feet.

Cautiously peeping out, I saw at a glance that Bose was right in his conjecture—there were two of them—one standing out in the clear moonlight, evidently watching my window, while the other—and I fancied it was the landlord—was in the shadow near the door which at that moment slowly sprung open.

As the man disappeared within the building, a low, keen whistle cut the air, and at the same instant I heard the knob of my door cautiously tried.

A low hiss from Bose brought me to his side, from the door where I had been listening.

"Dey's got de horses out in de yard," he whispered, as he drew aside to let me look out through the broken pane. "Take the door," I said "and fire through if they attack. I am going to shoot that fellow holding the horses."

"Lordy, Mars Ralph, it's de tavern-keeper. He ain't no count. Drop the big man!" was the sensible advice which I determined to adopt.

Noiselessly drawing aside the curtain, I rested the muzzle of my pistol on the sash where the light had been broken away; and drew a bead upon the tallest of the two men who stood, holding the three horses out in the bright moonlight.

The sharp crack of the weapon was instantly followed by a yell of pain, and I saw the ruffian reel backward and measure his length upon the earth, affid then from the main building there rang out:

"Murder! Murder! Oh, help!

Like lightning it flashed across my mind. There were the horses out in the open lot! There was, then, another traveler besides ourselves.

A heavy blow descended upon the door, and a voice rsared:

"Quick! Burst the infernal thing open, and let me get at him. The scoundrel has killed Dave!"

"Let them have it, Bose," I whispered, rapidly reloading my pistol. "The second panel."

With a steady hand the plucky fellow leveled the huge weapon and pulled the trigger.

A deafening report followed, and again a shrill cry of mortal anguish told them the shot had been wasted.

"Sabe us! how it do kick!" exclaimed Bose under his breath.

The blow had fallen like an unexpected thunderbolt upon the bandits, and a moment later we heard their retreating footsteps down the corridor.

"Dar'll be more of 'em heah 'fore long, Mars Ralph," said Bose with an ominous shake of the head. "I 'spects dese b'longs to a band, and if dey comes an' we still heah, we gone coons for shuar."

This view of the case was new to me; but I felt the force of it. I knew that such bands did exist in these mountains.

Stunnen for a moment, I turned round and stared hopelessly at Bose; but he, brave fellow that he was, never lost his head for a moment.

"Bound to leab here, Mars Ralph," he said, quite confidently. "An' dar ain't no way gwine 'cept tro dat window;" and he pointed to the one overlooking the cliff.

I merely shook my head, and turned to watch again, hoping to get a shot at the rascal on guard.

Bose, left to his own devices, at once went to work. I heard him fussing around the bed for some time, but never looked to see what he was after until he spoke.

"Now den for de rope," I heard him say, and in an instant I caught his meaning.

He had stripped the bed of its covering, dragged off the heavy tick and the stout hempen rope with which it was "corded."

In five minutes he had krawn the rope through its many turnings, and then, gathering the coil in his hands, he drew up the sash and prepared to take soundings.

It failed to touch the bottom; but, no wise disheartened, he seized the cotton coverlet and spliced on. This succeeded and the cord was drawn up preparatory to knotting it in place of cross-pieces.

In the meanwhile the silence without had been broken once. A shrill, keen whistle, such as we had heard before, was given by the man on the watch, and replied to by some one seemingly a little way off. Then I heard footsteps—soft, cat-like ones—on the veranda outside, showing that the robbers were on the alert at all points.

At length Bose announced the "ladder" ready. It was again lowered from the window, and the end was held and made fast to the bed we had dragged over for the purpose.

"Now, den, Mas'r Ralph, I go down fust and see if 'um strong enough to bar us."

And he was half way out of the window before I could speak.

"No, Bose; you shall not," I answered, firmly, drawing him back into the room. "You must—"

The words were lost in the din of a furious and totally unexpected attack upon the door.

The dull heavy strokes of the axe were intermingled with the sharp, quick clatter of the hatchets as they cut away at the barrier, and once in a while I could hear deep oaths, as though they had been rendered doubly savage by our resistance.

"Here, Bose, your pistol! Quick!" I whispered, and the heavy charge went crashing through, followed by shrieks and curses of pain and rage.

"Now, then, out with you! I will hold the place," I