

The PASSING of BLACK EAGLE

By O. HENRY

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OR some months of a certain year a grim bandit infested the Texas border along the Rio Grande. Peculiarly striking to the optic nerve was this notorious marauder. His personality secured him the title of "Black Eagle, the Terror of the Border." Many fearsome tales are of record concerning the doings of him and his followers. Suddenly, in the space of a single minute, Black Eagle vanished from earth. He was never heard of again. His own band never even guessed the mystery of his disappearance. The border ranches and settlements feared he would come again to ride and ravage the mesquite flats. He never will. It is to be disclosed the fate of Black Eagle that this narrative is published.

The initial movement of the story is furnished by the foot of a bartender in St. Louis. His discerning eye fell upon the form of Chickie Ruggles as he pecked with avidity at the free lunch. Chickie was a "hobo." He had a long nose like the bill of a fowl, an inordinate appetite for poultry, and a habit of gratifying it without expense, which accounts for the name given him by his fellow vagrants.

Physicians agree that the partaking of liquids at meal times is not a healthy practice. The hygiene of the saloon promulgates the opposite. Chickie had neglected to purchase a drink to accompany the counter, caught the judicious diner by the ear with a lemon squeezer, led him to the door and kicked him into the street.

Thus the mind of Chickie was brought to realize the signs of coming winter. The night was cold; the stars shone with unkindly brilliance; people were hurrying along the streets in two egotistic, jostling streams. Men had donned their overcoats, and Chickie knew to an exact percentage the increased difficulty of coaxing dimes from those buttoned-in vest pockets. The time had come for his annual exodus to the south.

A little boy, five or six years old, stood looking with covetous eyes in a confectioner's window. In one small hand he held an empty two-ounce tin; in the other he crasped something flat and round, with a shining milled edge. The scene presented a field of operations commensurate to Chickie's talents and daring. After sweeping the horizon to make sure that no official tug was cruising by, he insidiously accosted his prey. The boy, having been early taught by his household to regard altruistic advances with extreme suspicion, received the overtures coldly.

Then Chickie knew that he must make one of those desperate, nerve-shattering plunges into speculation that fortune sometimes requires of those who would win her favor. Five cents was his capital, and this he must risk against the chance of winning what lay within the close grasp of the youngster's chubby hand. It was a fearful lottery, Chickie knew. But he must accomplish his end by strategy, since he had a wholesome terror of plundering infants by force. Once, in a park, driven by hunger, he had committed an onslaught upon a bottle of peptonized infant's food in the possession of an occupant of a baby carriage. The outraged infant had so promptly opened its mouth and pressed the button that communicated with the welkin that help arrived, and Chickie did his "thirty days and" in a snug coop. Wherefore he was, as he said, "feary of kids."

Beginning actually to question the boy concerning his choice of sweets, he gradually drew out the information he wanted. Mamma said he was to ask the drug store for ten cents' worth of paregoric in the bottle; he was to keep his hand shut tight over the dollar; he must not stop to talk to anyone in the street; he must ask the drug store man to wrap up the change and put in the pocket of his trousers. Indeed, they had pockets—two of them! And he liked chocolate creams best.

Chickie went into the store and turned plunderer. He invested his entire capital in C. A. N. D. Y. stocks, simply to pave the way to the greater risk following.

He gave the sweets to the youngster, and had the satisfaction of perceiving that confidence was established. After that it was easy to obtain leadership of the expedition; to take the investment by the hand and lead it to a nice drug store he knew of in the same block. There Chickie, with a parental air, passed over the dollar and called for the medicine, while the boy crunched his candy, glad to be relieved of the responsibility of the purchase. And then the successful investor, searching his pockets, found an overcoat button—the extent of his winter trousseau—and, wrapping it carefully, placed the ostensible change in the pocket of confiding juvenility. Setting the youngster's face homeward, and patting him benevolently on the back—for Chickie's heart was as soft as those of his feathered namesakes—the speculator quit the market with a profit of 1,700 per cent on his invested capital.

Two hours later an Iron Mountain freight engine pulled out of the railroad yards, Texas bound, with a string of empties. In one of the cattle cars, half buried in straw, Chickie lay at ease. Beside him in his nest was a quart bottle of very poor whisky and a taper bag of bread and cheese. Mr. Ruggles, in his private car, was on his trip south for the winter season.

of it, was his goal. There the air was salubrious and mild; the people indulgent and long-suffering. The bartenders there would not kick him. If he should eat too long or too often at one place they would swear at him as if by rote and without heat. They swore so drawingly, and they rarely passed short of their full vocabulary, which was copious, so that Chickie had often gulped a good meal during the process of the vituperative prohibition. The season there was always springlike; the plazas were pleasant at night, with music and gaiety; except during the slight and infrequently cold snaps one could sleep comfortably out of doors in case the interiors should develop inhospitality.

At Texarkana the car was switched to the I. & G. N. Then still southward it trailed until, at length, it crawled across the Colorado bridge at Austin, and lined out, straight as an arrow, for the run to San Antonio.

When the freight halted at that town Chickie was fast asleep. In ten minutes it was off again for Laredo, the end of the road. Those empty cattle cars were for distribution along the line at points from which the ranches shipped their stock.

When Chickie awoke his car was stationary. Looking out between the slats he saw it was a bright, moonlight night. Scrambling out, he saw his car with three others abandoned on a little siding in a wild and lonesome country. A cattle pen and chute stood on one side of the track. The railroad bisected a vast, dim ocean of prairie, in the midst of which Chickie, with his futile rolling stock, was as completely stranded as was Robinson Crusoe with his land-locked boat.

A white post stood near the rails. Going up to it, Chickie read the letters at the top, S. A. 90. Laredo was nearly as far to the south. He was almost a hundred miles from any town. Coyotes began to yelp in the mysterious sea around him. Chickie felt lonesome. He had lived in Boston without an education, in Chicago without nerve, in Philadelphia without a shining place, in New York without a pull, and in Pittsburgh sober, and yet he had never felt so lonely as now.

Suddenly through the intense silence, he heard the whicker of a horse. The sound came from the side of the track toward the east, and Chickie began to explore timidously in that direction. He stepped high along the mat of curly mesquite grass, for he was afraid of everything there might be in this wilderness—snakes, rats, brigands, centipedes, mirages, cowboys, fandangoes, tarantulas, tamales—he had read of them in the story papers. Rounding a clump of prickly pear that reared high its fantastic and menacing array of rounded heads, he was struck by shivering terror by a snort and a thunderous plunge, as the horse, himself startled, bounded away some fifty yards, and then resumed his grazing. But here was the one thing in the desert that Chickie did not fear. He had been reared on a farm; he had handled horses, understood them, and could ride.

Approaching slowly and speaking soothingly, he followed the animal, which, after its first flight, seemed gentle enough, and secured the end of the twenty-foot lariat that dragged after him in the grass. It required him but a few moments to contrive the rope into an ingenious nose-bridle, after the style of the Mexican borsal. In another he was upon the horse's back and off at a splendid lunge, giving the animal free choice of direction. "He will take me somewhere," said Chickie to himself.

It would have been a thing of joy, that untrammeled gallop over the moonlit prairie, even to Chickie, who loathed exertion, but that his mood was not for it. His head ached; a growing thirst was upon him; the "somewhere" whither his lucky mount might convey him was full of dismal adventure.

And now he noted that the horse moved to a definite goal. Where the prairie lay smooth he kept his course straight as an arrow's toward the east. Detested by bill or arroyo or impenetrable spiny brakes, he quickly flowed again into the current, chartered by his unerring instinct. At last, upon the side of a gentle rise, he suddenly subsided to a complacent walk. A stone's cast away stood a little mott of coma trees; beneath it a jacal such as the Mexicans erect—a one-room house of upright poles daubed with clay and roofed with grass or tule reeds. An experienced eye would have estimated the spot as the headquarters of a small sheep ranch. In the moonlight the ground in the nearby corral showed pulverized to a level smoothness by the hoofs of the sheep. Everywhere was carelessly distributed the paraphernalia of the place—ropes, bridles, saddles, sheep feed, wool sacks, feed troughs and camp litter. The barrel of drinking water stood in the end of the two-horse wagon near the door. The harness was piled, promiscuous, upon the wagon tongue, soaking up the dew.

Chickie slipped to earth, and tied the horse to a tree. He halted again and again, but the house remained quiet. The door stood open, and he entered cautiously. The light was sufficient for him to see that no one was at home. He struck a match and lighted a lamp that stood on a table. The room was that of a bachelor ranchman who was content with the necessities of life. Chickie rummaged intelligently until he found what he had hardly dared hope for—a small, brown jug that still contained beer.

Half an hour later, Chickie—now a gamecock of hostile aspect—emerged from the house with unsteady steps.

ma's equipment to replace his own ragged attire. He wore a suit of coarse brown ducking, the coat being a sort of rakish bolero, jaunty to a degree. Boots he had donned, and spurs that whirred with every lurching step. Buckled around him was a belt full of cartridges with a big six-shooter in each of its two holsters.

For two days the glittering stranger within the camp was feasted. Then, by common consent, he was invited to become a member of the band. He consented, presenting for enrollment the prodigious name of "Captain Montessor." This name was immediately overruled by the band, and "Piggy" substituted as a compliment to the awful and insatiable appetite of its owner.

Thus did the Texas border receive the most spectacular brigand that ever rode its chaparral.

For the next three months Bud King conducted business as usual, escaping encounters with law officers and being content with reasonable profits. The band ran off some very good companies of horses from the ranges, and a few bunches of fine cattle, which they got safely across the Rio Grande and disposed of to fair advantage. Often the band would ride into the little villages and Mexican settlements, terrorizing the inhabitants and plundering for the provisions and ammunition they needed. It was during these bloodless raids that Piggy's ferocious aspect and frightful voice gained him a renown more widespread and glorious than those other gentlemanly and sad-faced desperadoes could have acquired in a lifetime.

The Mexicans, most apt in nomenclature, first called him The Black Eagle, and used to frighten the babies by threatening them with tales of the dreadful robber who carried off little

children in his great beak. Soon the name extended, and Black Eagle, the Terror of the Border, became a recognized factor in exaggerated newspaper reports and ranch gossip.

The country from the Nueces to the Rio Grande was a wild but fertile stretch, given over to the sheep and cattle ranches. Range law was mainly a letter, and the pirates met with little opposition until the flaunting and garish Piggy gave the band an advertisement. Then McKinney's ranger company headed for those precincts, and Bud King knew that it meant grim and sudden war or else temporary retirement. Regarding the risk to be unnecessary, he drew off his hand to an almost inaccessible spot on the bank of the Frio. Wherefore, as has been said, dissatisfaction arose among the members, and impeachment proceedings against Bud were premeditated, with Black Eagle in high favor for the succession. Bud King was not unaware of the sentiment, and he called aside Cactus Taylor, his trusted lieutenant, to discuss it.

"If the boys," said Bud, "ain't satisfied with me, I'm willin' to step out. They're buckin' against my way of handlin' 'em. And 'specially because I concludes to hit the brush while Sam Kinney is ridin' the line. I saves 'em from bein' shot or sent up on a state contract, and they up and says I'm no good."

"It ain't so much that," explained Cactus, "as it is they're plum locoed about Piggy. They want them whiskers and that nose of his to split the wind at the head of the column."

"There's somethin' mighty seldom about Piggy," declared Bud, musingly. "I never yet see anything on the hoof that he exactly grades up with. He can shore holler a plenty, and he straddles a horse from where you laid the chunk. But he ain't never been smoked yet. You know, Cactus, we ain't had a row since he's been with us. Piggy's all right for skeerin' the greaser kids and layin' waste a crossroads store. I reckon he's the finest canned oyster buccaneer and cheese

little party of peaceable rustics assembled for a fish fry or peacan gathering. Gentle of manner, sleeking of gait, soft-voiced, unpicturesquely clothed; not one of them presented to the eye any witness of the desperate deeds they had earned.

"He talks all spraddled out," said Cactus, "bout the rookies he's been in. He claims to have saw the elephant and hear'n the owl."

"I know," replied Bud, using the cow-puncher's expressive phrase of skepticism, "but it sounds to me!"

This conversation was held one night in camp while the other members of the band—eight in number—were sprawling around the fire, lingering over their supper. When Bud and Cactus ceased talking they heard Piggy's formidable voice holding forth to the others as usual while he was engaged in checking, though never satisfying, his ravenous appetite.

"Wat's de use," he was saying, "of chasin' little red coxes and hosses 'round for 'tousands of miles? Dere ain't nuttin' in it. Gallopin' 'trough dese bushes and briars, and gettin' a 't'raj dat a brewery couldn't put out, and missin' meals! Say! You know what I'd do if I was main finger of dis bunch? I'd stick up a train. I'd blow de express car and make hard dollars where you guys gets wind."

Later on, a deposition waited on Bud. They stood on one leg, chewed mesquite twigs and circumsoluted, for they hated to hurt his feelings. Bud forewent their business, and made it easy for them. Bigger risks and larger profits was what they wanted.

The suggestion of Piggy's about holding up a train had fired their imagination and increased their admiration for the dash and boldness of the instigator. They were such sim-

ple, artless and custom-bound bush-rangers that they had never before thought of extending their habits beyond the running off of live stock and the shooting of such of their acquaintances as ventured to interfere.

Bud acted "on the level," agreeing to take a subordinate place in the gang until Black Eagle should have been given a trial as leader.

After a great deal of consultation, studying of timetables and discussion of the country's topography, the time and place for carrying out their new enterprise was decided upon. At that time there was a feedstuff famine in Mexico and a cattle famine in certain parts of the United States, and there was a brisk international trade. Much money was being shipped along the railroads that connected the two republics. It was agreed that the most promising place for the contemplated robbery was at Espina, a little station on the I. & G. N., about forty miles north of Laredo. The train stopped there one minute; the country around was wild and unsettled; the station consisted of but one house in which the agent lived.

Black Eagle had set out, riding by night, arriving in the vicinity of Espina they rested their horses all day in a thicket a few miles distant.

The train was due at Espina at 10:30 p. m. They could rob the train and be well over the Mexican border with their booty by daylight the next morning.

pirate that ever was, but how's his appetite for fightin'? I've knowed some citizens you'd think was starvin' for trouble get a bad dose of dyspepsy the first dose of lead they had to take."

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drop on the engineer and firemen, force them to descend and proceed to the rear. Then the express car would be looted, and the escape made. No one was to move until Black Eagle gave the signal by firing his revolver. The plan was perfect.

At ten minutes to train time every man was at his post, effectually concealed by the thick chaparral that grew almost to the rails. The night was dark and lowering, with a fine drizzle falling from the flying pig clouds. Black Eagle crouched behind a bush within five yards of the track. Two six-shooters were belted around him. Occasionally he drew a large black bottle from his pocket and raised it to his mouth.

A star appeared far down the track which soon waxed into the height of the approaching train. It came on with an increasing roar; the engine bore down upon the ambush; a shriek like some avenging monster came to deliver them to justice. Black Eagle flattened himself upon the ground. The engine, contrary to their calculations, instead of stopping between him and Bud King's place of concealment, passed fully forty yards farther before it came to a stand.

The bandit leader rose to his feet and peered around a bush. His men all lay quiet, awaiting the signal. Immediately opposite Black Eagle was a thing that drew his attention. Instead of being a regular passenger train it was a mixed one. Before him stood a box car, the door of which, by some means, had been left slightly open. Black Eagle went up to it and pushed the door farther open. An odor came forth—a damp, rancid, familiar, musty, intoxicating, beloved odor, stirring strongly at old memories of happy days and travels. Black Eagle sniffed at the witching smell as the returned wanderer smells of the rose that twines his boyhood's cottage home. Nostalgia seized him. He put his hand inside. Excelsior, dry aprone, curly socks, howl covered the floor. Outside the drizzle had turned to a chilling rain.

The train bell clanged. The bandit chief unbuckled his belt and cast it, with its revolvers, upon the ground. His spurs followed quickly, and his broad sombrero. Black Eagle was mouthing. The train started with a rattling jerk. The ex-Terror of the Border scrambled into the box car and closed the door. Stretched luxuriously upon the excelsior, with the black bottle clasped closely to his breast, his eyes closed, and a foolish, happy smile upon his terrible features, Chickie Ruggles started upon his return trip.

Undisturbed by a band of desperate bandits lying motionless, awarding the signal to attack, the train pulled out from Espina. As its speed increased, and the black masses of chaparral went whizzing past on either side, the express messenger, lighting his pipe, looked through his window and remarked, feelingly: "What a jim-dandy place for a hold-up!"

Buried With His Pipe. A man named Dollin, who was guilt-otined for murder at Le Mans, France, the other morning, smoked a pipe before his execution and asked leave to have it buried with him. When Dollin was awakened by the governor of the prison and told that his last hour had come he turned to the chaplain and said: "Father, you know how fond I am of smoking, and that cigarettes do not interest me. Fill my pipe for me, and let me smoke it for the last time." The chaplain did so, and, after smoking his pipe, Dollin submitted himself to the hands of the executioner and his assistants. But before going to the scaffold he obtained leave to slip his "best friend," as he called his pipe, into his pocket, and the prison governor promised him that it should be buried with his body.

At the Wrong House. A man with a valise rang the bell, and a lady came to the door. The man bowed, and inquired if the lady owned a graphophone. She said yes, she believed there was one somewhere about the house, but that it had not been used for a long time.

"Then I should like to show you," he rejoined, proceeding to open his valise, "a new attachment for the machine, which we are—"

"No use," she interrupted, waving him away. "I used to have an attachment for the things, but I haven't now, and don't want to have. Our neighbors on both sides have graphophones, for which they have a very strong attachment. Good day, sir."

The door closed with a slam, and the man went sadly down the steps—Youth's Companion.

One Vote for Draper. Governor Draper is having a lot of fun explaining why he was not a passenger in the airships recently at Atlantic City, admitting that it was fear that kept him on the ground.

In connection with this, he tells what he calls an "honest to goodness" story: "Two men were walking down the street a few days ago," he relates, "and I heard this conversation: 'I'm going to vote for Draper this time, even if he is a Republican.' 'Why?' demanded the other. 'You've always been a good Democrat.' 'I know I have,' said the first speaker, 'but Governor Draper is the one of the whole bunch that had a chance to fly, but sense enough to stay on the ground.'"—Boston Journal.

Sticky Sweating Palms

after taking salts or cathartic waters—did you ever notice that weary all-time feeling—the palms of your hands sweat—and rotten taste in your mouth—Cathartics only move by sweating your bowels—Do a lot of hurt—Try a CASCA-RIT and see how much easier the job is done—how much better you feel.

CASCA-RIT'S got a box for a week's treatment, all druggists. Biggest seller in the world. Million boxes a month.

Afflictions mark the difference between iron and steel.

No harmful drugs in Garfield Tea. Nature's laxative is composed wholly of clean, sweet, health-giving Herbs!

No man has come to true greatness who has not felt in some degree that his life belongs to his race.—Phillips Brooks.

There's Many a Slip. "What is the name of the song the lady is singing?" "Meet Me in Heaven."

"Don't you think she's taking a great deal for granted?"

Woman as Bank Cashier. Miss Ethel Boynton is cashier of the National Bank of Bayside, L. I., the only woman in the state holding such a position. She says that to be trustworthy a man or woman must first be kind, then he cannot find it in his heart to betray the trust that is reposed in him.

OATS—250 Bu. Per Acre. That is the record to yield of Theodore Harnes, Lewis Co., Wash., had from Salzer's Regenerated White Bonanza oats and won a handsome \$0 acre farm. Other big yields are 341 bush., 117 bu., 103 bu., etc., had by farmers scattered throughout the U. S.

Salzer's Pedigree Barley, Flax, Corn, Oats, Wheat, Potatoes, Grasses and Clovers are famous the world over for their purity and tremendous yielding qualities. We are easily the largest growers of farm seeds in the world.

Our catalog bristling with seed truths free for the asking, or send 30c in stamps and receive 10 packages of farm seed novelties and rarities, including above marvelous oats, together with big catalog. John A. Salzer Seed Co., 182 South 8th St., La Crosse, Wis.

Real Courage. He was the small son of a minister and his mother was teaching him the meaning of courage.

"Supposing," she said, "there were twelve boys in one bedroom, and eleven got into bed at once, while the other knelt down to say his prayers, that boy would show true courage."

"Oh," said the young hopeful, "I know something that would be more courageous than that? Supposing there were twelve ministers in one bedroom, and one got into bed without saying his prayers?"

A Dry Wash. Representative Livingston of Georgia, who, disgusted at the bath-tub debate in the house recently, proposed that a little money might be made by renting the bath tubs out, said recently, apropos of this subject: "We are at now a good deal like Bill Spriggins on a zero morning."

"Bill's valet entered his bedroom one January morning and said with a shiver: "'Will you take your bath hot or cold, sir?'"

"Thank you," said Bill; "I'll take it for granted."

THE SITUATION

Katharine—He was to marry a telephone girl, but she broke the engagement.

Kidder—Oh, I see! A case of "ring off."

IT'S FOOD That Restores and Makes Health Possible.

There are stomach specialists as well as eye and ear and other specialists.

One of these told a young lady, of New Brunswick, N. J., to quit medicine and eat Grape-Nuts. She says: "For about 15 months I suffered severely with gastritis. I was unable to retain much of anything on my stomach, and consequently was compelled to give up my occupation."

"I took quantities of medicine, and had an idea I was dying, but I continued to suffer, and soon lost 15 pounds in weight. I was depressed in spirits and lost interest in everything generally. My mind was so affected that it was impossible to become interested in even the lightest reading matter."

"After suffering for months I decided to go to a stomach specialist. He put me on Grape-Nuts and my health began to improve immediately. It was the keynote of a new life."

"I found that I had been eating too much starchy food which I did not digest, and that the cereals which I had tried had been too heavy. I soon proved that it is not the quantity of food that one eats, but the quality."

"In a few weeks I was able to go back to my old business of doing clerical work. I have continued to eat Grape-Nuts for both the morning and evening meals. I wake in the morning with a clear mind and feel rested. I regained my lost weight in a short time. I am well and happy again and owe it to Grape-Nuts." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Read "The Road to Wellville," in pinks. "There's a Reason."



BLACK EAGLE AND HIS BAND.