

Jake Severns.

Jake Severns worked hard; no one could deny that. What ever any one might say of him, and it cannot be denied there were those who did say things, he could not say that Jake did not work.

He worked unceasingly—from early morn until late at night; and sometimes he kept at his work all through the long weary nights. Many a belated devotee from some social function, or roysterer from some more hilarious entertainment, coming home at two or even three in the morning, would see a man working by the uncertain light from a small lantern and would say "There is Old Jake Severns plying his trade." And some would laugh and wonder what Jake would carry off on that particular night.

He picked up odds and ends—anything that came in his way.

One might tell where Jake lived had he never-known of his place of residence. His house looked decent enough. It was not the house, but the place all around it that spoke of Jake. The yard in the rear looked like a prize crazy quilt patch. Bits of wood, raw lumber-odd pieces of harness, broken down wheels, pieces of iron, old wagon beds, remnants of hitching posts, shovels, rakes, with only a tooth or two left, boxes, old saddles—anything—everything that could be picked up and carted home, was thrown around in endless confusion and disorder.

It is doubtful if the time would ever come when Jake would make use of anything in the whole lot. Probably he, himself, did not think he could. That did not concern him. It was his habit to take anything that came in his way, and if he never made use of certain things—why—he could not help that.

His worst enemies could not say that he ever took anything of much value: unless it might be an occasional bottle of wine (and between claret and madeira Jake never hesitated, madeira was good enough for him) or jars of choice fruit picked up from somebody's cellar. And when it came to fruit, he unhesitatingly picked out preserves. He was fond of preserve, and, why not?

If any of his victims missed anything and inquired of him about it, if he could, he would most cheerfully return it, (of course if the wine or preserves were gone, he could do nothing.) He never took offence if people seeing him coming would turn their keys and lock up some things they wished to keep. He thought it a very wise precaution, and carried no resentment in his heart.

He was thin and spare, wore a little bunch of thin shaggy whiskers, which were no doubt black in the earlier stages of their career, had little black twinkling eyes set deep in his head, and was dirty—always dirty. It seemed as if the dust and dirt of years must have accumulated on that bald spot on Jake's head. It was hard to tell the real color of Jake's hair or his whiskers. To get through the layer of dust and ashes and dirt would be hard work. His shirt, always open at the neck, was always dirty, never ragged. He was no beggar. Rags were not congenial to him, dirt was.

One of the ladies on his route had said to him one day, "Jake, we must have a new barrel, this one is dirty." "Why, woman," Jake replied, "that barrel ain't no more dirty than I am dirty." The madame smiled and said "perhaps not, Jake, but I guess we had better have a new one"—and Jake went on his way, happy and cheerful.

He was not a pre-possessing figure as he drove off, perched upon the seat of his scavenger wagon.

But one would never dream it—in spite of his cheeriness, his clear conscience (he did not think he did any-

thing wrong—to be sure—the wine and the old saddles, but what were they.) and his good will to all men, he had not an unkind word or thought for any living creature—in spite of all this, Jake Severns, as he drove along on his wagon, as he arose in the dewy morn, as he laid him to rest in the quiet night (when he did rest) had a consuming, heart-eating ambition within his breast that gave him no peace. He cared not for any of the so-called good things of life for himself, but Jake had a daughter! Ah! There was the rub. He worshiped at her shrine, "Queen," he called her. When this daughter was born to him he wanted a fine sounding name, and he found it in "Queen." How he loved her, she was an angel to him. He stood in awe of her beauty. To him it seemed heavenly. He knew what he wanted. He wanted to make a fine lady of her. It was the dream of his life. He knew how they looked and how they acted. He had seen them in his rounds, their dainty silken dresses, their delicate, white shapely hands, that air of refinement about them, it ate into his soul. Queen should be like them! He would work, yes, harder than ever. But it was so slow. It seemed to him sometimes that the time would never come. To a fine school; that was his one idea of the channel through which all this ladyship must come. He knew if she had but half a chance, she would out-shine them all. "Not a whit prettier than my Queen," he would say to himself when he saw some unusually handsome girl. "No, by gummi, nor half so purty."

If you could have seen the girl you would have understood. How could such a child come from such a father. "A freak of nature," one would say. But to be sure, no one knew all about Jake, his ancestors, his parents or his early bringing up. There is no telling what his childhood may have been, but no matter, the fact stood.

The girl was now almost sixteen years old. Tall, slender, well formed, her features and skin fair as a lily with roses in her cheeks, large dreamy blue eyes, beautiful brown wavy hair. Jake's instinct did not lie when it told him she was beautiful. And yet it was not so much her figure, or her features, or her complexion, or her hair that made her so beautiful, that made one stop and turn to look at her as she passed. It was that poise of the head, the way she carried herself. She might truly have been a queen, from her looks; and she had an indefinable air, style you might call it, that marked her out. It was more this air of hers that awed Jake than her beauty. Her gowns were simply made, and always of some cheap stuff, yet she wore them with an air of style and distinction that many a "fine lady" as Jake called them, might envy.

Things were going on much as usual with Jake. He sat on his perch on the wagon and made his rounds, the same dirty unkempt man, with dirty shirt open at the neck, nursing his secret ambition. When one day, alas! temptations came in his path. It came like a whirlwind mighty and strong. It over-powered him, he fell.

In going through one of the places of business he visited, he saw what made his eyes almost leave their sunken depths and start from his head. It almost made him reel like a drunken man. A package of money, greenbacks, all nice and even with a rubber around them, had been left out by accident. It was an accident that he was there alone for the instant, an instant, but, oh merciful God! in that one breathing, palpitating moment of his existence the dream of his life seemed to realize in his hands; months and years of his paltry savings would not make what he saw before him, within his grasp. In his mind's eye he could see her now, as he had always wanted to—a lady—that was

what education and clothes would make her. He gasped for breath, the consequences of such an act did not for a moment occur to him. He was not concerned with that, but, the money, the money.

When he was seated again on that perch in his wagon, his heart was thumping, there was joy in his eye. The wagon in itself was not an attractive thing to look at. Nor yet its contents, but it was a chariot filled with choice American beauties and rare exotics to Jake's mind, as he drove along that morning. As soon as he could finish his more urgent tasks he drove to his home looked around complacently as he went through the veritable juck shop on his premises, and went to his room where his precious bundle was safely put under lock and key.

But as he went out he met his daughter and he could not keep his secret. He led her into the room and showed it to her. "Fur you honey," he said, "you're a going to a fine school, an' wear silk dresses an' be a lady."

The girl was as excited as was poor old Jake. Her color came and went, her eyes shone like stars. Her fingers trembled as she reached out to touch the wonderful package. "Oh father," she said, "where did you get it?"

Jake's countenance fell. It was like the rude awakening from a beautiful dream. "Why," he stammered, "never mind 'bout that honey, its your'n now, where I got it don't make no difference, its all for you honey."

"All for you," he kept saying it over and over to himself. He was elated again; his dream was true. He could not wait. He took part of the money and put it in his pocket. "Now, gal, get on your duds, let's go and buy some of the things."

It seemed like a fairy tale to Queen, in a shop with her father buying real silks. Old Jake and his comely daughter had not been regular patrons of the silk counter, and the obliging salesman was, perhaps, a trifle surprised. But he met with surprises almost every day of his life, as he stood behind the counter, showing and selling silks.

He offered some of his stock in trade suggestions to this pair of shoppers. The black grounds were very fashionable, at present. Not want them, that was indeed surprising. No—Jake had his own ideas, and so had the girl. He wanted "purty flowered things" but she did not run to the gaudy in her purchases. The salesman wished that he had only the girl to deal with, so far as his artistic taste was concerned. But, when it came to getting rid of old chestnuts Jake was a veritable gold mine. But when it came to the real issue Queen was allowed to choose for herself.

Jake paid his bill and hurried on, hats next, he could not wait, he was feverish in his excitement. So he went about leaving tracks like foot prints in freshly fallen snow.

If this dream of bliss was to be short, he did not know it. Usually shrewd and calculating he had lost his head—some said afterwards that it was certainly a fit of insanity that had fallen upon poor old Jake. But, a crazy man may be a very happy one for aught one knows, and Jake was in heaven.

Jake Severns had not left the office many moments that morning before the loss was discovered. It was kept very quiet, and defectives were soon on the scent.

It was not a very interesting case for them, the trail was soon easily found. Of course the evidence was largely circumstantial, but it was so evident. The scavenger man usually visited the place near to that time in the morning. To be sure nobody had seen him come or go, but he had access to the place, and then, the damaging facts.

It did not take long to find out that he had bought things, which to say the

least, he did not often buy. Where did he get his money. His reputation, too, was a little against him. There's a difference, of course, between an ordinary pullover of chickens, or a stray bottle of wine, and the criminal who steals money. But the one leads to the other, and it was not long before Jake was in the toils.

He was a trifle too stupefied at first, to say much of anything. There were lawyers to defend him. He had worked hard, no doubt of that, he had been saving of his money, he was a miser and had hoarded up his little bits until they had grown into a pile. What if he had been known to take divers and sundry articles of small value. He was not a criminal.

Things began to look a little brighter for Jake. He had not seen his Queen since he was first taken into custody.

His trial was dragging along, he did not know what would become of him. It seemed to him that everyone there must know where he got that money as well as he did by this time.

But his counsel cheered him up. He was worth a dozen penitentiary birds yet. Ugh! how that word "penitentiary" made the cold chills run up and down poor old Jake's spine.

He sat watching things, hoping it wouldn't go against him after all, when those chills in his spine changed to burning coals all through his body.

They were bringing forward a new witness. His heart seemed to stop its beating; he was on fire, it was his daughter Queen.

She walked in with an absolutely unconscious grace in every movement. How beautiful she was, she looked frightened and cast an imploring look at her father. Someone whispered to another "good blood there from some place, heaven knows where."

If one had been walking through a thorny thicket and found an American Beauty rose growing sweet and lovely, in its tangles, one could not experience more of a surprise than to see this really lovely girl brought forward as the daughter of the dirty, grimy prisoner.

The miserable story was dragged out of her in broken bits how her father had come home on that same morning in so short a time after the money was taken, his excitement, how he had shown it to her, and with a sob she repeated his very words to her, "all for you honey." No, she did not know that he had saved up money like that, he did not tell her that he had saved it. Yes, she had asked him where he got it. "Never mind about that, it's yourn now."

She thought she could tell where part of it was now, the rest was gone. "What had he done with it?" She broke down, put her head in her arms, and sobbed aloud. He had bought fine things for her with it, nothing for himself, not so much as a button for his shirt.

The trial was over. Jake was sent up. He had lived and toiled for one object, this was his reward. The one he would have put into high estate he would leave alone, young and beautiful, to fight her way as best she could. This is Jake's story, he is behind prison walls. Perhaps he has done more for his beloved Queen than if his dream had come true.

She has been shown what an absorbing, self-sacrificing love of one for another can mean. It has changed her from a child to a woman. She may work out her own salvation far better than the schools and the silken robes might have done.

Her soul is stirred, she does not see a dirty ridiculous person in the prisoner. She sees a toiling, self-sacrificing father who would give up his life without one murmur to give his child a moment of happiness. She sees that in him. His wonderful love for her should not be in vain. If true to her purpose she may work out his salvation as well and make a man of Jake.

M. M.