

The North Platte Tribune.

VOL. IX.

NORTH PLATTE, NEBRASKA, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1893.

NO. 5.

Great Clearing Sale!

For the Next Sixty Days

We will sell everything in our store, such as

Clothing, : : : : :
: : : Furnishing Goods,
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: : : Hats and Caps,
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At 25 Per Cent Discount

FOR CASH ONLY.

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MAX. EINSTEIN, Prop.

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LUMBER,

COAL,

AND GRAIN.

Order by telephone from Newton's Book Store.

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All Sizes. All Prices. All Solid All Good Wearers.

The Cheap John stores have sold many shoddy goods at prices which they claimed were cheap. We will sell you good wearing, solid goods (same sizes) as cheap as other stores sell their trash.

CHILDREN'S SHOES:

Sizes 5 to 7, 85 cents.
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All solid and warranted. Others have come to run us out, some tried to lie us out, but the only to get rid of us is to buy us out. We have made them all sick at the shoe business, and mind you now we will sell you good cheaper than before, for we are after the trade of western Nebraska, and if good, fine goods at low prices will do it, we will have all the shoe trade. Store and fixture for sale, but they can't run us out for no one can compete with our prices on good goods.

H. OTTEN.

Dr. N. McCABE, Prop. J. E. BUSH, Manager.
NORTH PLATTE PHARMACY,

[Successor to J. Q. Thacker.]

NORTH PLATTE, - NEBRASKA.

WE AIM TO HANDLE THE BEST GRADE OF GOODS,
SELL THEM AT REASONABLE PRICES, AND WARRANT
EVERYTHING AS REPRESENTED.

Orders from the country and along the line of the Union Pacific Railway Solicited.

F. J. BROEKER,
Merchant Tailor,
CLEANER AND REPAIRER
LARGE STOCK OF PIECE GOODS,
embracing all the new designs, kept on hand and made to order.
PERFECT FIT GUARANTEED.
PRICES LOWER THAN EVER BEFORE
Spruce Street, between Fifth and Sixth.

The Bandit of the Sierras

By THOMAS P. MONTFORT.

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CHAPTER I.



"Did you say he was a road agent?"
A dilapidated, weather stained old stagecoach, which had evidently seen many years of rugged service, bounded along the rough track that wound up a deep, dark gorge in the Sierra Nevada mountains. Now it swung to the right, now to the left, now giving great lurch forward as the front wheels dropped into a rut, now creaking and groaning like some live thing in terrible pain, and ever and anon tipping up on one side and threatening to turn over and roll down some steep embankment.

There were four passengers in the coach, two of them men of about the middle age, whose appearance and garb showed them to be frontiersmen, evidently miners, and a very old lady, who was exceedingly small and nervous, but patient and good natured withal, and the other a little girl of perhaps seven years, very beautiful and demure, and seemingly very much afraid.

There was not much opportunity for conversation, for the stage made enough noise to drown any ordinary tone of voice, and then the passengers had all they could do to keep themselves seated. Once or twice the men had attempted to exchange a word or so, but scarcely had they begun to speak when the stage gave a sudden lurch and cut their remarks short.

The old lady, although she was thin and frail and nervous, bore all the rough jolting and bumping uncomplainingly, and as often as the men turned their eyes toward her they saw a happy, satisfied smile lighting up her wrinkled features. Where could she have come from? They wondered, and where could she be going—she and the child? It was evident that they did not belong there in that rough new country; that they were strangers to the rugged habits and semi-civilized life of the western miners. They were delicate, refined and well dressed—attribution being long in a mining camp in the far west.

The two men scrutinized their fellow passengers silently and intently for a long time, and once or twice something like a slight escape of steam. Finally the stage reached a stretch of comparatively smooth road, where it was possible to converse with tolerable ease. The men drew closer together, and one of them said:

"Jack, the sight of that old lady and child makes me sad; yet it does me good. It takes my thoughts right back to the old home in the east, and brings up remembrance of the friends I have not seen for so long."

"Just what I was thinking, Joe," the other replied. "The old lady reminds me of mother, and somehow I can almost imagine that it is she. Poor mother; it's been a long time since I have seen her, and I have not thought of her very often the last two or three years; but, Joe, I love her yet above everything on earth. I haven't written her for two years, and I know how anxiously she has watched the mails, and how disappointed she has been, and how she has wept and suffered. The sight of this old lady has brought it all back to me, and tomorrow I am going to write a good, long letter. The dear old soul will be so pleased."

The two men were silent for some time, each looking straight out before him, their lips slightly tremulous, while a moisture gathered in their eyes. They were rough, sun bronzed men with calloused hands, but the remembrance of the old homes and the old mothers they had left there touched them and awoke in them the better part of their natures.

After awhile one of the men suddenly straightened himself up as though he had just awakened out of a reverie, and turning to the other said:

"Was there anything new up at the Flat when you left this morning?"

"No," the other answered, recalling his wandering thoughts. "Nothing of much importance. They had a couple of road agents under arrest, and were going to try them this afternoon and hang them tonight."

"So? You don't know who the two are?"

"No; more's the pity. But they've got 'em."

The old lady had suddenly sprung to her feet, and now stood before the miners holding a strap for support, her face pale and cold, her eyes fixed in a searching gaze on the two men, her lips twitching and her whole frame wrought up to the highest pitch of nervous tension.

"What was it you said about Mart Thompson?" she cried in an eager yet stifled voice. "Did you say he was a road agent and that he was to be arrested and hung? Tell me, did you say that?"

The men were startled by the old lady's voice and manner, and for an instant they gazed at her in stupid amazement. She repeated her question with more eagerness, more vehemence, and one of the men, recovering from his surprise, replied:

"Perhaps you misunderstood me, lady, or perhaps I mispoke the name. I should have said Mark Thompson."

you. Yet I might have known that it was not Mart Thompson. He would never do anything wrong, even the least little thing, and I was foolish to think you could have meant him."

The men exchanged a glance, and the one who had spoken last spoke again. "Do you know Mart Thompson?" he asked.

"Do I know him?" she repeated, while a proud, happy smile wreathed her thin features. "Yes, I raised him from a baby and I kept him with me until he was almost a man grown. He is my grandson, and his mother and father died when he was only a year old, so I took him and raised him."

The good old lady, glad of an opportunity to speak of "her boy," continued in her childish simplicity to narrate his history.

"When he was almost a man," she said, "he went away from home, and after awhile he married. His wife was not strong, and in a year or so she died, leaving a child, this little girl here, and I took her and raised her."

"Then he became restless, and when so many were coming to California he came too. That was five years ago. I got a few letters from him the first year, but he wasn't writing. I suppose he had been very busy and hasn't had time to write, and then he may have forgotten about it. He was always a little forgetful about such things, and then he was a little wild."

"He wasn't so wild, though," she hastened to add, "and he never done anything real bad. He was just a little wild, like young men often are, you know, but he never meant any harm by it. He was good and kind, only sometimes he was a little thoughtless."

It was really pitiful to note how the honest, simple old soul excused and sought to wipe away the faults of "her boy." Her tone was so apologetic, and her manner so childlike and unpoetic, that a heart of stone must have been touched by it. It was plain that she saw "her boy's" faults and realized the extent of them, else she would not have taken such pains to excuse and shield them, yet she did not admit to herself that she saw and understood anything of the kind. For his sake she denied and disputed the evidence of her own senses.

"For four years," she continued in her simple way, "I have had no letter from Mart, and so one day I concluded to take his child and go in search of him. You didn't know that, did you? I was in or trouble or something, and I felt as though I ought to go and see."

"When we came to California and went to the place where he was when we heard from him last he was gone, and nobody there knew anything about him. I was a little discouraged, because California is a large place and I didn't know where to go in search of my boy. I didn't have much money, and we couldn't go very far, but I thought I could go as far as my money and strength would permit."

"But God helped me, and before my little money was all gone he directed me to the post down there where the stage started. I heard of Mart down there, and they told me he was up in the mountains somewhere near the Poverty Flat mines, so now I shall soon find him."

"I never thought to ask you, but I expect maybe you two gentlemen live at Poverty Flat, isn't it so?"

"Yes, ma'am, one of them replied hesitatingly.

"Then you know Mart?" she cried with eagerness.

The two men exchanged a quick glance, and a little of their secret appeared greatly embarrassed; but neither of them spoke. The old lady thought they had not heard her and she repeated her question.

"Yes, ma'am," said one, seeing that an answer must be given, "I know Mart Thompson, or, more correctly speaking, I know of him."

"Do you?" the old lady cried, a smile of happy anticipation lighting up her face. "I am so glad, because then you can tell me about him. Is he at the mines now, do you think?"

"Why—no, ma'am; I don't think he is just now. You see, the men went on hesitatingly, "he don't stop at the mines. He's out in the mountains most generally."

"Is he? What does he do out in the mountains?"

The men exchanged another glance, and appeared very restless and exceedingly disturbed, and remained silent. The old lady waited a moment, then again said in a little louder tone:

"What does Mart do in the mountains?"

"Why—I—you see," began the miner in a reckless way, but he got no further. At that instant there was a firing of pistols, and the old lady, giving a lurch, came to a halt. A moment later the door was thrown open and a masked face looked in.

"Now step out here you folks inside," a gruff, unattractive voice commanded, "and we'll proceed to unload you of any burdens you may happen to have in the shape of money or valuables. Here, you," he continued to the miners, "you needn't be coming for your shooters, for we've got you covered, and any smartness on your part will only compel us to waste a bullet or two on you. Now come out quietly and gentlemanly and we'll not detain you a moment."

The passengers all left the coach and formed in line under the cover of a half dozen pistols. Night was just coming on, and it was scarcely dark, but the robbers were all masked, so that nothing of their features showed, and when they spoke they disguised their voices, so that they were safe from recognition.

One of the highwaymen went through a search of the passengers, beginning with the two men, from each of whom he took a few dollars, a silver watch and a pair of gloves. When he came to the old lady he said:

"Now, then, ma'am, I'll trouble you for any little change and trinkets that you may happen to have about you."

"Here is my purse," she said, extend-

ing it in her open hand. "There is not much in it now, for I have spent pretty near all my money searching for my boy. That is all I have that you would want."

"I don't know about that. We are not hard to please, and rather than hurt anybody's feelings we accept the commonest kind of gifts. Have you no jewelry, old lady? No watch or anything like that?"

"Nothing but a little locket," she replied, "and I cannot give that. You would not take that from me, for it is not mine. It belongs to my son, whom I am going to find. He left it with him when he went away, and it has his picture in it and a lock of his hair, and his name is cut on the case."

"Ah, well, we'll just take it. His name's on it, so if we happen to meet your son we'll just hand it to him for you."

And the man broke into a coarse laugh, at the same time placing the locket in his pocket.

"Yes, it was, because as it is there wasn't anybody hurt."

"No, that was all right. But about the rest of it I don't know what to do."

"What?" she said, turning to the little girl, and as the two miners turned to see what it meant a man lifted the latch and came in. Jack and Joe sprang to their feet and started back in alarm.

"It was really a man or was it an apparition?" they asked immediately, but he shifted his weight from one foot to the other and scratched his head thoughtfully. At last he spoke, though with hesitation. He said:

"I believe he would, to say, men, for this is a peculiar case. For the sake of the old lady and the little girl I would like for us to let Mart Thompson go. I would like to do it, too, on account of his coming in and surrendering himself. For these two reasons I wish we might spare him, for if we did he would lead an honorable and honest life."

"I believe he would," some one murmured, and Thompson quickly raised his eyes to see who it was. "I think we could afford to let him go free. But perhaps you didn't all hear about it. Jim Main was shot and killed by the bandits last night as he was coming up from the post, and from what I have been able to gather it seems that Thompson is the man who shot him."

"Is that a fact?" Jack asked.

"It is. A man who was with Jim and who escaped unharmed came in this morning before daylight and told me. I have been able to gather it seems that Thompson is the man who shot him."

"So I thought, and for that reason I am here."

"I do not understand," Jack said, looking at Thompson in blank amazement.

"Don't you understand?" Thompson replied quietly. "What I say is plain and simple and it ought not to be hard to understand it. You people here have said that you would hang or shoot me if you ever had a chance. I have supposed that you had said that, and for that reason I came to this camp. I know that the men of this place are people who keep their word and who never abandon a purpose."

Jack still looked puzzled, but he remained silent. Mart Thompson's words and actions were beyond his comprehension. He could not fathom the man's meaning. He might have thought that Thompson was feigning had he not seen his face and noted now pale and wan it was, and how sad and sunken were his eyes. That face, those eyes, a picture of despair and dejection, precluded all doubt of the man's earnestness.

"Don't you understand me yet?" Thompson asked after a short pause. "Then I will be plainer in my speech. I have come here because I want you men to take my life. I surrender myself into your hands. Take me and do with me as you please, only so you take my life."

"Why do you say such things?" Jack asked.

"I say what I do because I feel it, and I feel it because of what happened yesterday. You were in the stage yesterday evening when it was robbed?"

"Yes, we were there."

"So was I. Here are your pistols, your money and your watch, and what I have taken from me and I restore them. But that is nothing; look here at this. Here is the locket I took from the old lady. Do you see what a cheap, simple, little thing it is? It is almost worthless; yet it has brought me to a sudden halt in my journey. I was set me to thinking. It has made me want to die."

"The trusting old soul I took that from," he continued, after a momentary pause, "is my grandmother, and practically my mother. Old and feeble as she is, she is the home in the east and came west in quest of me. She has passed through months of suffering, hardships and disappointments, all in the hope of seeing me again. And at last her love conquers her weakness and bears down every obstacle, and her purpose is accomplished. She finds me, but how? She finds me a highway robber. I whom she has loved and nurtured, and for whom she has sacrificed everything, reward her love by stealing from her that trinket which she valued equal to her life because it was mine. She was hunting her father, and she found him. Yes, she found him. She found him a highwayman, a robber, a thief."

Mart Thompson walked the floor for a moment with his head hung down and his hands clasped nervously. Suddenly he stepped in front of the two miners, and with startling vehemence cried:

"Do you think I should want to live after that? Do you suppose I could find any pleasure or satisfaction in living when I know what a miserable wretch I am? Never, never! That old lady and that child by their simple faith and innocent trust have stabbed me through and through. They have cut my heart deeper than any assassin might have cut with the sharpest steel. My God, men, I wish I had the power to tell you what I felt last night when I examined that locket and realized what I had done; but I can't do it. I can't find the language."

Mart Thompson again paced the floor for almost a minute; then growing calmer he came and sat down near the table.

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"I am glad of that," said Thompson, "and I have one request to make, or rather one favor to ask of you—that is, that they may never know. Will you grant it?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Now let the miners know I am here, and let them do their work."

With that Thompson folded his arms and sat grimly silent. His face, a little flushed now, still retained its drawn, sunken look, and his eyes, though they flashed with the fire of a certain sort of defiance, were still hollow and dark. His whole appearance denoted keen suffering—physical as well as mental.

Jack, without a word, went out and informed some of the leading men of the Flat of Mart Thompson's presence in the camp, and also of the conversation that had taken place down at his and Joe's cabin. Within a quarter of an hour a dozen men had gathered, and again Thompson stated why he had come in, and also of the conversation he had heard the story were told by it, strong, rough men as they were, there was deep down in their hearts a feeling of pity for the highwayman.

Ab Johnson was the acknowledged leader in the camp, and his companions were anxious to hear him speak; so when Thompson had finished, and a moment had passed in silence, some one said:

"Ab, what is your idea in this case?"

Ab did not answer immediately, but he shifted his weight from one foot to the other and scratched his head thoughtfully. At last he spoke, though with hesitation. He said:

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