

THE GIRL AT THE HALFWAY HOUSE

A STORY OF THE PLAINS
BY E. HOUGH, AUTHOR OF THE STORY OF THE COWBOY
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CHAPTER XIV.

Another Hour.

"But it seems as though I had always known you," said Franklin, turning again toward the tall figure at the window. There was no reply to this, neither was there wavering in the attitude of the head whose glossy back was turned to him at that moment. "It was like some forgotten strain of music!" he blundered on, feeling how hopeless, how distinctly absurd was all his speech. "I surely must always have known you, somewhere!" Mary Ellen still gazed out of the window. In her mind there was a scene strangely different from this which she beheld. She recalled the green forests and the yellow farms of Louisiana, the droning bees, the broken flowers and all the details of that sodden, stricken field. With a shudder there came over her a swift resentment at meeting here, near at hand, one who had had a share in that scene of desolation.

She turned toward him slowly at length, and so far from seeming serious, her features bore the traces of a smile. "Do you know," said she, "I think I heard of a stage-driver—wasn't it somewhere out west—who was taking a schoolteacher from the railroad to the schoolhouse—and he well, he said things, you know. Now, he had never seen the schoolteacher before."

"Yes, I have heard of that story," said Franklin. "I don't just recollect all about it."

"It seems to me that the stage-driver said something—er, like—maybe he said it was 'like forgotten music' to him."

Franklin colored. "The story was an absurdity, like many others about the west," he said. "But," he brightened, "the stage-driver had never seen the schoolteacher before."

"I don't quite understand," said Mary Ellen coldly. "In my country it

"You blame me as though it were personal!" broke in Franklin; but she ignored him.

"My father, my mother, my two brothers, nearly every relative I had, killed in the war or by the war—our home destroyed—our property taken by first one army and then the other—you should not wonder if I am bitter! It was the field of Louisiana which cost me everything. I lost all—all—on that day which you wish me to remember. Why, sir, if you wished me to hate you, you could do no better—and I do not wish to hate any one. I wish to have as many friends as we may, here in this new country; but for remembering—why, I can remember nothing else, day or night, but Louisiana!"

"You stood so," said Franklin, doggedly and fatuously, "just as you did last night. You were leaning on the arm of your mother—"

Mary Ellen's eyes dilated. "It was not my mother," she said. "We were seeking for my friend, her son, I—Captain Franklin. I know of no reason why we should speak of such things at all, but it was my—I was to have been married to the man for whom we were seeking, and whom we found! That is what Louisiana means to me."

Franklin bowed his head between his hands and half groaned over the pain which he had cost. Then slowly and crushingly his own hurt came home to him. In his brain he could feel the parting one by one of the strings which but now sang in unison. Discard, darkness, dismay, sat on all the world.

The leisurely foot of Buford sounded on the stair, and he knocked gaily on the door jam as he entered.

"Well, niece," said he, "Mrs. Buford thinks we ought to be starting back for home right soon now."

Mary Ellen rose and bowed to Franklin as she passed to leave the room; but perhaps neither she nor

of adventures ended. For one brief, glorious season the nomad and the home dweller shook hands in amity, not pausing to consider wherein their interests might differ. For both, this was the West, the free, unbounded, limitless, exhaustless West—Homer, Titanic, scornful of mores and bounds, having no scale of little things. The horizon of life was wide. There was no time for small exactness. A newspaper, so called, cost a quarter of a dollar. The postmaster gave no change when one bought a postage stamp. A shave was worth a quarter of a dollar, or a half, or a dollar, as that might be. The price of a single drink was never established, since that was something never called for. By day and by night, ceaseless, crude, barbaric, there went on a continuous carousal, which would have been joyous backed by a vitality less superb, an experience less young. Money and life—these two things we guard most sacredly in the older societies, the first most jealously, the latter with a lesser care.

The transient population of Ellenville, the cattle sellers and cattle buyers and land seekers, outnumbered three to one the resident or permanent population, which catered to this floating trade, and which supplied its commercial or professional wants. The resident one-third was the nucleus of the real Ellenville that was to be. The social compact was still in embryo. Life was very simple. It was the day of the individual, the day before the law.

With this rude setting there was to be enacted a rapid drama of material progress such as the world has never elsewhere seen; but first there must be played the wild prologue of the West, never at any time to have a more lurid scene than here at the Halfway House of a continent, at the intersection of the grand transcontinental trails, the bloody angle of the plains. Eight men in a day, a score in a week, met death by violence. The street in the cemetery doubled before that of the town. There were more graves than houses. This superbly wasteful day, how could it presage that which was to come? In this riotous army of invasion, who could have foreseen the population which was to follow, adventurous yet tenacious, resolved first upon independence, and next upon knowledge, and then upon the fruits of knowledge? Nay, perhaps, after all, the presence of this coming time lay over Ellenville the Red, so that it roared the more tempestuously on through its brief, brazen day.

(To be continued.)

Czar Arrested—For a Minute.

Motorists will be amused to hear of an adventure which befell the czar when he was staying at Darmstadt a short time ago. The czar was driving in a motor car with Prince and Princess Henry of Prussia and the Grand Duke of Hesse, and, when passing through Boekenheim, a suburb of Frankfurt, the car slipped on the greasy cobblestones and came in contact with the wall of a house. Happily no harm was done, but the car had hardly been backed into the road again when a policeman stopped it and demanded the name of the owner. The czar replied "I am the Emperor of Russia," and the policeman was so taken aback that he let the car go on without taking any further steps. The czarina was much amused at the incident, and it is said that she has made the momentary arrest of the czar the subject of one of her caricatures.—London Sketch.

Steel Dolls.

A factory in New Jersey has gone to making steel dolls. A steel doll is an indestructible doll that some parents may fancy is the right doll to buy. You can't yank the leg from a steel doll, nor dislocate its arms, nor twist its neck, nor dent its nose. You can have very little fun with a steel doll. It may do to batter the piano legs, or raise lumps on the head of your infant companion, but it can't be compared with a rag dollie for genuine comfort. Every normal child wants a doll that can be punctured and that will lose its stuffing through the puncture.

A steel doll, bah! What healthy infant outside of New Jersey would care to cuddle a steel doll, or put it to sleep, or dress it, or give it sugar pellets? Not one. No, indeed. The man who invented the steel doll was no friend of infantile humanity.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Dumas' Love for His Porthos.

Like Balzac, Dumas was fond of his own creations. Among them all he loved Porthos best. The great, strong, vain hero was a child after his own heart. One afternoon, it is related, his son found Dumas carworn, wretched, overwhelmed.

"What has happened to you? Are you sick?" asked Dumas his son.

"No," replied Dumas pere.

"Well, what is it, then?"

"I am miserable."

"Why?"

"This morning I killed Porthos. Poor Porthos! Oh, what trouble I have had to make up my mind to do it! But there must be an end to all things. Yet when I saw him sink beneath the ruins, crying 'It is too heavy for me!' I swear to you that I cried."

And he wiped away a tear with the sleeve of his dressing gown.

Blood of the Filipinos.

Ethnologists of the Smithsonian Institution have investigated the Filipinos, with results that are of rare interest to science. They have called attention to the fact that in the veins of the tribes of the archipelago flows the blood of all the races and varieties of mankind.



"I caught cold in my eye last week," said the cigar dealer. "The general effect was as if somebody had given me a good belt and the black and blue hadn't had time to show. It wasn't painful—merely uncomfortable—and I thought I could just as well attend to business while it wore itself out. It began to be painful after I got down to the store."

"Catch fresh cold?" inquired the customer.

"No," replied the cigar dealer sadly. "It was the inevitable funny business that hurt. People began to get interested in the eye as soon as they got inside the store. They thought it one of the richest jokes that ever happened, apparently. Say, can you tell me what there is funny about a black eye?"

"It isn't any funnier than twins," said the customer. "The last addition to my family was twins. I can sympathize with you. What did you do about it?"

"Stood it as long as I could," replied the cigar dealer. "After that I

went around to the printer and got these cards printed. Then when a man came in and asked me about it I handed him one of 'em."

The customer took a card the cigar dealer handed him and read:

"I did not run against an open door in the dark."

"It was not a stick of wood that flew up and hit me."

"I did not call the man a liar."

"I do not want to call your attention to the condition of the other man."

"I have not been interviewing Fitzsimmons."

"Nobody hit me."

"My wife and I have no differences of opinion."

"I have no wife."

"I did not threaten to report the policeman."

"N. B.—I would like to smile, but I can't, even in the interest of trade."

"Let me keep this for a curiosity," said the customer.

"I'm sorry," said the cigar dealer, "but I had only 1,000 of them struck off and I used up all the others."

His Trust Well Placed

"Last winter when I went south for my health," said Col. L. S. Brown of the Southern Railway, "I was told they were going to try a colored man for stealing a quantity of raw cotton, and when the hour arrived I went up to the court house to hear the case. The prisoner was a man about 40 years of age, and he had elected to plead his own case. The prosecution proved that the bag of cotton was found in the colored man's cabin, and the property was fully identified as belonging to the owner of a compass. The prisoner asked no questions, but said he wanted to make a statement and rest his case 'wid de Lawd.' After a while he was given an opportunity to speak and said:

"I was gwine by dat compass at 'leven o'clock last night when a voice dun called out to me: 'Hold on, dar, Abraham Jones. Yo' was a pore man, an' yo' jest take 'long dis bag o' cotton to buy yo' some shoes for cold weather.' Den de bag fell at my feet, an' I dun took it home."

"Did you recognize the voice?" said the judge.

"No, sah, but I reckon it was an angel who spoke."

"Then why did you hide the bag when you got home?"

"Well, sah, just as I got frowed de gate another voice dun told me dat I'd better hide de cotton for a few days."

"Did you recognize that voice?"

"No, sah; but I dun reckon it was a voice from heben."

"And that's your defense, is it?"

"Yes, sah, I've willin' to rest dis case in de Lawd's hands. De Lawd he dun knows I neber stole dat cotton."

"Hadn't you better have a lawyer?" suggested the judge, with something like a smile on his face.

"I reckon not, sah, I've been gwine to church fur de las' fo'ty y'ars, an' I've restin' dis case right in de hands ob de Lawd."

"Then I shall have to give you four months in jail, Abraham."

"Huh, what fur?"

"For stealing dat cotton."

The prisoner received his sentence without a word, seeming to have expected it, and was presently led away. Two weeks later I met him on the streets of a town fifty miles away and said to him:

"Abraham, I thought you were in jail at Selma?"

"Yes, sah, I was," he replied.

"And I remember you put your case in the hands of the Lord?"

"Deed, but I did, sah, an' I cum out all right."

"But you got four months'?"

"So I did, sah—so I did; but arter serving nine days ob de time de Lawd showed me how to dig out dat jail, an' yer I am an' dey won't neber git me agin'."—Washington Star.

Battle with a Wolf

The skin of the only gray wolf killed in Vermont in the last fifty years was brought into the village of Starkeboro the other day by David Dike, a farmer, who killed the animal in a patch of woods near his barn after a severe fight, in which Mr. Dike and a dog were badly used up.

Mr. Dike had just gone into the house from the barn, where he had been milking, when his attention was attracted by his shepherd dog, which was loudly barking in front of the hen-house. Taking a lantern, he went out to investigate and saw the dog had cornered a gray animal about his own size. Both were bristling with fear and rage, but neither dared to attack the other. The farmer had no gun, but he ran into the woodshed and procured a broom with which he struck at the marauder. Thereupon the wolf, for such it turned out to be, dashed for the woods, with the dog after it, and came to a stand near the foot of a maple tree.

By this time the wolf was frothing at the mouth and snarling and snapping at the shepherd every time he

came within range. Once or twice he nipped the dog and drew blood. Mr. Dike encouraged the dog and then boldly worked around to the rear of the maple.

This was too much for the wolf, and in sheer desperation he sprang at the farmer, who dealt him a telling blow with the broom. At the same time the dog tackled the animal in the rear and got a hold on his neck. The next instant a three-cornered fight was on. The wolf tackled the farmer and dog by turns, snapping and scratching at first one and then the other. In the meantime the dog and the broom got in some lively work and at the end of ten minutes honors were about even.

The wolf could easily have escaped, but he evidently preferred to fight it out, and it was nearly twenty minutes before he was vanquished. When the wolf was dead Mr. Dike found he was scratched in several places from the tip of his nose to the end of his tail. The skin is much the worse for wear, but will be mounted.

A Genius in Rags

"I don't pretend to account for the inequalities in this world, but I do know that there are a good many numbskulls who are rich and a good many very shrewd men who are poor," said a merchant who was taking lunch with a party of friends down town yesterday. "Here is a little incident that will give you some idea of what I mean. I'm something of a crank in the matter of shoes, and always have from five to a dozen pairs that are partly worn but still available for service. One morning last week a 'hobo' called at the basement door of my house and succeeded in getting my wife there to hear his story. But the fact that his feet were on the ground pleaded more eloquently than any words, and my big collection of shoes was brought out for him to choose from. He took a couple, returned profuse thanks, and left."

Toward evening my wife was out and I at home. Along came a 'hobo' with hair through his hat and feet

through his shoes. He humbly asked me if I couldn't help him in the matter of footwear and I was in the midst of a refusal when he said my wife had told him in the morning that I had a pair of shoes that were not mated and I would probably be willing he should have them. More with the idea of convicting the fellow of lying than anything else I brought out the shoes. Sure enough, there were two of them for the left foot, without any corresponding shoe for the right. I didn't see how he could utilize them, but he said they would serve his purpose, and he departed with them. In the morning that fellow had been sharp enough to pick out the two shoes for the right foot and then waited around till he could work me for the other two. I suppose one pair went to a pal.

Now, there is a fellow tramping it that would simply raise Ned if he had a chance at wrecking railroads or cornering wheat. There's not one man in a thousand would have thought of turning the trick he did."

STATE OF OHIO, CITY OF TOLEDO, ss.
I, CLARENCE M. HENRY, Notary Public in and for said State of Ohio, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the original of the same, as the same appears from the records of said office, and that the same were duly filed for record in said office, on the 10th day of December, A. D. 1903.
Attest my hand and the seal of said office, this 10th day of December, A. D. 1903.
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"You blame me as though it were personal."

was not customary for gentlemen to tell ladies when they met for the first time that it was "like a strain of forgotten music"—not the first time.

"Music never forgotten, then!" said Franklin impetuously. "This is at least not the first time we have met. In any ordinary duel of small talk this had not been so bad an attack, yet now the results were something which neither could have foreseen. To the mind of the girl the words were shocking, rude, brutal. They brought up again the whole scene of the battlefield. She shuddered, and upon her face there fell the shadow of an habitual sadness.

"You have spoken of this before, Captain Franklin," said she, "and if what you say is true, and if indeed you did see me—there—at that place—I can see no significance in that, except the lesson that the world is a very small one. I have no recollection of meeting you. But, Captain Franklin, had we ever really met, and if you really cared to bring up some pleasant thought about the meeting, you surely would never recall the fact that you met me upon that day!"

Franklin felt his heart stop. He looked aside, his face paling as the even tones went on:

"That was the day of all my life the saddest, the most terrible. I have been trying ever since then to forget it. I dare not think of it. It was the day when—when my life ended—when I lost everything, everything on earth I had. Because of Louisiana—why, this—Ellenville! This is the result of that day! And you refer to it with eagerness."

Poor Franklin groaned at this. "I know—I could have known," he blundered—"I should not be so rude as to suppose that—ah, it was only you that I remembered! The war is past and gone. The world, as you say, is very small. It was only that I was glad—"

"Ah, sir," said Mary Ellen, and her voice now held a plaintiveness which was the stronger from the drop of the tenderly curving lips—"ah, sir, but you must remember! To lose your relatives, even in a war for right and principle—and the South was right!" (this with a flash of the eye late pensiveness)—"that is hard enough. But for me it was not one thing or another; it was the sum of a thousand misfortunes. I wonder that I am alive. It is no wonder that those of us left alive went away, anywhere, as far as we could, that we gave up our country—that we came even here!"

Franklin was fully conscious of the leave-taking. Buford saw nothing out of the way, but turned and held out his hand. "By the way, Captain Franklin," said he, "I'm mighty glad to meet you, sir—mighty glad. We shall want you to come down and see us often. It isn't very far—only about twenty-five miles south. They call our place the Halfway Ranch, and it's not a bad name, for it's only about halfway as good a place as you and I have always been used to; but it's ours, and you will be welcome there. We shall depend on seeing you now and then."

"I trust we shall be friends," mumbled Franklin.

"Friends?" said Buford cheerily, the smiling wrinkles of his own thin face signifying his sincerity; "why, man, here is a place where one needs friends, and where he can have friends. There is time enough and room enough, and—well, you'll come, won't you?" And Franklin, dazed and missing all the light which had recently made glad the earth, was vaguely conscious that he had promised to visit the home of the girl who had certainly given him no invitation to come further into her life, but for whose world of welcome he knew that he should always long.

BOOK III.

The Day of the Cattle.

CHAPTER XV.

Ellenville the Red.

Gourdlike, Ellenville grew up in a night. It was not, and lo! it was. Silently, steadily, the people came to this rallying place, dropping in from every corner of the stars. The long street spun out still longer its string of toylike wooden houses. The Cottage Hotel had long since lost its key, and day and night there went on vast revelry among the men of the wild, wide West, then seeing for the first time what seemed to them the joy and glory of life.

Land and cattle, cattle and land. These themes were upon the lips of all, and in those days were topics of peace and harmony. The cattleman still stood for the nomadic and untrammelled West, the West of wild and glorious tradition. The man who sought for land was not yet recognized as the homesteader, the man of anchored craft, of settled convictions,