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THE CHOICE.

If it could choose, would the chattering brook
Flow tirelessly on, from each shady nook,
Out to the sun and the sea?
Would it blend with the waves in the neap-tide slow?
Or sing its own song, in melodious flow—
Monarch of meadow and lea?

If we could choose, would a starless sky,
Or a fret or a jar or a tear or a sigh
Ever enter these lives of ours?
Would we willingly go through life's devi-ous ways?
Serene in the sunlight, dark in the haze,
Unmindful of Pleasure's flowers?

Ah, could we choose, we would miss, I think,
The strength of our striving—the towering brink.
Of Virtue too hard to climb;
But man in his bosom has buried a dream God-given, and tenderly, fitfully gleam—
Under the earth-mold and rime—

Glimpses of beauty that lure our hearts on,
Despite of life's failures, out into the dawn
Of peace through the tempest of pain;
For man's but a child, and his lesson—to learn.
That earth's rarest hues, tear-bowed may burn
Out of the mist and rain.
—Katherine B. Huston, in Dramatic Magazine.



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CHAPTER IV.—CONTINUED.

Five minutes later he was back again. Tom had not returned, and Rider gulped down another draught of fiery liquor and then sluked up the street until he came to the darkest portion, where a narrow alley afforded him a secure hiding place. His right hand was hidden in the pocket of his coat, and grasped a short implement made of bone, which the sailors call a "fd," and which he had secured while on board a few moments before.

Under ordinary circumstances the liquor he had imbibed would have confused his brain, but now he was only conscious of an intense, overpowering determination to secure the papers which meant so much to the man who could reach the gold region with them.

There had been a smart shower in the early part of the evening, and the dripping from the low eaves of the houses still continued, but had a dragging and relenting sound. A solitary street light 50 yards away east a dismal gleam for a few square yards in either direction, while an occasional burst of drunken laughter from the next street told of some party of revelers making their noisy way home.

The mate noticed none of these things. His eyes were fixed intently in the direction from which he expected his victim to come, and his square jaws were set. Through his brain ran but one thought:

"The papers!"

Half an hour passed and Tom came striding along under the gaslight, humming a tune and merrily rehearsing the play he had just witnessed. Suddenly the watcher uttered an imprecation under his breath, for just as he was gathering himself for a spring he espied a dark figure stealing noiselessly along behind the young man.

Closer and closer crept the fateful shadow, and as Tom arrived opposite the alley where the mate was crouching, the latter saw the second figure take a few rapid, noiseless strides. Then an arm was raised over Tom's head and fell with crushing force, sending him stunned and senseless to the muddy pavement, while his assailant bent over his form to secure the valuables he might have about him.

With a shout of rage the mate rushed from his place of concealment toward the stranger, who sprang nimbly to his feet and sped down the street at amazing speed, without waiting to dispute the field with the newcomer.

To kneel by the prostrate form and tear open his clothing was the work of an instant, and when Obed Rider arose to his feet he held the belt containing the precious documents in his hands.

Slipping it quickly into his pocket he gave a hasty glance about him. All was still and once more he knelt by Tom's side, panting.

"Is he dead? I must be sure!"

In one hand he grasped his weapon and the other he placed over the young man's heart.

At first he detected no pulsation, then there was a feeble flutter and a moment later Tom groaned faintly.

"He's alive!"

The words were hissed forth in a murderous manner and as he spoke Rider raised his weapon.

But the blow did not fall, for even as he nervously prepared for the stroke the mate had a new thought which arrested his arm. He must have money and had no time to lose. If he robbed Tom of

both money and papers the victim, even if he recovered, was powerless to pursue his journey further. Who would believe his story of the gold mine?

All this flashed through his brain in much less time than it takes to write it, and with feverish, trembling haste he began fumbling about in Tom's clothes. He was not long finding the money which Tom carried in an inside pocket of his vest and was rising to his feet when a door suddenly opened a few yards away and a man came out of the house.

Without waiting to see in which direction he was turning, Obed Rider hurried away toward the wharf and was soon safe in his stateroom with his ill-gotten booty. His eyes shone with devilish triumph as he perched over the papers, and the sight of over \$700 in cash wrapped around the railroad ticket to Seattle filled his measure of satisfaction to overflowing.

He had no knowledge of the amount left Tom by the old miner and as he carefully secreted his treasures about his person, he chuckled:

"I'm a made man. He's lost his pile and the papers, too. I'll take the train to-day, you fool, in your place. I wonder if he will get over the rap or not? I don't need to fret, anyway. I didn't hit him, and he'll never know who did."

Tom's unintentional rescuer came quickly along until he caught sight of the prostrate figure, then he stopped short and slipped his hand behind him, glancing sharply about on every side. Apparently satisfied that no one was near, he knelt by the motionless form and struck a match.

It was a ghastly picture. Tom's face was so covered with blood that his features were not recognizable, his clothing was disarranged and covered with black mud, and as the newcomer looked a deep groan came from the prostrate man's lips.

With a little exclamation of horror the stranger rose to his feet and ran back to the door he had just left. He was gone but an instant, returning with another man, who assisted him in carrying the inanimate form to the entrance. With much trouble they lifted their heavy burden along a narrow passage into a sparsely furnished room, where they placed it upon a narrow bed in one corner.

A small kerosene lamp stood on a table, and by its light the first man took a look at the face, saying:

"Get a basin of water, Ned, quick! We must see how bad he is hurt."

When the water arrived a moment later, he washed the blood from Tom's face with a gentle hand, then as the features became distinct he uttered a little cry of astonishment and dropped on his knees by the wounded man, exclaiming:

"By thunder, Ned, I know this man! He was a passenger with us! If it isn't Mr. Scott, I'm a sinner! Somebody has knocked him on the head and gone through him! Bring the light! He may be hurt bad!"

As he spoke Tom moaned and stirred upon the bed. Then he opened his eyes and struggled with a wild look into a half-erect position.

"What's all this?" he groaned. "Where am I?"

"It's all right, Mr. Scott," replied a familiar voice. "You are with a friend. Better lie down awhile till you feel better."

Tom looked at him in a bewildered fashion, blinking his eyes in the glare of the lamp which the third man held close to him.

"Mr. Green!" he said, wonderingly.

"Yes, sir," replied the second mate of the Seabird. "It's me. I happened along just in time. Are you hurt much?"

Let me look at your head."

"My head?" repeated Tom, who had no clear conception of where he was or whether he was asleep or awake.

"Yes," replied his rescuer, lifting the hair on the top of his head as he spoke. "You were knocked down on the street and I found you there. I was going down to the vessel after some things I left there and I stumbled over a man on the sidewalk. I had no idea it was you, but I couldn't let a chaplie there in the mud, so we took you in here. This is my room. I've left the Seabird, you know. I'm off for the gold mines in the Klondike if I can get there."

The last word acted like magic upon Tom.

"The Klondike!" he repeated. "Yes, I remember. It all comes to me now. I forgot where I was. I remember now—I was attacked on the street! Somebody came up behind and struck me!"

"That's it. Then I came along and found you. You've got an ugly cut on the head, but I don't think it will amount to anything after you rest awhile. There is no doctor round here that I know of, and I'll just put a bit of plaster on it for you if you don't mind. You can get it looked at to-morrow if you want to."

The third man held the light while this was done and then left the second mate with his patient, who asked:

"Who was that?"

"I hire this room of him," was the reply. "He helped me bring you in from the street."

"You are very good," said Tom, "but it's late and I'm keeping you out of your bed."

As he spoke he tried to rise, but the other restrained him.

"You are not well enough yet," he said, kindly. "Better rest awhile. Did

you lose anything when you were struck? Have you watch or money?"

Tom interrupted him with a hoarse cry and sat bolt upright.

"My belt!" he panted, wildly.

His hands went to his waist and then the full force of his loss burst upon him.

It was gone!

The unfortunate young man looked stupidly at the sailor a moment, then he broke into meaningless laughter and fell back upon the bed. The blow had robbed him of his scattered senses and he fainted.

When the doctor reached his side a few hours later, Tom was suffering from brain fever and could not be moved. The second mate had summoned Capt. Coffin and now turned to him, saying:

"We can't leave him alone and without a cent. I was going to try my luck up north in the mines, but hang me if I'll leave him this way. I'm going to stay alongside the poor chap till he gets well or dies, if it takes every red I've got!"

"Put it there!" roared the bluff old skipper, holding out his hard fist. "You're a man, you are. But there's plenty of money belonging to him in my safe, and you needn't use a cent of yours. See he has the best care and call on me for the pay when you need it."

That afternoon the northern train included Obed Rider among its passengers, while Tom Scott tossed unceasingly from side to side, rambling on about secret trails and gold mines until the stout sailor by his side shook his head sorrowfully as he glanced at the burning cheeks and growled:

"I'm afraid the poor fellow has got his discharge."

CHAPTER V.

RIDER GETS A SURPRISE.

Obed Rider was far from easy in his mind as the train sped on, leaving San Francisco behind. He had slept on board the vessel the previous night until the noise of the second mate arousing the captain had awakened him. They did not call him, knowing the enmity that had existed between himself and Tom, but he overheard enough to tell him that Tom was alive, although badly hurt and out of his head with fever.

He knew Tom was in utter ignorance of the identity of his assailant, but had he been aware of the loss of the belt? Would the skipper remember the time he had seen the mate coming out of Tom's room and place any new significance on the incident?

A guilty conscience made him imagine all sorts of dangers to himself, and he trembled each time the train stopped at a station lest an officer should be in wait for him.

But nothing of the kind happened, and in due time he reached Seattle.



They placed him on the bed.

Here things seemed more encouraging, for he was fortunate enough to find a man who had engaged a passage on a steamer for Skagway and Dyea, which sailed the same day. The man had received a telegram announcing the dangerous illness of his wife, and was eager to leave Seattle by the next train.

The mate happened to be the first man he met, and the latter soon came to terms with him, and hurried on board to secure his quarters. He kept himself out of sight as much as possible, but when the lines were cast off the following day and the City of Seattle steamed out of the harbor he drew a long breath of relief, and said, half aloud:

"We're off at last, and I'm safe now."

He found that his ticket entitled him to a stateroom, and that the trip from Seattle to Dyea usually occupied about five days. All his fellow passengers were wild with impatience to reach the land of gold, and now that he felt safe from pursuit he eagerly listened to the stories of wonderful wealth found by lucky miners, for each one made it more probable that the papers he had secreted about him were genuine evidence, a fact which at times he was inclined to doubt.

He had paid the returning miner \$500 for his ticket and outfit, the latter including three horses and a good supply of provisions, while the former included their transportation to Dyea free of cost. He must, however, land them himself, the company declining all responsibility for this part of the work.

A short stop was made at Juneau, and two days later he found himself on the bench at Dyea with his belongings and feeling utterly at a loss how to proceed.

How to handle this formidable outfit was a puzzle. On board a vessel he was at home, but a horse was an animal of which he knew very little and here were three of them besides the heap of miscellaneous articles piled on the rocky shingle.

It was plain that they must be moved before the tide came in, and with a sailor's knowledge of knots he soon lashed the burdens on the backs of the raw-boned animals and succeeded in getting them to the town safely.

A small tent was among his newly acquired possessions and he proceeded to pitch it as best he could, piling his goods outside. He set up his little sheet-iron stove and was going for water when he passed close to one of his animals, who launched out viciously at him with his hoof, sending him to the ground several yards away with a broken rib and his left arm badly bruised.

"What's the trouble?" said a rough voice from the next camp as a burly, bearded man strolled leisurely to the spot. "Hurt ye much, pard?"

A string of oaths burst from Rider as he scrambled to his feet.

"Something's cracked inside," he growled, "and my arm's hurt. D—n the horse, anyway!"

"Better let my mate see if anything's wrong. He's a master hand with anything o' that kind. Here, Scott!" he added, raising his voice.

Obed Rider started at the name, but he turned fairly white with amazement as a tall, broad-shouldered man in the prime of life issued from the tent and came toward him, saying:

"What is it, Jack?"

Before the other could reply both Rider and the newcomer uttered exclamations of astonishment.

"Obed Rider!"

"Capt. Scott!"

The mate looked about him in a helpless way as if seeking some avenue of escape, but the other held out his hand cordially, saying:

"Of all men, to see you here!" Then he added:

"But you are hurt. Can I do anything for you? Let me have a little look. We can talk afterward."

The injury was soon located, and after predicting that a few days would set the matter right, Capt. Scott said:

"What on earth brought you here? Have you been home lately? Did you see my boy?"

The mate had done considerable thinking during the past few minutes. After the first surprise was over he had rapidly determined upon his course, and he now shook his head, replying:

"I'm afraid I can't give you much good news from home, cap'n."

His eyes fell as he spoke, but the other was too eager to notice.

"What do you mean, Rider?"

The voice was hoarse now with suppressed eagerness. "My boy! Tell me! Is he—why don't you speak? My brother, too! D—t, man speak out! Has anything happened to them? They might both be dead by the way you act!"

"They are," murmured Rider, still with his eyes cast down.

Without a word the captain turned on his heel and disappeared. It was half an hour before he returned, and there was such a change in his rugged features that even the mate felt compassion for him. But he had no alternative. Anything to prevent Tom's father from learning the truth. He had told his story, and now he must be prepared with the details. Fortunately the absence of his latest victim had given him time to rapidly sketch out a line of procedure which he hoped would be safe.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Medieval French Beggars.

The rank and file of the beggars were divided into distinct classes, each following some particular form of mendicacy to which strict attention was demanded. One had to be a specialist and stick to his own line of business; the general practitioner was accorded no recognition. The subjects of the king of Argot kept no chronicles; consequently our knowledge of the beggar dynasty is somewhat limited.

Three kings, however, managed to make names for themselves in history: Ragot, a Solon in Bags, who founded the monarchy and drew up a system of laws for its government; AACREON, who, wrapped in a mantle of a thousand pieces, collected alms while riding an ass through the streets of Paris, and a monarch who is known to us as the king of Tunis. The latter reigned for three years only, and was broken on the wheel at Bordeaux because his ideas of personal liberty differed from those of the French government, whose minions happened to be stronger than his own.

At stated periods the French beggars held a general parliament at Sainte Anne d'Auray, in Brittany, where means were discussed for the advancement of mendicacy in all its branches. What a gathering it must have been! What a fantastic, nightmare-like assemblage of rags and tatters!—Lippincott's.

Spoke for Him.

Hiram Jinks—O. Maudie, are you never going to listen to my suit?

Miss Maud—