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THREW LIFE AWAY.

FIRST met the dea-
con under rather
odd circumstances.

A persistent touch
of rheumatism un-
der my left shoul-
der, which defied
liniments and plas-
ters, sent me to the
Hot Springs, seven
miles north of
Boomopolis, South-

ern California. To reach the hot springs
the traveler crosses five miles of desert
country, where the cactus flourishes
like the green bay tree, and the coyote
shrills at night his peculiar lay. Then
he climbs "the grade," a rise of a thou-
sand feet in two miles. This part of
the way is over a mountain road which
skirts precipices and winds in and out
among canyons in a way that makes
timid people dizzy.

One bright, beautiful winter after-
noon Deacon Hardwicke started for the
hotel. That morning he had procured
at Boomopolis a livery team and a driver,
and had been taken to different
points about the valley, looking at
lands which were offered for sale.

Having completed his inspection, he
was driven to the foot of the grade, and
there he dismissed the team.

He had in his hands a little black
leather wallet containing deeds, and,
as he walked along in his slow and
dignified fashion, his eyes bent on the
ground, he looked like a gentleman of
leisure, perhaps a wealthy Eastern
tourist out for an airing.

At the foot of the grade is a little
ranch house, and just beyond the road
makes a turn almost at right angles
and skirts the edge of a canyon, where
the traveler is hidden from view in
either direction.

In this angle of the way a man was
waiting for the afternoon stage, which
was about due. It carried the mail for
the hotel and sometimes considerable
express matter, to say nothing of the
passengers.

But the deacon happened to come
first, and as he turned the corner, plod-
ding slowly along, he heard a smooth,
clear, firm, but not impatient voice
say:

"Wait a moment, sir. And kindly
hand over that grip-sack and your
money."

Glancing up, the deacon beheld a
big revolver pointed at his head.

Deacon Hardwicke was surprised and
grieved. He was not a coward. He
had lived in many a lawless commu-
nity, had seen men lynched, had himself
been a target for bullets more than
once. If he had been armed, he would
have fought—as he afterward assured
me.

But the appalling fact flashed over
him that he had no "gun," and that
the gentlemanly stranger "had the
drop" on him.

"Come," said the highwayman in a
more threatening tone. "I mean busi-
ness. Drop your wallet. Give me your
money, or I'll let daylight through you."

The deacon halted and shook his fist
at the man. What he said is not ma-
terial to this recital. Then he turned
and ran down the grade.

The highwayman fired twice, and the
deacon afterward stated that the balls
whistled by in close proximity to his
head. The shots flustered him. He
stumbled, tripped and fell. He bruised
his shins and tore the skin from his
wrists. The wallet flew from his hand,
and he lay in the road, howling with
rage and pain.

The marauder advanced leisurely and
picked up the wallet. Just then the
stage, which was a trifle late, as us-

ual, rolled slowly around the turn in
the road.

The deacon's assailant leaped down
the steep bank of the canyon and rolled
headlong among the chaparral.

The remarks of the passengers on
the stage, which picked him up and
brought him to the hotel, did not tend
to make him better natured.

"Guess it was all a fake," "I didn't
hear any shots." "More scared than
hurt." These were some of the whis-
pered compliments that came to the
deacon's ears.

"If I had only had a gun," he said to
me, "that fellow would never have got
out of there alive. It's the disgrace that
hurts. I don't see how I was care-
less enough to leave my gun at home
these times," he said, with tears in
his eyes.

"Do you think you would know the
fellow should you see him again?" I
asked.

"I should know him anywhere. He is
short and wiry, dark hair, mus-
tache, no beard, black eyes. And there
is a great, red, flaming scar across his
cheek—knife wound, I reckon."

"I'll tell you what we'll do," I said.
"Let us go to Boomopolis and find him.
He will soon see that there is no pur-
sult, and will certainly go there. Per-
haps we can arrest him yet."

Boomopolis at that time was only an
infant among the cities of Southern
California. There were huge gaps
among its business houses, now filled

with stately edifices. There were no
pavements, and where a hundred
globes of electric fire now glare at night
upon the passerby, there was then only
the dim and fitful gleam of lamps from
the windows of the scattered stores.

After an elaborate supper at the
Transcontinental, served by retired
cowboys from Arizona, we sallied forth
to visit the saloons and gambling places
in search of our robber. We made
three or four circuits of the town with-
out success, and finally found ourselves
in the Magnolia Club rooms.

I was enjoying the character of
amateur detective hugely. So far there
was a pleasant tinge of excitement—or,
rather, an expectation of excitement—and
very little danger. But as we
scanned the faces of the company with-
out seeing our man, the deacon's brow
grew black with disappointment.

It was now after midnight. The
cigar store was closed, but the bar was
kept open all night. Disappointed in
our search, we became absorbed in
watching the game.

There is something of the gambler in
every man, and, as I looked upon the
tense, excited faces of the players the
contagion of their example seized me,
and I felt in my pocket for a coin.

Finding nothing but silver, which I did
not like to stake as there was none on
the table, I was on the point of bor-
rowing a double eagle from the deacon
when I heard a quiet but distinct voice
at the end of the room say:

"Hands up, gentlemen, if you please."

Glancing around, I saw a man stand-
ing at the door leading to the bar, a
revolver in each hand pointed at us.
He was a short, slight man, with dark
hair and a flaming scar across his face.

There was no confusion. One of the
loungers quietly placed his back against
the door leading to the cigar store and
drew two revolvers, which he pointed
along the table. Two others, evidently
confederates also, stood at ease await-
ing the next order. The rest of us
lifted our hands simultaneously.

"The gents that are seated will kindly
rise," said the voice near the door.
The gamblers rose as one man.

"Now, then. Everybody right about
and face the wall," was the next com-
mand.

We advanced in two rows to the op-
posite sides of the room and stood, as
directed, ranged against the walls.
Then the two confederates stepped
leisurely to the table, and scooped the
gold into a couple of little sacks which
they produced from their pockets.

Having secured the money on the
table, the brigands proceeded to rob our
persons. With a great show of politeness
they requested us to give up our
watches, money and weapons. The fel-
low tossed my revolver and my few sil-
ver dollars into his sack and grabbed at
my watch.

Just then there was a crashing, ex-
plosive sound, deafening in the narrow
confines of the room—then another—
another—and another. Then came dark-
ness, a quick rush of feet, a tumult of
shouts and groans.

It was the deacon, of course. I knew
it before the welcomed hurried arrival
of men from outside, with lanterns. He
had "turned loose" at the leader. They
had exchanged three or four shots be-
fore the light went out, quickly and
mysteriously.

The men with the sacks and the
money were gone, but the deacon was
bending over a form that was stretched
upon the floor.

The fellow tried to lift himself upon
his elbow.

"I know you, pard," he said. "You're
the man I stood up this afternoon.
You've held over me this time. I'm
gone."

The deacon's eyes softened. He
dropped his revolver, put his long arm
under the other's head and tried to
turn him into a more comfortable posi-
tion.

"I am sorry for you," he said, slowly
and simply.

"Oh—it's all—right," gasped the
wounded man, evidently speaking with
great difficulty. "I came—into—the
game—on—a bluff, but—you've—called—
me—sure."

"Is there anything that I can do for
you?" asked the deacon.

"Bend down here," said the man.
The deacon lowered his head, and the
other whispered something to him.

"I'll do it," said the deacon.
The next day in the afternoon the
deacon and I sat on the veranda of the
hotel at Hot Springs enjoying a sun
bath and admiring the diversified land-
scape before us.

"Now, there was that young fellow
yesterday," said he. "Had he told me
who he was I would have lent him
\$100 to go East, and there he might
have amounted to something. He sim-
ply threw his life away."

"What did that young fellow say to
you?" I asked.

"Told me his name. You would
know the family if I should mention it.
Wanted me to see that he was decently
buried, and to write to his father and
mother."—San Francisco Argonaut.

Stopping a Panic

One night at a London theater some
odds and ends of scenery took fire, and
a very perceptible odor of burning
alarmed the spectators.

A panic seemed to be imminent,
when an actor appeared on the stage.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said,
"compose yourselves. There is no
danger—I give you my word of honor
there is no danger."

The audience did not seem reassured.
"Ladies and gentlemen," continued
the comedian, rising to the necessities
of the occasion, "confound it all; do you
think if there was any danger I'd be
here?"

The panic collapsed.

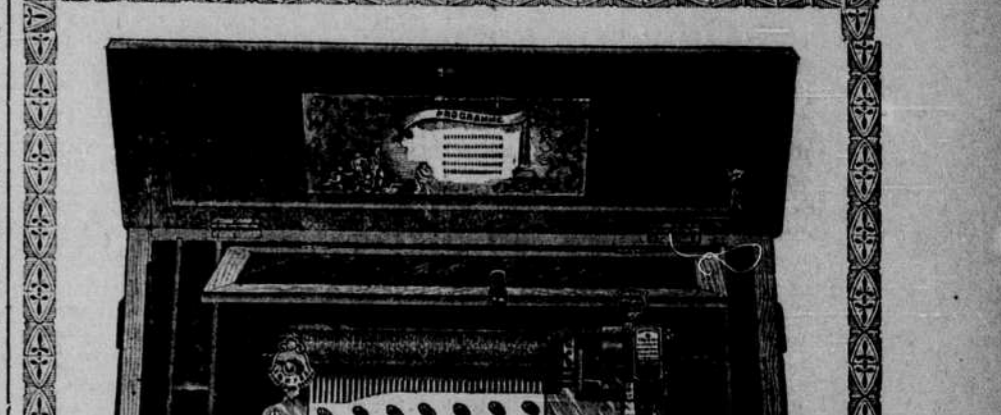
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