

BOME SWEET BOME.

Weary and faint lay the old grandire—
He had hidden adieu to earthly things;
His hands were clasped like a saint at rest,
In the holy calm death's angel brings.

"The way had been long—he was so tired,
So glad to reach the end," he said;
Then closed his eyes with a parting smile,
While we kept our vigil beside his bed.

The sands of life were ebbing fast—
We felt "the last of earth" had come.
When sudden, the voice of a little child
Sang sweetly and clearly, "Home sweet home."

At once the wan lips opened wide,
The dim eyes beamed on us in prayer,
And we caught the pale lips' wistful words:
"There's no place like home—help me reach there."

Then, while he gently fell asleep,
We took up the strain of the little child,
And sang the old man to his heavenly rest,
Safe in the fold of the Shepherd mild.

And the smile still lived on the dear, calm face,
On which the shadow of death had come;
But our grief was stilled, and our hearts were
Glad, for we knew he was sheltered at "Home,
Sweet home."
—New York Observer.

RIVAL OF A PARSON.



Two or three customers who had come from the extreme end of Possum Ridge, concluded to wait for Beckett's return rather than to make the trip again; and so, tying their horses, they sat down on a log and fell into a friendly chat.

"I'll tell you what, fellers," Rial Harder said, after the weather and crops had been discussed, "the takin' off of old Sam's woman is purty dogged sudden, ain't it?"

"Yes, it air, Rial, fur a fack," Dan Hawkins replied. "Reckon there warn't nobody spectin' it."

"No, and I guess Sam hadn't figured on it any hisself."

"Wonder if it'll git Sam down much?"

"Reckon not bad. You see, when a feller's buried four wives he naturally gets sort of used to it, and the takin' off of the fifth hasn't likely to go so hard with him as it would if she was the first. It's all bein' used to things."

"Yes, that's so, Rial, and if a feller ever gets used to wives a dyin', I guess Sam ought to be. There ain't many men as kin boast o' buryin' five of 'em haudrunnin' it."

"No, there ain't many, Dan, that's so. Wonder who Sam'll marry next time?"

"Lor' I hain't no idea. Nobody ever thought of him marryin' any of them women he has married. Seems like he has a mighty takin' way with the women folks, somehow, and it does 'pear like women do most unaccountable things. Now there wasn't anybody as ever thought of Tilly Smith a marryin' old Sam, was there?"

"I guess not."

"But she married him, though."

"Yes, that's so, she did."

"Well, and that's the way it'll be ag'in. Old Sam's dogged lucky when it comes to marryin', and I guess he ought to be, after all the experience he's had."

"Yes; and the first thing you know he'll have another wife. And she won't be an old hag, either, but the purtiest gal on Possum Ridge."

"Azactly—azactly. He has always married young gals, and I low he'll do it this time."

"I wouldn't be a blamed bit surprised, Dan, if he did spruce around Bet Higgins. Bet's the best-looking woman on the ridge, and most anybody'd be glad enough to git her."

"But that wouldn't do him any good, Rial. Reckon that preacher has got her fast enough."

"He may have, and he mayn't have. We kin tell better a week from now."

The two hours had run out and Beckett returned.

"Sorrow I had to keep you waitin', men," said he, as he came up; "but it couldn't be helped. Folks will die, and they can't be blamed for it, and they're just as liable to go at one time as another. Tain't in the nature of things for people to choose their own time for dyin'; and when they die they have to be buried, you know."

"Shore, Sam; that's all natural enough. Reckon you find it a powerful hard blow, comin' so unexpected?"

"Yes, I do, Rial. It's awful unhandy. Tilly was a smart woman and I hated to give her up; and besides, there is always more or less time lost in buryin' of the dead one and lookin' round for somebody to take her place."

"Reckon you'll marry ag'in?"

"Why, yes, of course, but I hain't settled on anybody yet. It takes times for these things, you know, and a man has to look around a little."

Old Sam Beckett was well-to-do, and on Possum Ridge he was looked upon as the money king of the world. He owned a good farm, besides the old mill, and lived in a two-story frame house—a luxury that was rare

at that time and which loomed up immensely among its numerous log cabin neighbors.

Some time previous to the death of Beckett's fifth wife old Jerry Higgins had died, and, having a daughter to leave to the tender mercies of the world, bequeathed her to old Sam's fatherly care.

Betty Higgins was just "rising onto" 18, and was as pretty a girl as ever graced Possum Ridge society, and for that matter she would have no mean ornament in more aristocratic circles.

For years she had constituted Jerry Higgins' family, and he being a man well-to-do financially, and justly proud of his daughter, had devoted considerable means to giving her an education, and had even gone so far—against the protest of his neighbors, of course—as to send her away to attend school in the city.

Old Sam was a rudy gruff fellow, who had seen the suns of 50 summers, but who was perfectly preserved physically, and in good trim for taking a sixth wife at any time.

The work at the mill had run behind a little during Tilly Beckett's short illness, and for two or three days after the funeral old Sam was kept quite busy grinding the accumulated "grists."

In the meantime Mose Hackett, the "preacher feller," had spent a good deal of his spare time in the neighborhood of Beckett's mill. In fact, he and Betty spent a great many hours in quiet strolls along the shady lanes of Possum Ridge or in peaceful Coon Run River.

In one of these long walks they happened to pass by the mill. Beckett was at the time leaning through the little window looking listlessly down the road that ran off through the woods, and all at once his gaze fell upon the advancing couple.

In a moment a dark frown came over his face and his brows contracted with vexation. He watched them until they passed on and out of sight, and then with a dissatisfied shrug of the broad shoulders he turned away muttering:

"'Twon't do—'twon't nigh do! That thar feller's gittin' too numerous in these parts, an' the first thing I know that girl will be fer marryin' him. I promised old Jerry I'd keer fer 'er an' I'll do it. Tain't fer her good to marry sech upstarts as him, an' she shan't do it."

Since the death of Beckett's wife Betty had gone to live at Dan Bunker's, and accordingly, as soon as the grist had all been ground out, Beckett closed the old mill, and dressing himself in his best suit, walked over to Bunker's house.

Pretty soon after his arrival Dan and his wife managed to retire, leaving Beckett alone together in the best room.

"Ruth," Dan said, when they were outside, "you know what Beckett's come fer?"

"No, I don't," Ruth replied.

"Wal, I do."

"Then, what is it?"

"Why, he's come a-sparkin' uv Bet."

"The land sake, Dan, do you reckon so?"

"I know it. Ain't he got on a biled shirt an' his go-to-meetin' blue jeans coat? An' what else would he have them on for if he wasn't flaunting on axin' her to have him?"

"Dan Bunker, do you know what I think of old Beckett?"

"No, I don't, Ruth; but, for that matter, I low it's not so much what you think of him as what Bet thinks of him that's of interest to old Beckett."

"Well, I think he's an old varmint, and for that matter, I low that Bet won't think much different when she finds out his business. The idea of the old thing marryin' a pretty young gal like her—an' that, too, when his other wife ain't been dead a week!"

As soon as Dan and Mrs. Bunker were well out of the room old Sam turned to Beth and remarked:

"I see you a-walkin' about a good bit of late with that preacher feller, an' don't approve of it. I hope you don't mean nothin'—like business."

"I do'n know that I understand your meaning, Mr. Beckett," the girl replied, but I must say that I am at a loss to know what objection you can have to Mr. Hackett."

"Wal I've got this much objection to him or to anybody else: I don't want you to marry anybody but me. I'm your guardian, an' I know how I'll make you a good husband, an' I ain't willin' to trust you with them thar young upstarts. I've made up my mind to marry you Bet. I done that the day Tilly was buried, an' I've come to ask you to jine me."

"Marry you!" the girl exclaimed in amazed wonder. "Why, I never thought of such a thing."

"Don't need to be thought of. All you want to do is to say the word, an' I'll get Dan to go over an' fetch Squire Beeson, an' we'll have it over in less'n an hour. Don't need no thinkin', Bet. You know me an' I know you, an' you know how much money an' land I've got, an' you know what sort of a home I kin offer you. Ain't that enough?"

"No, it's not enough. You are a fool if you think I could be induced to marry an old man like you simply because you have a little money, and that, too, when your poor wife is hardly cold in her grave. I won't listen to you and either you or I will leave the room!"

"Do you mean what you say, Bet?"

"Yes, I mean what I say—every word of it. I'd die before I'd marry you!"

"Wall, I ain't used to bein' treated in that way, gal, an' you may be sorry for it yet."

"Never!"

"Then I shall have to repeat it."

A few more plunges weakened the

ful guardian, I now give you notice that you shan't never marry that upstart of a preacher. Do you hear that?"

"Yes, I hear it."

"Then see that you heed it!"

"I won't do it. I'm going to marry him, and you can't prevent it."

"Goin' to marry him?"

"Yes, going to marry him."

Old Sam took two or three turns across the room, then halted in front of the girl, his face livid with rage and his form shaking with anger, he bent forward until his hot breath scorched her cheeks, and hissed:

"You shan't do it. You're mine, an' I'm goin' to have you, and before you shall marry that fellow, I'll—I'll—"

He never finished the sentence, but the look in his eyes and the awfulness of his manner made his meaning plain to the girl, and she shrank back from him.

"You will not," she cried. "You dare not."

"Won't I? You'll see. And, girl, his blood will be on your head for you drive me to it. I've had five wives and I've loved them all. I loved them as well as men usually love their wives, but I never loved anybody as I love you."

"Go! I've heard enough!" and with that the girl swept from the room.

For a moment Beckett stood still looking after her, then, whirling on his heel, he strode out and away.

As he walked along the road leading to the mill his mind dwelled on the scene he had just quitted, and with each succeeding minute his rage grew fiercer and his anger higher, and his face looked strangely white in the soft moonlight. Once he clinched his fists and muttered:

"It shan't be so. I'll kill him first. It's her money that bought the land and her money that built the house, and, though nobody knows it, it'll be found out if she marries him, and then I'll be fixed in a nice pickle. No, it musn't be and it shan't be. She must be my wife."

He had walked quite a distance and come to the point where the road followed along the river bank. It was a narrow pass between the river and the bluff, and only a footpath, or "high cut," as the people called it, where foot passengers turned off from the main road and saved some distance by going through it.

Beckett had passed several yards along the bank when he heard the sound of footsteps approaching from the other way, and looking up, what was his surprise and indignation to find himself face to face with the "preacher feller."

Both stopped short and for some time neither spoke. Beckett's rage was too great to permit of his uttering a word, while the other was too much shocked by old Sam's looks and actions to find any power of speech.

"What's the matter, Mr. Beckett?" the minister finally asked.

"Matter enough," Beckett replied, in a trembling voice.

"I hope nothing serious has gone wrong with you?"

"You're a liar," Beckett screamed. "You don't hope any such thing, an' you know you don't. If you did you wouldn't do it."

"Do what, my friend? I do not understand your meaning."

"No, I reckon you don't understand it, when you are at the bottom of it."

"Bottom of what?"

"Bottom of this trouble. Oh, you're a good one, and you've worked it mighty fine, but you shan't never marry her."

A light began to dawn on Hackett, and he thought he was getting an insight into the old man's meaning.

"Now, look here, Mr. Beckett," he said, very calmly. "I know you are Miss Higgins' guardian, and I proposed to respect your right by informing you of our intentions."

"Hang your intentions! I say you can't marry the gal. You can't have her!"

"What's your objections?"

"I'm goin' to marry her myself."

The reply struck Mose Hackett as so preposterous and ridiculous that he could not avoid laughing.

In an instant Beckett's face grew red with anger; and taking a step forward, he said:

"You laugh at me, do you, you little gutter-snipe of creation? You think you'll git her anyhow, but I'll see to it that you don't!"

And before the minister realized his meaning, Beckett had his strong arms about him and was doing his utmost to throw him over into the river.

Beckett was a hardy man and unusually strong, and he experienced no difficulty in lifting his little antagonist up and churning him about. But to throw him into the river was a much more difficult task, since the little man clung to him like a leech and refused to be shaken loose.

There was a long struggle which at last ended in both of them getting too near the bank and slipping into the river.

The minister, being the most active, was the first to come up, and seeing his advantage was quick to seize it, and in an instant he gathered Beckett by the nape of the neck and proceeded to duck him two or three times, after which he said, still retaining his grip:

Mr. Beckett, I want your consent to the marriage between Miss Higgins and myself. Are you going to give it?"

"That's not enough," the minister went on. "You have her money and you must give it up. Do you promise that?"

"No, I don't, and I won't. I'll die first."

"Then I shall have to put you under and hold you under."

"For heaven's sake, don't do that, man! I'm drowned now."

"Then you promise?"

"Yes, I promise."

"Will you swear it?"

"Yes, yes! Let me out; I'm dying!"

At that moment Dan Bunker and Betty Higgins arrived.

"They knew that the minister was coming, and they feared that Beckett would meet him and use violence, and came to his rescue."

"Now, repeat your promise in the presence of these two," the minister commanded, and Beckett reluctantly complied.

"I'll tell you what," the minister continued, "it will be a good idea to complete this business while we're at it. So if Dan will go an' fetch Squire Beeson, we'll have the marriage performed and the papers signed over while Mr. Beckett is in the right notion."

Dan went for the Squire, who lived less than a half a mile away, and in a short time the marriage ceremony was gone through. Beckett then signed over the girl's property and departed for home, a sadder and a madder man.

The next day he went down and married the Widow Muggs, and from that day he and his old mill have jogged along, doing moderately well.

But Beckett never has liked a preacher since that night.

A True Wife.

It is not to sweep the house, make the beds, darn the socks and cook the meals chiefly that a man wants a wife. If this is all he needs, a servant can do it cheaper than a wife. If this is all, when a young man calls to see a lady, send him in to the pantry to taste the bread and cake she has made; send him to inspect the needlework and bed-making; or put a broom in her hand and send him to witness its use. Such things are important, and a wise young man will quickly look after them. But what the true young man wants with a wife is her companionship, sympathy and love. The way of life has many dreary places in it, and a man needs a wife to go with him. A man is sometimes overtaken by misfortunes; he meets with failures and defeat; trials and temptations beset him, and he needs one to stand by and sympathize. He has some hard battles to fight with poverty, enemies and sin, and he needs a woman that when he puts his arms around her, he feels he has something to fight for; she will help him to fight; she will put her lips to his ear and whisper words of counsel, and her hand to his heart and impart inspiration. All through life, through storm and through sunshine, conflict and victory, through adverse and through favoring winds, man needs a woman's love.—The Lady.

Guiteau's Curse.

The death of Policeman Kearney, the officer who arrested Guiteau after he had shot President Garfield, brings up once more Guiteau's curse. The superstitious find much food for morbid imaginings in the fate which has befallen so many of the chief actors in that tragical affair. It must have been an impartial or too comprehensive curse, for while George B. Corkhill, the prosecuting attorney, and Judge Porter, his assistant, are both dead, poor Charley Reed, who defended him, after attempting suicide by jumping from a ferry boat into the North river, is in an insane asylum in New Jersey, and Scoville, Guiteau's brother-in-law, who assisted in the defense, is divorced from his wife and is little better than a legal wreck. However, Judge Cox, who presided at the trial and sentenced the assassin, is hale and hearty, sound of body and mind, and is just now wrestling with the mysteries of the Butler-Strong case.—Washington Cor. Chicago Times.

The Ancient Ale Taster.

The modern wine taster and tea taster are well known institutions, but in old times there was an office of ale taster, to the holder of which fees were paid in kind. It is noted in Dr. Langbaine's "Collections," under Jan. 23, 1617, that John Shurle had a patent from Arthur Lake, bishop of Bath and Wells, and vice chancellor of Oxford, for the office of ale taster to the university, and the making and assizing of bottles of hay. The office of ale taster requires that he go to every ale brewery the day they brew, according to their courses, and taste their ale; for which his ancient fee is one gallon of strong ale and two gallons of small wort, worth a penny.—Lippincott's Magazine.

Sully Planted It.

Very few persons are aware that Paris has a large elm which is 130 feet tall and has a circumference near its base of eighteen feet. It is healthy and vigorous. It was planted by Sully by order of Henry IV, who placed an elm in front of every church in Paris.—Rebobbth Herald.

LOST LIGHT.

I cannot make her smile come back—
That sunshine of her face.
That used to make this worn earth seem
At times, so gay a place.
The same dear eyes look out at me;
The features are the same.
But, oh! the smile is out of them,
And I must be to blame.

Sometimes I see it still: I went
With her the other day
To meet a long-missed friend, and while
We still were on the way,
Her confidence in smiling love
Brought back, for me to see,
That old-time love-light to her eyes
That will not shine for me.

They tell me money waits for me:
They say I might have fame.
I like those gossams quite as well
As others like those same.
But I care not for what I have,
Nor lust for what I lack.
One title as much as my heart longs
To call that lost light back.

Come back! dear, banished smile, come
back!
And into exile drive
All thoughts, and aims, and jealous hopes,
That in thy stead would thrive.
Who wants the earth without its sun?
And what has life for me
That's worth a thought, if, at its price,
It leaves me robbed of thee?
—Edward S. Martin, in July Scribner.

A FEAREUL ORDEAL.

Occupying a seat in the reading room of a down town hotel one day last week, says a writer in The Alta California, there might have been observed a seemingly aged gentleman, whose hair was gray and whose cheeks were shriveled. A pallor as of death was on his face, and frequently the muscles of his features would twitch convulsively. His name was Richard J. Allen, and he registered himself as hailing from Toronto, Canada.

Five years ago Richard Allen, or Dick Allen, as he was familiarly known by his associates, owned, or at least claimed and occupied, a stock range of considerable area in southern Arizona, the Mexican boundary line being distant but a few miles. He owned a large number of beef cattle and was considered well to do.

Among the rough population of the border Allen was a power. He was most generously gifted by nature, having a well knit, athletic frame, and a mind well stored with knowledge. But it was Allen's nerve which secured for him recognition and affluence amid the cactus flecked plains of Arizona and New Mexico—a nerve which knew no flinching, even in the face of death. The greasers and Indians soon learned to dread the tall stockman, for in more than one encounter they had come off badly worsted, and more than one unmarked grave on the Mexican frontier bears silent witness to Allen's unerring aim, for he never hesitated to kill when he thought himself justified. Very little is considered justification among the class with which Allen was associated. So greatly was he feared and respected by his wild companions and neighbors that nothing bearing his brand was ever molested, and the most daring of the cowboys and outlaws seldom attempted death by a too prolonged argument with him.

As an illustration of his iron nerve, it may be related that at one time in 1884 he was given warning to keep away from a certain small settlement, some ten miles from his ranch, he having incurred the displeasure of a gang of notorious cutthroats there. Allen smiled grimly as he read the warning, then strapped on his revolver and set forth for the hostile hamlet. He tied his horse in the rear of a saloon and started to enter, when a pistol shot was heard and a bullet whistled over his head. Allen turned. Not more than twenty feet away stood "Dan," a half breed Indian, with a revolver in his hand. As Allen turned three more balls passed in close proximity to his head. He knew the Indian had one shot left. With a scornful smile he said, "Fire again, you—, and fire lower."

The Indian did so, and the next instant his spirit had left the arid plains of Arizona forever. Then Allen strode into the saloon, where at least a dozen of his enemies were gathered, and demanded to know who sent him the warning. No one answered, and after roundly cursing the gang for their cowardice, he left and went home. For two months he battled hard with death, for the last bullet fired by the Indian had lodged in his right breast, almost piercing the lung.

It was some three months after this occurrence that Allen met with a mishap that buried him from an existence but little removed from death. It was in the summer of 1885. All day long Allen had been hard at work branding a lot of yearling steers, at a point some twenty miles from his dugout, and at night he was completely worn out. It was a wearisome gallop from the branding place to his cheerless habitation, for the air was sultry and the baked ground gave forth an intense heat.

It was nearly 11 o'clock when the stock man reached his destination, and glad was he when his pony was safely stabled for the night and at creep into bed when his quick ear detected a slight noise in the direction of his stable, and he knew at once that prowlers were about. Seizing his revolver, he started for the stable, on his hands and knees, for he intended to kill and not alarm,

having no garment on other than his undershirt. The noise at the stable continued, and Allen moved rapidly toward the sound. So intent was he on investigating the noise that he failed to notice where his path led him, and suddenly, without warning, he felt something beneath him give way, and he was precipitated to the bottom of a "played out" well, a distance of some twenty-five feet. The well had been dry for years, and the mouth had been closed with a few rotten boards, which giving way under Allen's great weight, had caused the catastrophe.

For a moment Allen was stunned. The skin on his body had been abraded in a dozen places, and every bone ached with the force of the fall. The stockman was almost overwhelmed with rage, for in this accident he saw himself rendered helpless, and knew the thieves, if any there were, would not leave as much behind as a lariat, and might should they discover his position, kill him. With a muttered curse of despair he turned to look for his revolver, determined to fight to the last, should an attack be made upon him. As he turned he saw gleaming and flashing in the dusky darkness a pair of small, beady eyes, and poor Allen's heart almost stood still, for a warning hiss and rattle told him he had in the well as a companion a rattlesnake. The reptile rattled angrily and moved his head from side to side in an uncertain way, and then behind Allen there came an answering sound, and he knew he had two reptiles to cope with instead of one.

The snake behind him soon crossed the well and joined its mate, the two meanwhile keeping up an incessant rattle. Their slumbers had been rudely disturbed and they seemed determined to resent it if possible.

Allen stood as if petrified. He knew a movement on his part meant an attack, and this attack to him must result in death. And such a death! He imagined himself bitten by the snakes, and his fancy depicted a frenzied being, with veins filled with burning poison, wildly galled with the scaly, venomous reptiles, and striving with the desperation of the awful lever to mount the hard sides of the well and die on the plain above beneath God's smiling stars. The sweat poured from the poor man's body in streams. The snakes gave forth that musky odor peculiar to them, and this, taken with the closeness and warmth of the air, produced a sensation as of suffocation.

In a moment still hissing angrily, one of the snakes began to move, and Allen saw its glistening eyes at his feet. The clumsy thing crawled over his bare feet and circled around his naked legs. The creature seemed to like the warmth of Allen's body, and stopped for a moment. Then it slowly began to ascend his limbs to his body, and soon the terrible eyes were looking into those of Allen, and they seemed to burn through to his brain. Up over his face the creature moved its head, and then encountered Allen's crisp and curly hair. With an agitated rattle the snake drew back his head, and Allen, knowing it would strike, raised his hands as quick as lightning and gripped the creature by the throat. With the other hand he grasped the rattles, and then he slowly, surely strangled the creature to death, though the fearful effluvia which it emitted almost caused him to faint. For half an hour he held the snake firmly; he saw the malignant light in its eyes grow dim and finally disappear, and then he knew one enemy at least was dead. But he dared not drop the dead snake, for the other had become uneasy at the disappearance of its mate, and seemed on the point of starting out in search. The fierce, glaring eyes moved from side to side, the rattle was seldom still, and Allen never for a moment took his eyes from those hostile orbs.

For hours he stood thus, consumed with a feverish thirst; his nerves at a terrible tension, and his eyes strained and almost bursting. Then the sky above him began to light up, and a little ray of sunlight danced on the western wall of his underground prison. In a few moments the well was quite light, and then Allen and his remaining enemy saw each other at the same instant. The snake coiled and sprang, but Allen was too active. He stepped to one side and let the snake go by him, and then, with a small club, crushed out the venomous life forever. Then it was that Allen's great nerve gave way. He yelled and shrieked and cursed and tore in a mad delirium; and when neighbors, attracted by his cries, rescued him an hour later, he was frothing at the mouth, bleeding at the nose and the snakes were torn to shreds.

For weeks he lay in his cabin on the outer edge of death, but his sturdy constitution stood by him, and he recovered, though he was but a wreck of his former self. His neighbors "rounded up" what little stock he had left—for the thieving residents of the frontier were quick to take advantage of his helplessness—and Allen left for New England, to recover, if possible his former health. But the shock was so severe, and Allen will never be a man again. At the age of 36 he is as infirm as a man of 70, and his life is devoid of pleasure. He cannot remain long in one place, for his nerves demand a constant change of scene, and he is a homeless, helpless wanderer. Soon death will come to his relief, and then, perhaps, Allen will learn why this dreadful plague was visited upon him.—Boston True Flag.