

HER LETTERS.

They hadn't any sugar talk—but they knew from her, you know, Joe's sort o' the weather as the 'mount o' that fall down since she wrote me last, an' 'grees there'd be a word about her music lesson, or p'raps that she had heard 'At I was goin' round again, that girl o' old Peters.

The one wot had the voice, you know, they took to tune egg-beaters.

But still I liked to git 'em, fer they seemed to kind o' say—As she hadn't quite forgot about that sunshiny June day She hurt her foot, an' spoilt her dress, an scratched her pretty face, A-hoos for a lily-pond that was some other place.

An all the other little times we used to have us two, When the ha's o' the ole clock Je' round the ole pine tree.

But a great black cloud o' doubt an' pain kem o'er our happy sky.

An' hid from me the treasure wot no world wealth kin buy.

From a poor chap the restin'-spot where he when he sees his sorors go an' all his woes depart;

The time his heart gets kind o' soft, jes like a sponge, you know, 'till swells up big an' seems to take in all this 'arth below.

So, when I kem to burn her notes, an' see them in the flame, I thought about the chap, the feller—you know who's his name—

'As writes the poetry stuff about "the ashes o' An' how the folks through this dark world o' sin an' mis'ry goes,

An' when the last one burned—set still now, stranger, don't you rise?

It's jes' this blam' tobacco smoke got in my pecky eyes!

—N. Y. World.

ALTERED INTENTIONS.

How the Cowboys Came to Exhibit the Circus Elephant.

Ever since sunset the prairie breeze had fanned a fever-flushed little face Bolt upright in a splint-bottomed chair by the bedside, a man had fallen asleep again and again, in spite of his determination to remain awake. But, notwithstanding his weariness, he had slept lightly, and had often awakened at the sound of a faint moan or the touch of the night wind as it softly stirred the erect and unruly wisps of his mop of tangled hair, and often seemed to him, half waking, like the soft, caressing touch of childish fingers. Every time he woke with an anxious start he saw that the fever-bright eyes of the sick child were fixed longing upon the pictured handbill upon the wall, as it fluttered in the gentle night wind. And, each time when the man had cooled the parched lips with water or patted the scanty pillow, the child had piped:

"Tell me more 'bout the ole elephant, daddy!"

And the man had told again of the old elephant—how he was almost as big as the "shock," and was dirt-colored, and had long, white tusks and great big floppy ears, and had a trunk that he swing from side to side as he walked.

"An' he likes little boys—don't he?"

"Likes 'em first-rate!" the man would answer. "Thinks a heap of 'em!"

And the fever-bright eyes of the child would be bent more eagerly upon the long bill that fluttered on the wall, and, in spite of his loving anxiety, the man would nod, his head would slowly sink forward on his breast, and he would be asleep from sheer weariness.

Presently, as the candle burned almost out, the east grew gray, then lighter. A turtle-dove, that had winged her way through the misty half darkness to a resting-place upon the topmost strand of the settler's piece of barbed-wire fence, greeted the coming morning with her soft, solemn "coo-woo!"

If they had looked from the window of the "shack," and the gray of the morning had turned a little more to gold, the settler and the sick child might have seen a novel procession passing along the section-road, a quarter of a mile away. There were queer, canvas-wrapped vehicles and queerer blanketed animals that looked strange enough in the coming light, but which, denuded of their wrappings in the glare of the sunlight and on the main street of Range City, would blossom out into the more or less gorgeous chariots, cages and curiosities of a circus-parade.

This last crawling end of the procession was dimly discerned by a little squad of broad-hatted, jangle-spurred horsemen, whose galloping cayuse ponies had carried them swiftly across the prairie in the direction in which the circus was slowly taking its way.

"That!" cried one of the cowboys, as they reached the forks where the little-worn by-road that passed the settler's cabin left the section-road. "That they air! Come on!"

The squad seemed on the point of dashing along the section-road in the wake of the circus.

"Hold on, thar, Scotty!" cried the oldest man of the group. "We've got—"

"But that's a elephant, Slade!" interrupted the first speaker, with an almost boyish enthusiasm. "Ketched a glimpse uv him among the wagons, just as—"

"Never mind the elephant," broke in old Slade. "We've got other business on hand jest now. Got to ketch a glimpse uv a granger, 'stead of an elephant, an' sortha—"

"Sorta start a granger procession," cried another of the broad-hatted ones.

"Yes," growled Scotty, "it'll be a procession that'll start quick and go a-tarin'. Hain't got no time to progrin' now!"

"You bet! Specially when that's a elephant as big's a house movin' down the road away from us," said another.

"Twon't take but little bit," said old Slade. "We kin—"

"But 'spose he shows fight? He'll cut up rusty, er—"

"Let him cut all he dares 'pleases,'" broke in Scotty, savagely. "Let him eat! We're able for him, all the same. Grangers are grangers!"

Grangers were grangers, and therefore entitled to little but indignation at the hands of the cowboys and "cattle kings." Though, legally, grangers, as the cattle-men scornfully denominated the squat and hot-headed men

have a right on the range, they are regarded as interlopers, and the little patches of prairie that they are bravely and tenaciously trying to convert into fertile farms are regarded as so much stolen from the rightful feeding-grounds of the cattle.

"He kin cut up all he wants to," said old Slade. "We're able for him."

Which statement was substantiated by the huge revolver holstered at the hip of each of the riders.

Every now and then, as the cayuses bounded along, Scotty turned to gaze regretfully toward the place where the circus had disappeared in the timber.

"Blast the granger!" he growled once. "That that elephant was mighty nigh as big as a shack, an'—"

"Plenty time enough to see him," interrupted old Slade. "We're sorta killing two birds with one stone this-way—runnin' out the granger an' in the circus, both the same trip."

"They'll begin to put up the tents as soon as they git to town," said Scotty, half regretfully. "I never seed—"

"Wal," broke in old Slade, "as I said, it won't take us but a little bit yere. We'll chuck the granger's outfit into his wagon an' tell him to git. He'll git, or—"

He completed the sentence by letting his hand fall to the butt of the huge revolver at his hip.

"That's what's the matter," growled Scotty, full of wrath at the innocent granger, who ought to have known that the cattle interests were the only ones regarded on the range, and have governed himself accordingly.

The turtle-dove flew from the piece of a fence as the squad came close, but the half-sleeping, half-delirious child did not notice the cessation of her soothing, mournful coo. The orange in the eastern sky was climbing higher, and the myriad forms of prairie-life were wakening all about to the right of the elephant.

The advance of the circus towards the cattle country had not all been attended by good fortune, but, as the armed cowboys dashed up, the manager feared he was about to sustain his crowning misfortune. The tales he had heard of their reckless disregard for the persons and property of strangers were fully as Munchausen-like as those the cowboys had heard of the elephant. The weapons drawn, as the manager felt sure, to slaughter any opposers, were but as protective measures against the anticipated charge of the elephant. The manager's fears seemed realized as there was a nervous rush upon the part of the cowboys which hurried the elephant, driver and all out of the procession. Perhaps, if he had behaved the bank-bill that found its way into the ready hand of the elephant-driver, he would not have wondered at the slight resistance of the tail.

When he had recovered from the astonishment into which he had been thrown by the summary proceedings, the few words spoken, and the bank-bills old Slade dropped as he hurried past, the old elephant was lumbering rapidly away in the midst of the frightened and floundering cayuses.

The turtle-dove flew from the piece of a fence as the elephant and his captors hurried up to the shack. The grass muffled the footfalls of the animals.

The granger was still on his knees, with his face buried in the quilt of the poor bed, and the morning breeze that fanned the sick child's face and fluttered the pictured bill on the wall billitt the unruly tufts of his hair till it felt like the touch of baby fingers.

The little face was less flushed now, and the gasping feebler. The child's dim thoughts wandered still more, and his dim eyes could hardly see the fluttering bill. "Pappy," the weak voice whispered, "will the ole elephant ever come?"

A great bulk barred the sunlight from the little window, and the long, snaky trunk glided in, and the finger-like protuberance at the end very softly clasped the sick child's hand.

"Oh, pappy!—pappy! The ole elephant has come!"

The bowed head of the granger was raised. The child had started half upright, and the little hands were clasping the caressing trunk of the old elephant.

Then, before the granger could give expression to astonishment, the clinging hands relaxed, and the old elephant's trunk eased the child's weight softly back to the pillow again.

And the turtle-dove that had returned to the piece of a fence uttered her mournful coo.

When the elephant went away, the granger was kneeling beside his dead, and on the pillow near the still face lay the bank-bill that had been given to old Nero's driver, and beside it were other bank-bills.

As the little cavalcade journeyed back towards the place where the section-road wound into the Buzzard creek timber, old Slade said: "I'm agin this runnin'-out business!"

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movement, but all had started as if moved by a common impulse, though, to be exact, Scotty, the impatient, was a little ahead of his comrades. Of "running out" the granger nothing was said.

"Prayed for him to live to see the ole elephant!" muttered Scotty.

"Wal," said old Slade, earnestly, "if he lives half an hour, an' we have luck, blamed if he don't see—"

"That's what!" broke in some one.

"Meby we kain't—" began another.

"Meby we kin!" interrupted Slade firmly.

"But elephants is mighty—"

"No difference! We're able for him. I reckon, an'—on the sick boy never seed a elephant!"

The advance of the circus towards the cattle country had not all been attended by good fortune, but, as the armed cowboys dashed up, the manager feared he was about to sustain his crowning misfortune.

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