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274

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WHOLE NO. 571.

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THE COINERS OF KANSAS. Several years ago, and shortly after the reorganization of silver, counterfeiting received a wonderful impetus and the West and South especially were flooded with bogus coin.

The large floating population and the wilderness of the border country rendered the task of unearthing the coiners a hard one, but after several seasons of very persistent and stealthy work, the United States Detective service became satisfied as to the location of at least one gang of the "Sharps," and Jack Denmore, an experienced agent, was instructed to visit the State (Kansas), ingratiate himself with the counterfeiter, and learn of their haunts and habits.

The duty was a dangerous one, but the man selected to perform it had faced danger, and even death, too often among our eastern criminals to hesitate a moment; and so it happened that, upon a certain hazy September evening, Denmore, disguised as a Dutch peddler, dropped from the westward-bound train on the Kansas Pacific road, at the little station of Black Wolf, in Kansas.

For a moment he gazed after the retreating cars, then turned, and in broken English inquired of the station agent the route to Wildwood tavern.

"I was what you call strange mit dis part de kountry," said the peddler smiling, "but a friend of mine up de river, he say lots of goods in dot kountry."

"Wall, Dutchy, I don't reckon ye will do much trade, but I ken tell ye the road if ye'er goin'."

So saying, the rough Westerner gave him the necessary directions, and in the gloaming, Denmore disappeared.

"I'll try every house from here to Wildwood," muttered he, when out of hearing, but I'll find Price's. That is the name—Price. And then when that's found, look out! If I can't capture Dick Price, my fortune's made!"

At 9 o'clock, Carl—for so he called himself—sought shelter at a settler's cabin by the roadside and paid for supper, lodging, and breakfast with gaudy lace. At noon he paused again to eat and trade, and again many times during the afternoon. Before night he heard the name of Price; and before night, too, several pieces of this counterfeit coin had been passed upon him. He was nearing his game.

It was a little after sundown, and with weary tread Jack Denmore was climbing up a long hill, where the struggling roadside was fringed with bushes and woods, when a step started him, and a moment later a slender boy was at his side.

"How you vas, leetle feller?" said the detective. "Dose was a nice noight?"

"Yes, sir," said the youth, looking at him sharply. "Where are you going?"

"Me goin'?" Oh, I was goin' to sell de tings in mine pack. I just was goin' to git rich, and de peddler chuckled.

"No, I mean to-night. Where are you going to stay?" said the boy. "This road stops up in the wood here." Denmore paused.

"De road stops! Py schimminy! Den dot road got himself lost at de last turn. I tought dis road vent fro' dese woods to dot place you calls de tavern, hey?"

"Oh, you mean Wildwood tavern? That's over that way," and the boy pointed into the darkness. "It's five miles from here."

"Py schimminy!" sighed poor Carl; "five miles! I naffer get dere to-night. I sleep mit dese woods," and he began to unstrap his pack.

The boy eyed him again sharply. Then he said, "No, you needn't sleep in the woods. I live at the end of this road. Come with me. You can stay at our house, I guess."

"Ah, dot was a goot poy," said the Dutchman, gladly. "Dot was pery nice, and I get some supper, too, don't it?"

"I reckon," replied the boy. Reshouldering his pack, the two continued to follow the road, the boy leading, until half a mile further on, a cabin appeared in the shadows.

"Here's my house," said the guide. "Go to the door and I'll run and tell father," and he disappeared toward the barn.

Denmore looked sharply about him. This was Price's. A long, low cabin, strongly built with small barred windows, a bar back of it, dreary woods upon all sides. A regular den. The detective shuddered.

"A bad hole; yet he's the chief. If I can catch him, with the dies, it will destroy the gang."

Then with a resolution to succeed or perish he slowly moved toward the door.

As he raised his hand to knock, it

was suddenly opened. A heavily built, heavily bearded woodsman stood before him—a man with a skill and cunning in his face, and a desperate, threatening courage in his eyes—a devil to dare, a giant to do—Dick Price. He glowered upon the peddler, shading the flickering torch he held with one brawny hand, while his piercing glance searched Denmore's face.

"What d'ye want?" "You vas de leetle poy's pa? Dot vas goot. I vant sometings to eat and sometings sleep. De leetle poy said so." And with simple naturalness, Carl pushed aside the mighty door-man, entered the cabin, threw his pack upon the floor, and with a sigh of relief, he dropped on to a low bench near the fire. "Ah, dot vas mighty goot."

For an instant anger flamed in Dick Price's face. But before he could speak, a back door opened, and a young woman, young, lithe, and charming entered, and with a glance at the man before her, said "Ah, this is the peddler Will spoke to me of. He lost his way, dear," she continued, going to Price, and laying her hand upon his arm; "and Will met him on the road, and asked him to stay with us to-night. It's all right."

The passion died from the man's face. The voice of the woman thrilled Carl. This girl and the boy who had guided him were one. She was the spy of the gang.

"So yer a peddler, eh?" said the host, advancing, "an' los' yer way?" "Wall, yer welcome to our fire and fare; but I tell ye, a little more ceremony will be better with Dick Price next time. I was very nigh shakin' ye," and he smiled grimly.

Carl smiled, too, childlike and bland, and said, "Yaw." The host and his companion were amused.

"Where's the boy?" asked Price. "He went to the barn," replied the woman, as she busied herself preparing the evening meal. "He was too tired to eat and will not be in to-night."

Carl was now sure that that woman and boy were one.

A plain but plentiful supper was served after which the peddler and his host dined before the open fire with their pipes. Naturally the conversation turned upon trade, and Dutchy very willingly told of his success and even showed the silver which he had gathered during the day. Price picked a piece of it from his hand.

"This ere's bad," said he. "Vat! Pad? and Carl leaned forward excited. "Oh, you vas foolin'; he continued, examining the coin. "Dis vill pass."

"It may pass, but it's counterfeit, all the same," said Price. "I'm sure of it."

"Vell, naffer mind. It's blienty goot enough for me, said the peddler with a smile. "I only wish I had a thousand dollars mit it!"

"Wall, I reckon ye could get it," said Price, resuming his pipe. "I heard a feller say to-day that thar war lots o' it around."

"Py schimminy! I would like to get it," said his companion. "It vas goot effery vare I go."

"I know a feller what's got some of the stuff," said Price, in a low tone, "but he lives a mile from here. Ye could buy it o' him, I reckon."

"For how much?" said Carl. "Oh, maybe one half," returned the other. "I can't say. It's bad stuff to deal with, ye know, and I never touch it."

"One-half! You mean two dollars for one? Py schimminy! I will give two hundred dollars for four, and get myself rich!" cried Carl. Price smiled.

"But how kin ye pay for it?" "Naffer mind. I know," said Carl. "Show me de feller vat got it to sell and I pay him mit it."

"Wall," said the host, rising. "I'll find him for ye in the mornin'. Do you want to turn in?"

"Turn in?" "Go ter bed—ter sleep, I mean."

"Oh, yaw. I was tired myself out to-night."

A moment's consultation with the woman, and Price called the peddler to follow. Carl picked up his pack, and climbed the ladder that led into the loft. There was a shake-down on the floor.

"Thar! It's not the finest bedroom in the world, but ye'll sleep goot," said Price, laughing. "Good night!"

"Goot night," returned Carl. The other disappeared. Denmore heaved a sigh.

"It's hard work playing Dutch," he muttered.

Then he opened his pack, and from it drew two heavy revolvers, a bowie-knife, three pairs of handcuffs and the star of the United States Secret service.

"I may have work before mornin'," thought he, "and these are good bed-fellows."

He removed his coat, blew out the

candle, and lay down, his mind busy with the events of the day and in forming some plan for the morrow.

While thus engaged, the sound of a door stealthily opened attracted his attention, and a moment later he heard men's voices below. Quietly leaving his bed, he crept to a knothole in the floor and listened.

"But the peddler?" "It was the woman's voice."

"Never mind him," replied Price. "Ned," he continued, apparently addressing the new comer, "we've a customer up-stairs—a Dutch peddler—and he wants four hundred. I'll just bring him to ye in the mornin'. He'll buy—"

The door opened a second time. Pressing his face close to the floor, Denmore found that he could both see and hear. Three sharp-looking, roughly-dressed men entered.

"Ha! all here?" said Price in a low tone. "That is good. I want half a thousand of the queer to-night, for we kin send to the tavern to-morrow, and the chap up above wants some. Did you bring the dies, Bray?"

The man addressed shook his head. "I haven't been home, an' jest come from Elkhorn. Send Nettie. My old woman will give 'em to her."

"Price turned to the girl. "Are you afraid to go, Net?"

"Afraid?" she laughed, and touched her bosom, just drawing the butt of a pistol into sight—"Afraid, Dick? You know better nor that!"

"Wall, then, my gal, if ye go to Bray's an' get the dies, it will help us; for while the boys are coming, I will stay on watch, and mill the hundred we ran yesterday. Ye'll be back in an hour?"

"Yes, dear."

And throwing a heavy cloak about her and incasing her head in a deep hood, the girl opened the door and disappeared into the night.

Price turned to the gang. "Boys, go below, fire up, and prepare the rest o' the metal. I'll stay here, and when Net comes in with the dies we'll coin. I want a full load to-night, for we're almost out. Here, give me a lift."

As he ceased speaking, he seized a heavy iron bar and thrust it beneath the hearthstone. The others joined hands with him, and with desperate effort, the five slowly raised the great stone. Beneath it appeared a door, secured by long iron bolts. These being shot, and the trap raised, a flight of steps was seen. The four strangers descended, carrying a lantern, and Price dropped the door behind them. Then opening a sort of hidden closet, drew from it a box of rough silver coin and a milling machine, with which he then began to work.

"Trapped!" he whispered—"trapped! The gang complete! And now for work."

Noislessly he arose and approached the ladder. In either pocket were his pistols, and in his hand a pair of bracelets, on his breast his star. At the top of the ladder he paused, struck his foot against the floor and coughed. There was a quick stir down below. Mr. Brice! Mr. Brice! Was you dere?"

A half growl from below answered him.

"What ye want?" "I vas sick, Mr. Brice—I vas so hot as never vas. I vant a leetle vater, Mr. Brice, if you please, Mr. Brice."

"What the —" then came an oath. "Lie still, ye Dutch fool, and I'll bring vater. 'Don't come here!"

"Oh, no, Mr. Brice! But some vater, Mr. Brice, for God's sake! I vas burned alive!"

There was now a moving about the room a patter of dipper and pail, and Price approached the ladder. Denmore breathed hard. The steps came nearer, nearer. They mounted the ladder. He crouched—waiting. An instant more and the bearded face of Price appeared above the opening in the floor, and his right hand was raised, holding a tin cup of vater.

"Here! Dutchy! Ye're cursed hard to take care of! Here's your drink!"

Carl's arm was outstretched; but as he touched the dipper, there came a sharp click, and the handcuff closed about the wrist of the coiner, and at the same moment the cold muzzle of a heavy Colt's revolver pressed against his forehead, and the voice of the detective hissed in his ear: "Not a sound, or I'll kill you! Up with your other hand!"

The man was fairly caught, and he knew it. The color fled from his brown face, leaving it ashen-hued; a cold sweat gathered in beads upon his brow; the prison door yawned before him; one glance into the deep eyes of the detective were quite enough, and with a shudder and a groan he allowed the handcuffs to be placed around his other wrist.

"And now go down; without noise, too," said Denmore, "or—"

Price obeyed, and as he turned

upon the floor below the detective was at his side.

"Sit there," and he pointed toward the table, "with your back to the door."

Again the coiner obeyed, bowing his head upon his hands. Then Denmore crept to the trap, closed it, and shot the heavy bolts.

Without raising his head, Price whispered: "They'll smother."

"They must run their chances," replied Denmore, coldly.

So saying, he crept near the cabin door, and awaited. He must have the woman, the spy, the last and best of all the gang.

The moments passed; the hour was drawing to a close, and the detective listened with bated breath for his coming victim, when suddenly, without a sound, the door opened, and Nettie entered. As she did so, Denmore stepped forward, and would have laid his hand on her shoulder, but in a single glance the girl comprehended all, and with a wild shriek she sprang from him, the dies dropping from her arms as she did so, while Price started from his seat and joined her. And then again the detective found himself facing his enemies, one of them now armed, for the woman had drawn a pistol.

But there was no struggle. With nerves tense as steel, and a deadly light in the clear blue eyes, Carl leveled his heavy weapons, one at each of the figures before him, and in low, cool tones said: "Up with your hands! In the name of the National Government I arrest you as counterfeiter! Come, be quick!"

The last words were addressed to the woman, for in her eyes, too, there gleamed a dangerous light; but before the detective could start her the pistol was turned, there rang out a sharp report, and from her side there welled the bright blood, splashing the wooden floor, and, with a moaning cry, she tottered and fell, Price half catching her in his shackled arms as she sank.

Only once she spoke. "Better this than a prison, Dick! And to die with you, love."

Then came a fluttering sigh, and she was gone.

An hour later Denmore stood before the United States Commissioner at Wildwood, and delivered up his prisoner. Two hours later, a posse of officers secured the others, who were dragged half dead from their cellar furnace-room; and the next day, the detective alone stood by the open grave of poor Nettie, "the bravest and prettiest criminal he had ever known," he said, and heard the dull sound of the clouds as they fell upon her coffin. Then he turned eastward again, his duty done.

The coiners of Kansas are now no more.

Completeness of Character. Religion is good for nothing one day in the week, unless it is also good for all the seven days. Character, to amount to anything, must be shown alike in all things. There is no true manliness possible in one relation of life on the part of him who is not true and honorable in every relation of life. No boy can be a good son to his parents unless he is a good pupil to his teacher, and a good playfellow to his companions. No man can be a good friend, unless he is a good husband and a good father. No minister can be a good pastor and a preacher unless he is a good neighbor and a good man. Among the very many wise and timely words to boys spoken by Mr. Thomas Hughes, none are more important than those in which he has told of the teachings on this very subject by Dr. Thomas Arnold, his old teacher at Rugby. He says, "He certainly did teach us—thank God for it!—that we could not cut our lives into slices, and say 'In this slice your actions are indifferent, and you needn't trouble your heads about them one way or another; but in this slice mind what you are about, for they are important'—a pretty middle we should have been in had we done so. He taught us that in this wonderful world no boy or man can tell which of his actions is indifferent and which not; that by a thoughtless word or look we may lead astray a brother for whom Christ died. He taught us that life is a whole, made up of actions and thoughts and longings, great and small, mean and ignoble; therefore the only true wisdom for boy or man is to bring the whole life into obedience to Him whose world we live in, and who has purchased us with His blood."

At last we will all have to start on that dark, perilous journey. We must all die, and go out beyond the air and up through the stars.—Rev. A. A. Hodge.