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AN EPISODE AT DRY-UP.

When the stage coach from Stockton, bound for Mokulonne Hill, turned off at the small mining camp of Dry-up, Arkansas, Hank, the driver, sang out in a lusty tone:

"Now, where's that young un for Finnigan's. Look alive, and out with you, my lad, for I'm going to do this down grade a callyhootherin'!"

The youth whose hasty descent from the stage top he had assisted rather unceremoniously in his hurry to be off down the hill, and out of the camp on to the main road to Mokulonne again, was a lad of sixteen, or thereabouts, though remarkably well grown and developed for his age.

He was too dusty to be judged by his appearance at first sight; his clothes were plain working ones, and his manner was as confused and wandering as if he had dropped from the clouds.

The building before which he had alighted was the most pretentious in the town. It had a porch over its doorway, and within was a large cotton-lined room that served the inhabitants of Dry-up as a grocery, liquor saloon, postoffice, coach and express station, and an assembly hall in which was transacted all its public business of whatever nature.

Before its door stood its owner, Tip Finnigan, a small red-faced man with a cunning eye and a consequential smile, and behind him was his wife, drawn from her kitchen by the clatter of the coach, and evidently disappointed at its spare deposit.

"Tip, dear," she said, as she dried her arms on her apron, "why do ye ax youn lad who he's after wanting? He looks as if he was dead bated wid the jolting he's had, and sorra a wonder. Arkansas Hank never misses a stone in the road. Sure, I thought I'd be churned to death the day he drove me up here."

She had approached the door as she spoke, and her kind, motherly voice was meant to reach the stranger's ear. It went further, it touched his young heart, and he drew near; and his air, though full of timidity, had nothing of cowardice as he said:

"I came all the way from New York. I stopped here hoping to find work. Do you think there is anything I can get to do?"

He turned to Tip, and the tone of the inquiry was so very earnest as to be almost tremulous.

Mr. Finnigan made a somewhat lofty and comprehensive gesture toward the yellow river and its broken and serrated banks.

"There it is, before ye," said he; "up wid yer pick and down wid yer long tom. Thin that digs gold wias it in California, and there's plenty to work for, but not the size of a midge to be had for axing."

"Sure the young man was only axing the way he must begin," Tip declared Mrs. Finnigan. "If he could just wash the dust out of his eyes a bit and see himself till he finds ease after the jolting he wint thro' in Hank's stage, it would be a bless, so it would."

"Then show him the well, and lend him the jack tawel," observed her husband with dignity.

Kindly Mrs. Finnigan, who owed a good deal of her influence over her husband to the show she made of deferring to him, hastened to obey his command, and, as she generally did, to improve on it. When the new comer appeared again in his presence so great was the improvement wrought by washing, brushing and hair trimming that impressive as he tried to be, Mr. Finnigan was moved to compliment the change.

"Now, ye look like a Christian, young man," said he smiling, "and a purty one too, if good looks was any count out here, which they're not. Sure Hank's the boy to raise dust; his passengers might all be niggers when they reach Dry-up; if a nigger expites a trich for the coach he takes a brush wid him so as to swape the dust off before he recognizes him."

Then pausing suddenly in his discourse, Mr. Finnigan ran a critical eye over the young figure before him.

"You are not used to the working clothes you wear, my young lad," said he. "What did you come out here for, and have ye any friends in this camp?"

The sharpness and severity with which he utted these questions riveted the grocer of Dry-up with an air of authority which the stranger did not attempt to question. He glanced at his hands reproachfully, as if accusing their smoothness or betraying him, but said in a frank and manly way:

"I will tell you just the truth, Mr. Finnigan. He had read the name on a strip of canvas over the door. Its owner nodded encouragement, and the boy continued:

"I live in New York—I mean I did live there before I went on the steam or Northern Light, four weeks ago today. Just three days before I started I found out what an expense I was to the family. My dear, good mother is a widow; I am her only boy; but I have three older sisters, who were making all sorts of sacrifices and working themselves ill to keep me at a high-priced academy, dressed and provided for as if I were a rich man's son. My father's cousin, Mr. Mark Franklin, is a prosperous merchant and he has charge of my mother's small fund. Lately he has treated me quite coldly, though his daughter, my cousin Nellie, is always kind and good to me."

"That Saturday—I mean the one before the day I sailed—I ventured to ask him what I had done to forfeit his good opinion. I shall never forget the shock and surprise of his answer. He just spoke right out and told me I had been living for three years on the daily sacrifices of my mother and sisters; that I was an exacting, selfish fellow, and—"

Here the narrator suddenly choked up in a way that seemed so out of character with the Spartan courage he intended to display that his pride and sensitiveness had quite a conflict of it. Those two elements of his temperament fought it out in a series of strangled sobs and coughs, while his victim walked up and down the store, striving to gain the mastery over both. He soon succeeded, and, without entering again

on the subject that had overcome him, jumped at once to a practical point. "As you don't say any way daty intar in. Mr. Finnigan," said he, and although he addressed the grocer, he kept his fine, frank eyes on the grocer's wife, having discovered from a large cup of fresh milk that she had given him that she was a valuable member of the firm; "but no fellow knows until he has tried it how hard it is for a boy like me to get employment. It was too big to begin anything, they said, and I wasn't old enough to be trusted with anything that was begun. I was almost ready to give in, when I met a lad with the chills who had had a berth as cabin boy on the Ocean Queen, but was too sick to go. Didn't I jump into his place, though? But there was the Pacific and the steamer on the Pacific side to me, and I had to chance them. I was in luck. A San Francisco gentleman was sick. I waited on him, and he paid my way on the North Star. I had just money enough to bring me here on the stage, not a penny more, and so I had to get out."

Mr. Finnigan laid down the pipe he had been smoking, and, going to the door, summoned his young companion to follow him.

Pointing up the low gulch that formed the main road or opening to the town he indicated with his stubby forefinger a short pole stuck in the earth on the river bank, on top of which was an old tin pan.

Dutch Jake and Squatty Boggs took their leave of that claim under this very morning," said he. "They've gone prospecting, and any one that strikes his pick in a claim that diggin'. You've come a good stretch to find a job and the sooner you begin the better. I'll lend ye the tools till ye can buy wans or yer own."

Thereupon the enterprising Mr. Finnigan, who had taken from Dutch Jake an old cradle, spade and pick, because he could not get a three-dollar liquor bill over by that foreign bankrupt, made a mental excellent bargain for himself in transferring those articles to the boy miner.

"And now what's yer name, when we want to call ye to supper?" he asked after he had helped the youth to transfer the tools to the scene of operations, and given him a first lesson in digging and cradling.

The boy hesitated a moment, and a bright color rose on his smooth, young cheek.

"Och! don't bother yer head on that score," cried the Irishman, observing his embarrassment, "Jack or Jill, it is all went to us up here."

"My name is Jack," said the boy eagerly; "but I thought—"

Now good luck to ye, and remember that thin that finds gold has to look hard for it. Ye'll know it when ye come on it, after the instructions I give ye."

Mrs. Finnigan was waiting for her husband.

"O, Tip, dear," she said softly, "that boy hasn't broke his fast this day, and it seems hard like to drive him in at the work before he's fairly on his feet in the place."

"Tut," retorted her husband coolly; "it's a good chance to show what he's made of. Let him wrestle a while with Jake's pick before he comes to his tay, for I suppose nothin' will do ye, but he must contend wid us till he is able to set up a cabin for himself."

"Och, thin, ye have the kind heart, Miles Finnigan," cried his wife in tones of fervent admiration at her husband's yielding generosity; "and sure ye'll never lose a cent by it, so he hastened to add, knowing well his fondness of gain. "Our own little murgh, our little livel, our little live, but the morrow of this lad, and troth I fale a mother's heart to him, so I do."

The latter part of her speech was low. The tears that sprang with it were hidden; and Tip—so called from his birthplace, Tipperary—resumed his pipe and received the conjugal praise with a discriminating nod.

It was early in November. There had been one very heavy rain, but it had rather benefited than loosened the soil of the abandoned claim, and in Jack's untutored grasp the pick served as it struck the clayey bed, without dislodging much soil during the first hour's hard labor.

Then the boy stopped to rest, for he could work no more; the perspiration streamed down his face, every nerve in his body thrilled from his upward glance, and—though he tried to hide this last fact even from himself—from his lack of food. Away up the river as far as he could see miners were busy plying their picks or washing their dirt, some of them were standing up to their middle in the swift-running stream and roaring snatches of songs as they rocked their long toms, while others on higher ground contended with the water, and that sometimes flew off in splinters, and threatened the lives of their comrades. But they didn't seem to mind danger. It made Jack's flesh creep to watch their reckless movements, to see them mount a high, unsteady water flume in their immense mining boots and run half way across the river on its top to wash their waste dirt in it, as he noted their exhausted vigor he seemed to feel himself grow stronger again; he recalled Mr. Finnigan's words, and seizing the pick renewed the struggle. The soil must have grown softer; it sank in the side unbanked at the third stroke, and down came a crashing, rattling, torrent like fall of earth, which gave him barely time to spring aside to save himself from being buried under it.

"Lookoe here, young un," bawled out his nearest neighbor from the other side of a broken and disused flume that divided the "Dutchman's claim" from what was termed the "River Diggins," "don't smash cradling right atop of us all without singin' a word of warning. Don't go through it all at once, sonny, it's a thrill of joy shot through his frame like an electric shock."

Jack felt abashed at his unlooked for achievement, and knew it could not have been his blows that did the work. A great body of mould had been ready to fall; his pick had loosened a stone that held it back, and as down it came. According to custom, he began at once to test the value of his dirt by cradling; but he had poured one dirt into the muddy river water into the machine a thrill of joy shot through his frame like an electric shock.

"He had found gold!"

Not in the tin, but just that Tip's description led him to look for, but in

bright, yellow flakes all through the gravelly soil that shone and sparkled as clearly as he had ever seen the polished metal in a jeweler's window do.

A dozen foolish fancies rushed upon the boy in the exultation of the moment; he was tempted to cry out; to fling up his hat in the air with loud hurrahs; to rush shouting to the Finnigans; but the timely recollection of his aunt's came to his mind and sobered him.

Quietly as to outward appearance, though he trembled and shook with excitement all the while, he shuffled down and, wrapping the result in a canvas bag he had found, covered over the rich soil with a loose sprinkling of common clay.

By this time it was growing dusk, and he had been four hours a miner. Jack was only a lad and when he entered Finnigan's store, where some of the boys were already gathered, the temptation to boast of his great luck was strong upon him. It became stronger still when Tip said, rather sharply: "Well, my fine young gentleman, you've come back empty handed, I suppose, and I've got another boarder like Dutch Jake—"

"No, indeed, Mr. Finnigan," he explained, proudly, "I've got enough."

He felt a touch on his arm and turned quickly. Mrs. Finnigan was there.

"Come in to supper," she said, kindly; "Tip will follow when he has saved the boys wid their whisky."

When they were alone in the kitchen she told him to sit down before a pile of flapjacks and a bowl of coffee, and "get a start for his stomach, nearly famished with hunger." Then she laid her motherly hand on his shoulder: "You've met with luck; Heaven bless you; I see it in yer face," she said, "but keep it to yerself, dear; they're good boys, them," nodding her head in the direction of the store, "and as for Tip—he's just a jewel; but kape yer luck quiet like; it will be for your good."

Her significant glance added force to her words. Jack felt he could safely trust her and seizing the opportunity before Tip came in, he told her what happened in the Dutchman's debt-ridden claim and showed her the bright dust in his bag. Mrs. Finnigan was a pioneer. "A forty-miner," as they were called—and by one in the mines she understood the placer or surface diggings than herself.

She laughed delightedly at the young stranger's good fortune, and told him he had struck a "pocket." Three other workers of the same claim had got the same luck, and then each, after months of unrewarded labor, had abandoned it to give a new worker a chance to strike on a layer of gold again.

"But no one ever 'realize' as quick as you, Jack," cried Mrs. Finnigan, giving him his name with mining familiarity. "You're in big luck, my dear, but, as I said, we'll keep it to ourselves. And here comes Tip."

Alone, Jack never could have preserved his secret, but Mrs. Finnigan was a powerful ally; she kept her husband away from the claim when the young miner was cleaning up his tailings; she instructed him in the easiest modes of operating, initiated him in all the signs of the rock and soil, and aided him in tracing the rich deposit till his last abiding grain was separated from the earth. After paying for his tools, a month's board, and providing himself with mining boots and waterproof clothing, Jack had nearly a thousand dollars worth of gold dust left!

Mrs. Finnigan was his banker, and she told Tip that the lad was making "paying wages."

The claim sustained its reputation. The pocket exhausted, Jack worked and toiled day after day without seeing a sparkle in the loads of soil he beat down into the river. The rains had begun in furious force, and carried away the flumes and stakes, torn down "the boys' hydraulic works, and rendered placer digging next to impossible.

Squatty Boggs and a party of prospectors had discovered some wonderfully rich diggings higher up on the other bank of the river, and the fever for fitting had broke out among the citizens of Dry-up.

Jack had been idle two days; that is, his hands were still, but his mind had never been busier.

"Mrs. Finnigan," he said to his friend and adviser, "number costs about \$20 a hundred feet doesn't it?"

"And what would you do with it if it could be had for axing, Jack?" she cried, astonished.

"I'd make a raft and start a ferry right here," exclaimed the lad earnestly. "This is a narrow, deep river, with a swift current, and I could make a double cable ferry worked with ropes and rings. It came into my mind yesterday when I was near drowning in it."

"Whin ye risked yer life to save thin laythen Chinnamen and their mules," interrupted Mrs. Finnigan. "Sure the breath was a most frightened out of my body when I saw ye plunge in. But yer plan—go on wid it, Jack; it's illigant, and will just make yer fortune if ye can carry it through."

This encouraged Jack proceeded with his explanation. As he got on his companion grew more and more enthusiastic; its development would increase their store and tavern trade, and this insured Mr. Finnigan's cooperation—an important gain in his wife's eyes.

She was a keen-sighted woman and a great aid to Jack in all his undertakings; she recognized at once the value of his new enterprise, and showed him how to make it practical at the least cost.

She bargained with a departing miner for the uprights of his cabin at a low rate, and of them Jack, with Tip's help, made and set the stakes for his cable to be fastened on. The grocer forewore a brisk business at the ferry he kept when his store became a ferry house, so he urged forward the enterprise and did not spare his own labor in securing its completion. Jack was a natural mechanic and his energy and contrivance were crowned with triumphant success. His raft was a model of strength and lightness, and when Hank brought the ropes and rings from Stockton the whole affair was complete and ready for action just four days after the idea was hatched by the energetic proprietor. Early on the morning of its completion Jack tested his ferry, and carried over just at sunrise a whole train of

Chinnamen and pack mules, two at a time, bound for the new gold diggings at Dutch City. The rains were so incessant that the river grew higher and higher, and soon the turn of the current at that particular bend of the Mokulonne was almost strong enough to swing the raft over; the only difficulty lay in its return, and though the loads were light and passengers helpful on the way back, the young ferryman's arms ached so from tugging at the cords that at night he could not sleep from their pain. That was to begin with. Time consumed everything, and usage made his muscles almost like iron and the task grew easy.

"That boy is fairly coming gold," said Monte Mack to his pard Double-Deck Dick; "let's lay for him."

One night Jack came in shivering from the river bank. He had been out all day, and, despite alkali and India rubber, was drenched to the skin.

"Give him a hot toddy, here's the liquor," said Tip to his wife. "Make it sweet and strong, and he'll be all right in the morning."

Mrs. Finnigan nodded; but she gave him hot coffee, a foot bath and a dose of quinine instead.

"Never a drop of that sort shall cross yer lips if I can help it, Jack," Mrs. Finnigan said, and next day she pointed to poor "Fancifoot Ned" tumbling up to his cabin, with no more humanity in his appearance than one of the beasts that perish.

"Once and not so long ago, may-they be young and hopeful like you, Jack," she said; "look what liquor brings on a man, and fly here the sight of it."

"Let's have a little game right here," said Monte Mack, that evening; "yon pour us out your best and plenty of it. If there's a white man in this mine it's Tip Finnigan, and he knows how to sell first-class liquor; too; that's what I allow say, Dick, you deal for a four handed game; Tip and the young un'll jine in, just for a spree."

"No, he won't thin," cried the watchful Mrs. Finnigan, bursting in upon them, and for once daring to assert herself in her husband's domain; "ye've been after this lad wid yer dirty cards ever since he come to Dry-up; and if ye ax yer iver him to take a hand in three cheating games yer up to axin, sure I'll tache ye, both a new trick wid the tud or my broom, so I will—"

The gamblers shrank abashed before the woman's flashing eye; but Tip was much scandalized. He was a disciplinarian and believed in the inferiority of the weaker sex; he had always exacted from his wife and usually quipped with the strictest exactness, and her late assumption of wilfulness shook his disapproval.

That night her eyes were red when Jack came to sit a little while with her, as he always did before retiring to his bunk in the back end of the store.

"You iver write letters nor receive any, as I see, Jack," she remarked abruptly.

The youth's eyes filled with sudden tears; he shook his head and bit his lips nervously, but did not reply.

His questioner was a persevered one. She kept her gaze steadily on him, and he could not avert unconsciousness, as he tried hard to do at first. It cost a great effort, but at last he gave in, and broke down with something like a sob.

"Mrs. Finnigan, nobody knows where I am."

He hung his head in shame at this confession, and his face blazed into a perfect scarlet when his friend, raising her hands in shocked surprise repeated:

"Run away! Lord pity your poor distracted mother, you wrong headed boy!"

"They must all have complained and talked against me to—"

"Well, Heaven be praised, ye can kape yer word, and start home to-morrow. I've news for ye Jack; ye can sell out yer right and title to the ferry at a small fortune, and you shall do so and go home to see yer mother, if ye want it. It's Tip Finnigan."

Then in quieter and still more resolute tones Mrs. Finnigan explained to the lad that her guardianship over him must end since it had already produced ill-feeling between herself and husband.

"And the next to my own boy that the blessed saints has in their holy kaping this day, I have a warm heart for you, Jack," she confessed, "my duty is to nurse Tip and place him in mind, ye see, and I can't manage both you and him, I find. This is to place for a lad or your breeding and belonging. I may kape ye out of the gamblers' hands and away from the whisky cup; but there's more and worse temptations that I can't rache. So ye must just leave them all behind ye."

She backed her argument with an offer from a tall Boston knave as Lanky, who was ready to pay down in cash a hundred dollars for the ferry, and just as hundred ounces (\$1600) for Jack's right and title to the "Ferry," and then added in a whisper that Jack could pay a first-class passage and carry \$5,000 home with him. A few moments passed, during which the varying emotions of the boy's mind were easily read by her keen eye on his transparent face.

Suddenly, over the changing lights of everything, and I can't manage both you and him, I find. This is to place for a lad or your breeding and belonging. I may kape ye out of the gamblers' hands and away from the whisky cup; but there's more and worse temptations that I can't rache. So ye must just leave them all behind ye."

will see each other some day beyant this."

"Is that 'ere parry a coming!" hal-looed Hank from the coach box.

"Here he is!" shouted Tip; "and more fool he to have a place that would be the maker's! I have paid starting a big bar, and I'd have paid him a small fortune to wait on it; but the chap's head's turned wid the price he got for his ferry." The porch was full of "boys" come to see that rare sight in these days—a departure. Jack waved his hat as he climbed up the stage, but pulled it over his eyes as he dropped into place beside Hank; he had caught a glimpse of his friend weeping at the kitchen pane.

Some time after the express held a package directed to Mrs. Finnigan, and great was that good woman's surprise when apprised of the fact.

On being opened it proved to be an exceedingly richly-mounted picture of a handsome young man whom no one recognized until its recipient cried out in rapture:

"Arrah, sure it's Jack! Jack, in his own clothes, and just as he looks among them he was born wid. Sorra a beautiful picture nor this in the whole new state of California, and I wouldn't take its weight in gold for it."

So saying, she hung it beside a lumber one of her dead child, and there they remained together as long as Tip's store stood near Jack's Ferry.

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