******* THE STRANGE EXPERIENCE OF ALKALI DICK By Bret Harte. ****

(Copyright, 1897, by Dret Hartes) He was a "cowboy." A reckless and dash ing rider, yet mindful of his horse's needs; good-humored by nature, but quick in quar rel; independent of circumstance, yet shy ancensitive of opinion, abstemious by education and general habit, yet intemperate in relaxation, self-centered-yet possessed of a childish vanity-he was a characteristic product of the western plains, which he should never have left. But reckless adventure after adventure had brought him into difficulties, from which there was only one equally adventerous escape—he joined a company of Indians engaged by Buffalo Bill to simulate before civilized communities the sports and customs of the uncivilized. In divers Christian arenas of the nineteenth century he rode as a northern barbarian of an earlier date might have disported before the Roman populace, but harmiessly, of his own free populace, but harmiessly, of his own free populace, but harmiessly, of his own free him that it lay in a cup-like depression of the forest, and that it was still a long descent from where he had wazing the could see the grace long derkness. His mustang was moving for some new sensation, with admiring planding the from them and a half contemptons ego of the saddle-horn, and, selecting the long descent from the saddle-horn, and selecting the long descent from the saddle-horn. tism of his own. But outside of the arena he was lonely, lost and impatient for excitement. An ingenious attempt to "paint the town red" did not commend itself as a speciacle to the householders who lived in "paint the vicinity of Earl's court, London, and Alkall Dick was haled before a respectable magistrate by a serious policeman, and fined as if he had been only a drunken coster. A later attempt at Paris to "incardine" the neighborhood of the Champ de Mars, and "round up" a number of boulevardiers, met with a more dissipance result. wardlers, met with a more disastrous result, the gleam of steel from mounted gendarmes and a mandate to his employers. So it came that one night, after the conclusion of the performance, Alkali Dick rode out of the correl performance. Alkali Dick rode out of the corral gate of the hippodrome with his last week's salary in his pocket and an imprecation on his lips. He had shaken the sawdust of the sham arena from his high, tight-hiting boots; he would shake off the white dusof France, and the effeminate soil of all Europe also, and embark at once for his own country and the far west. A more pra-tical and experienced man would have sol his horse a' the neatest market and taker train to Havre, but Alkali Dick felt himse! Incomplete on terra firma without his mus tang-it would be hard enough to part from it on embarking-and he had determined to ride to the seaport. He was ignorant of the language, but with "Havre" upon his lips and a western faculty of finding roads he would succeed. Besides, he would be less likely to be troubled with foreign company

a Rembrandt sombrero, velvet jacket, turn over collar, almost Van Dyke in its proportions, white trousers and high boots, with long curling hair falling over his shoulders and a pointed board and mustache was a picturesque one, but still not a novelty to the late-supping Parisians, who looked up under the midnight gas as he passed and only recognized one of those men whom Parle had agreed to designate as "Borflo Bils' going home. A few gendarmes looked suspiciously after him. But Alkali Dick's vanity was already surfeited with the impressionable admiration displayed by male and female Parls for him and his companions, and he was too eager now to get away to wish even a hilarious conflict with the police. He kept his tongue and his temper until he had passed the "barriers" and fortifications, and it was only when he was fairly on the road to St. Germain that he gave vent to a characteristic yell and loosened the reins of his mustang. At 3 o'clock he pulled up at a wayside cabaret, or inn, preferring it to the publicity of a larger eternation of the cabaret keeper and his wife over this long-haired phantom, with glittering, deep-set eyes, was soothed by a royally flung gold coin and a few words of French slang picked up in arena, which with the name of Havre-comprised Dick's knowledge of the language. But he was touched with their ready and intelligent comprehension of his needs and their genial not so comprehensive loquacity. Luckil for his quick temper, he did not know that they had taken him for a traveling quack doctor going to the fair of Yvetot and that him for a magic balsam to prevent migraine. He was up betimes and away, giving a wide berth to the larger towns, taking byways and cutoffs, yet always with the western pathfinder's instinct, even among these alien poplar-haunted plains, low-banked, willowfringed rivers and cloverless meadows. The white aun shining everywhere-on dazzling arbors, summer houses and trellis s. on light green vines and delicate pea rows; on the white trousers, jackets and shoes of smart shopkeepers or holiday makers; on the white head-d esses of nurses and the white-winged caps of the sisters of St. Vincent-all this grew monotonous to this pative of still more otonous wastes. The long black shadows of short, blue-skirted sabotted women and short, blue-bloused, sabotted men slowly working in the fields with slow oxen, or still slower heavy Norman horses, the same horses gayly bedecked, dragging, slowly, not only heavy wagons, but their own ap parently most monstrous weight over the

on the road than in a train.

The spectacle of a lithe horseman, clad in



white road, fretted his nervous western

not the usual formal avenue of equi-distant the open field—but apparently a genuine fruits, forcet as wild as one of his own "Oak Bot-chairs. his broad sombrero, the vista before him ing and walk toward the table. T seemed only to endlessly repeat the same trai figure was that of an elderly in the primeval western forest and encom-passed by its vast dim silences. He did not know that he had in fact only penetrated an ancient park, which in former days echoed winding fanta e of the chase, and still, on stated occasions, swept by accurately green-coated Parisians green-plumed Dianes, who had come To him it meant unfettered and unprescripted freedom. He rose in his stirrups and sent a characteristic yell ring-

ing down the dim aisles before him. alas! at the same moment his mustang. ed to the firmer grip of the prairies. in lashing out stepped upon a slimy root and fell heavily, rolling over his clinging and still unsteady rider. For a few seconds both lay still. Then Dick extricated himself with an oath, rose giddily, dragged up his horse, who, after the fashion of his race, was meekly succumbing to his reclining was meesty succumbing to his rectangle position, and then became aware that the unfortunate beast was badly sprained in the shoulder and temporarily lame! The sudden recollection that he was some miles

ncentrated his scattered faculties. The prospect of sleeping out in that summer coodland was nothing to the pioneer-bred lick; he could make himself and his horse comfortable anywhere, but he was delaying als arrival at Havre. He must regain the high road, or some wayside inn. He glanced around him. The westering sun was a guide his general direction; to his general direction; the road must follow it north or south; he would find a "clearing" somewhere. But here Dick was mistaken; there seemed no interruption of, nor encroachment upon, this sylvan tract, as in his own western woods. There was no track nor trail to be found; he missed even the ordinary woodland signs that denoted the path of animals to water, for the park,

rigidly preserved. Suddenly, rising apparently from the ground before him, he saw the high roof ridges and tourelles of a long, irregular, gloomy building. A few steps further showed him. from the saddle-horn, and, selecting the most open space, tied one end to the trunk of a large tree- the forty feet of horsehair rope giving the animal a sufficient degree of grazing freedom. Then he strode more quickly down the forest side toward the building which now revealed its austere preportions, though Dick could see that they were mitigated by a strange formal flower garden, with quaint satues and foun-tains. There were grim black allees of flower garden, with quaint satues and fountains. There were grim black allees of clear pupils. But she uttered no outcryand twisted iron espaliers. On one side the

was a fringe of Illac bushes running from the garden up the slope; if he could gain their shadows he could descend into the garden. What he should do after his arrival, he had not thought; but he had one idea—he knew not why—that if he ventured to speak to her he would not be met with the abrupt rustic terror he had ex-perienced at the hands of the servants. She was not of that kind! He crept through the hedge, reached the lilaca and began the descent softly and securely in the shadow. But at the same moment she arose, called in a youthful voice toward the open window. and began to descend the steps; a half ex-postulating reply came from the window; but the young girl answered it in the laugh-ing capricious confidence of a spoiled child and continued her way into the garden. Here she paused a moment and hung over a rose tree from which she gathered a flower which whe thrust into her belt. Dick paused, too, half crouching, half leaning over a lichen stained cracked stone pedestal from which the statue had long been overthrown and forgotten. To his surprise, however, the young girl following the path to the illacs befrom the time a Norman duke had first allen-ated it from the virgin forest, had been from side to side with a youthful movement, and swinging the long stalk of a lily at her side. In a few moments she would be at his side. Dick was frightened; his confidence of the moment before had all gone; he would fly—and yet—an exquisite bons on her shouldrers; he could see the coils oval check, the delicate swelling nostril of her straight, clear-cut nose; he could even smell the lily she carried in her little hand. Then suddenly she lifted her long lashes, and her large g ay eyes met his.

Alas! the same look of vacant horror



TO HIS SURPRISE AND CONSTERNATION HE SAW THE COLOR DROP OUT OF HER FRESH CHEEKS.

edifice was supported by a great stone ter- nity to her recoiling figure-and made Dick

voices. Before him on the lawn a man and woman, evidently servants, were slowly advancing, peering into the shadows of the wood which he had just left. He could not understand what they were saying, but he was about to speak and indicate his desire to find the road by signs, when the woman, turning to speak to her companion, caught sight of his face and shoulders above the hadge. To his surprise and consternations and consternations are sometimed to speak to her companion, caught sight of his face and shoulders above the hadge. To his surprise and consternations are sometimed to speak to her companion, caught sight of his face and shoulders above the hadge. To his surprise and consternations are sometimed to speak to her companion, caught sight of his face and shoulders above. the hedge. To his surprise and consterna-tion, he saw the color drop out of her freeh cheeks: her round eves fixed in their sockets, and with a despairing shrick, she turned and fled toward the house. The man turned it his companion's cry, gave the same horrified glance at Dick's face, uttered a hoarse "Sacre!" crossed himself violently and fled

Amazed, indignant, and for the first time in his life humiliated, Dick gazed speechles:ly after them. The man, of sneaking coward-but the girl was a rather pretty one. It had not been Dick's experihe follow them, knock the silly fellow's head against a tree and demand an explanation Alas! he knew not the language! They had already reached the house and disappeared in one of the offices. Well! Let them gofor a mean, uncivil pair of country bumpkins-he wanted no favors from them! He turned back angrily into the forest

to seek his unlucky beast. The gurgle of

water fell on his ear; hard by was a spring.

where, at least, he could water the mustang. He stooped to examine it; there was yet light enough in the sunset sky to throw energy and made him impatient to get on.
At the close of the second day he found back from that little mirror the reflection of his thin oval face, his long curling hair and his pointed beard and mustache. Yes. in Paris had agreed was romantic and disidiots or insine? A sudden recollection of the suggested certainly an asylum, but where were the keepers! But it was getting dark in the wood; he made hast to recover his borse, to drag it to the swings and some head the that the rusk of meeting the others and repeating this ghastly farce. He caught her up—he scarcely felt her weight against his breast and shoulder, and ran hurriedly down the slope to the terrace which was still deserted. If he had time to place her on some heads head the window within their never seen a real man before? to drag it to the spring, and even bathe its shoulder in the water mixed with whisky taken from his flask. His saddlebag contained enough bread and mest for his own supper; he would camp out for the night was, and with the first light of dawn make his way back through the wood whence he came. As the light slowly faded from the wood he rolled himself in his saddle blanket and lay down,
But not to sleep! His strange position, the

accident to his horse, a singular irritation over the incident of the frightened servants -trivial as it might have been to any other man-and above all an increasing childish curiosity, kept him awake and restless. wood, and that the rays of a young crescent meen, while it plunged the forest into darkices and impassable shadow, evidently was illuminating the hellow below. He threw aside his blanket, and made his way to the hedge again. He was right; he could see the quaint formal lines of the old garden more distinctly—the broad terrace—the queer towered bulk of the house, with lights now gleaming from a few of its open windows. Before one of these windows opening on the trees, leading to nowhere, and stopping upon terrace was a small white-draped table with the open field—but apparently a genuine fruits, cups and glarses and two or three forcet as wild as one of his own "Oak Bot-toms." Gnaried roots and twisted branches flung themselves across his path, his mue-tang's hoofs sunk in deep pits of more and last year's withered leaves, trailing vines caught his heavy stirruped foot, or brushed his heavy stirruped foot, or brushed The censylvan glade, and he was in fancy once more yet tall and stately of carriage, walking with in the primeval western forest and encom- a stick, whose regular tap he had heard, supported on the one side by an elderly cure in black soutains and on the other by a tall and slender girl in white. They walked leisurely to the other end of the terrace as if performing a regular exercise and returned, stopping before the open French window where after remaining in conversation a few moments the elderly lady and her a rew moments the elderly lady and her ecclesisatical companion entered. The young girl rauntered slowly to the steps of the terrace and leaning against a huge vase as she looked over the garden seemed leat in contemplation. Her face was turned toward the wood, but in another direction from where he stood.

There was something as a settle of the contemplation of the contemplation of the contemplation of the contemplation.

race which seemed to him as broad as a flush with admiration. She put her hand Parislan boulevard. Yet everywhere it appeared sleeping in the desertion and silence of her ascent had set her heart to beating. of the summer twilight. The evening breeze but she did not faint. Then her fixed look swayed the lace curtains at the tall win- gave way to one of infinite sadness, pity and dows, but nothing else moved. To the un- pathetic appeal. Her lips were parted sophisticated western man it looked like a scene on the stage.

His progress was, however, presently checked by the first sign of preservation he had met in the forest—a thick hedge, which

interfered between him and a sloping lawn beyond. It was up to his waist, but he began to break his way through it, when suddenly he was arrested by the sound of voices. Before him on the lawn a man and tated, half-despairing gesture towards the

vous secourir? Moi meme, mes p pourraient elles interceder pour vous priercs supplieral le ciel de prendre en pitie l'ame de mon aucetre. Monsieur le Cure est la. Je lui parlerai. Ma mere et lui vous viendront en aide." She clasped her hands appealingly before him. stood bewildered, hopeless, mysti-

fied; he had not understood a word; he could not say a word. For an instant he had a wild idea of seizing her hand and leading wild idea of seizing her hand and leading her to his helpless horse, and then came what he believed was his salvation, a sudden flash of recollection that he had seen the word he wanted—the one word that would explain all! in a placarded notice at the Cirque of a bracelet that had been 'loet' -yes! the single word, "perdu." made a step towards her, and in a voice almost as faint as her own, stammered

With a little cry-that was more like a sigh than an outcry-the girl's arms fell to and fainted away.

Dick caught her as she fell. What had he said?-but more than all-what should be do now? He could not leave her there alone and helpless-yet how could he justify another disconcerting intrusion. He touched her hands; they were cold and lifeless-her eyes were half closed, her face as pale and had agreed was romantic and dis-Had these wretched greenhorns the worst now—and carry her to the house een a real man before? Were they even at the risk of meeting the others and some bench beside the window, within their reach, he might still fly undiscovered. But, as he panted up the steps of the terrace with his burden, he saw that the French window was still open, but the light seemed to have been extinguished. It would be safer for her, if he could place her inside the house -if he but dared to enter. He was desperate -and the dared! He found himself alone in long salon of rich but faded white and gold hangings, lit at the other end by two tall candles, on either side of the marble mantle, whose rays, however, scarcely reached the window where he had entered. He laid his burden on a highbacked sofa. In so doing the rose fell from her here that the school was not it in his breast Presently he could see also that it was growing lighter beyond the edge of the wood and the the was arrested by wood and the the was arrested by

It was the voice of the elderly lady, who with the cure at her side had just rounded the house from its rear, and at the further end of the terrace was looking toward the garden in search of the young girl. His escape in that way was cut off. To add to his dismay the young girl, perhaps roused by her mother's voice, was beginning to show signs of recovering consciousness. Dick looked quickly around him. There was an open door, opposite he window, leading to a hall which no doubt offered some exit on the other side of the house. It was his only remaining chance! He darted through it, closed it behind him and found himself at the end of a long hall or picture gallery strangely illuminated through high windows. reaching nearly to the roof, by the moon, which on that side of the building threw nearly level bars of light and shadows across the floor and the quaint portraits on the wall. But to his delight he could see at the other end a narrow, lance-shaped open postern door showing the moonlit pavement without—evidently the door through which the mother and cure had just passed out. He ran rapidly toward it. As he did so he the hurried ringing of bells and heard the nurried ringing of bells and voices in the room he had quitted—the young girl had evidently been discovered—and this would give him time. He had nearly reached it, when he stopped suddenly—his blood chilled with awe! It was his turn to be terrified—he was standing.

his turn to be terrified—he was standing, apparently, before himself.
His first recovering thought was that it

Dick's sombrero. But the likeness of the face to Dek was marveious—convincing! As he gazed at it the wicked black eyes seemed to flash and kindle at his own—its lip curled with Dick's own surdonic humor!

He was recalled to himself by a step in the gallery. It was the cure, who had entered hastly, evidently in search of one of the servants. Partly because it was a man but the servants. Partly because it was a man between the servants. Partly because it was a man between the servants.

end not a woman, partly from a feeling of bravado, and partly from a strange sense, excited by the picture that he had some claim to be there, he turned and faced the good priest with a slight dash of impatient deviltry that would have done credit to the portrait. But he was sorry for it the next moment! The priest, looking up suddenly, discovered what seemed to him to be the portrait standing before its own frame and glaring at him. Throwing up his hands with an averted head and an attempted "Exorcis," he stopped short, wheeled and shuffled away. Dick seized the opportunity, darted through the narrow door onto the rear terrace and ran under cover of the shadow of the house to the steps into the garden. Luckily for him his new and unexpected diversion occupied the inmates too much with what was going on in the house to think of what might hap-pen outside. Dick reached the lilse hedge tore up the hill and in a few moments threw himself panting on his blanket. In the panting on his single look he had cast behind he had seen that the half dark salon was now brillantly lit-where, no doubt, the whole terrified hou chold was now assembled. He had no fear of being followed; since his confrontation with his own likeness in the mysterious por-trait he understood everything. The apparently supernatural character of his visitation was made plain to him; his ruffled vanity was soothed-his vindication was complete. laughed to himself and rolled about until in his suppressed merriment the rose fell from his bosom, and-he stopped. Its tresumesa and fragvance recalled the innocent young gentle, pleading voice, and his cheek flushed! well! he had done the best he could in not know the difference between a living

bringing her back to the house—at the risk of being taken for a burglar—and she was safe now! If that stupid French parson did man and a dead and painted one-it wasn't But he fell asleep with the rose in his fingers. He was awake at the first streak of down

He again bathed his horse's shoulder, sad-dled, but did not mount him, as the beast, although better, was still stiff and Dick wished to spare him for the journey to still distant Havre, although he had determined to lie over that night at the first wayside inn. Luckily for him the disturbance at the chateau had not extended to the forest, for Dick had to lead his horse slowly and could not have escaped, but no suspicions of external intrusion seemed to have been awakened, and the woodland was, evidently seldom invaded. By dist of laying his course by the sun and the exercise of a little woodcraft, in the course of two hours he heard the creaking of a hay cart and knew that he was near a traveled road. But to his discomfiture he presently came to a high wall, which had evidently guarded this por-tion of the words from the public. Time, however, had made frequent breeches in the stones; these had been roughly filled in with a rude abattis of logs and tree tops point-ing toward the road. But as these were mainly designed to prevent intrusion into the park rather than egress from it, Dick had no difficulty in rolling them aside and emerging at last with his limping steed upon the white highroad. The creaking cart had passed; it was yet early for traffic, and Dick presently came upon a wine shop, a bakery, a blacksmith's shop, laundry and a somewhat pretentious cafe and hotel in a broader space, which marked the junction of another Directly before it, however, to his onsternation, were the massive, but timeworn iron gates of a park-which Dick did not doubt was the one in which he had spent the previous night. But it was impossible to go further in his present plight, and he holdly approached the restaurant. As he was preparing to make his usual explanatory signs, to his great delight, was addressed in a quaint, broken English, mixed with forgotten American slang, by the white-trousered, black alpaca coated pro-prietor. More than that—he was a social democrat and an enthusiastic lover of America-had he not been to "Bostown" and

New York and penetrated as far west as "Booflo?" and had much pleasure in that beautiful and free country! Yes! it was a 'go-a-ed' country—you 'bet-your-lif.' One had reason to say so—there was your electricity—your street cars, your "steambots"-ah! such steambots-and your "rrail groads and the buffet of the Pullman-with the line from Paris, for example—and where is one? Nowhere, Actually, positively, without doubt-nowhere!" Later, at an appetizing breakfast-at which, to Dick's great satisfaction, the good man had permitted, and congratulated him-

self to sit at a table with a free-born American, he was even more loquacious what, then, he would ask, was this incom want, then, in which the petence this imbedlity of France? He would tell. It was the vile corruption of Paris, the grasping of capital and com-panies, the fatal influence of the still cling-ing noblesse, and the insidious jesuitical power of the priests. As, for example, Monsieur "the Boofiebil" had doubtless noticed the great gates of the park before the cafe? It was the preserve—the hunting park of one of the grand old signeurs, still kept up by his descendants, the counts of Fontonelles—hundreds of acres that had never been tilled and kept as wild waste her side, she took a step backwards, reeled wilderners—kept for a day's pleasure in a year—and, look you! The peasants starving around its walls in their small garden patches and pinched farms! And the pres-ent Comte de Fontonelles cascading gold on his mistress in Paris, and the comtesse, his mother, and her daughter living there to ting, black cowl pricets. Ah bah! When was your republican France then! But time would come. The "Boot bill" has feed and fatten and pension a brood of plottime would come. The "Boof bill" had, without doubt, noticed as he came along the road, the breaches in the wall of the park?

Dick, with a slight dry reserve, "reckoned

that he had." They were made by the scythes and pitchforks of the peasants in the revolution of '93, when the count was emigre, or, says with reason, "skedadelle" to England. Let them look the next time that they burn out the chateau—"bet your lif"
"The chrteau," said Dick, with affected

"Wot's the blamed thing like? It was an old affair, with armour and a picture gallery and bric-a-brac. He had never seen it. Not even as a boy-it was kept very secluded then. As a man, you understand, he could not ask the favor. The Comtes de Foutonelles and himself were not friends. The family did not cafe near their sacred gates. where had stood only the huts of their retainers. The American would observe that he had not called it "cafe de Chateau" nor "cafe de Fontonelles"—the gold of California would not induce him. Why did he remain there? Naturally, to goad them. It was a principle, one understood. To goad them why not? One had one's principles, one's convictions—that was another thing. That was the kind of "airpin," was it not, that he Gustav Ribaud, was like!

Yet for all his truculent socialism, he was quick, obliging and charmingly attentive to Dick and his needs. As to Dick's horse, he have the best veterinary surgeon—there was an in the person of —see to him, and incomparable one the blacksmith the if it and an affair of days and Dick must go, he himself would be glad to purchase the beast, his saddle and accourtements. It was an affair of business an advertisement for the cafe! He would ride the horse himself, and before the cafe! before the gates of the park. It would please his customers. Ha! He had learned a trick

two in free America. Dick's first act had been to shave off his characteristic beard and mustache and even submit his long curls to the village barber's shears, while a straw hat, which he bought to take the place of his slouched sombrero. completed his transformation. His heat saw in the change only the natural preparation of a voyager, but Dick had really made the sacrifice—not from fear of detection, for he had recovered his old, swaggering audacity but from a quick dististe he had taken to his resemblance to the portrait. He was too genuine a westerner and too vain a man to feel flattered at his resemblance to an gristocontemplation. Her face was turned toward the wood, but in another direction from where he stood.

There was something so gentle, refined and graceful in her figure, yet dominated by a girlish youthfulcess of movement and gesture that Alkali Dick was singularly interested. He had probably never seen an ingenue before; he had certainly never come in contact with a girl of that caste and seclusion in his brief Parisian experience. He was sorely tempted to leave his hedge.

lost in shadow, was scarcely distinct from tion! His curiosity to know what mistake Dick's sombrero. But the likeness of the he had made—for he knew it must have been rying the pale unsatisfied face of that gentle

girl ever before his eyes! A sense of del-leacy—new to Dick, but always the accompaniment of deep feeling-kept him from ever hinting his story to his host, though he knew, perhaps because he knew, that it would gratify his enmity to the family. sudden thought struck Dick. He knew her house and her name. He would write her a note. Somebody would be sure to translate

the clean solitude of his fresh chintz bed-room, indied the following letter:

it for her.

He borrowed pen, ink and paper, and in

"Dear Miss Fontonelles-Please excuse me for having skeert you. I hadn't any call to do it; I never reckoned to do it-it was all Jest my derned luck! I only reckoned to tell you I was lost—in them blamed woods tell you I was lost—in them blamed woods—don't you remember—'lost'—perdoo!—and then you up and fainted! I wouldn't have come into your garden, only, you see, I'd just skeered by accident, two of your help, reg'lar softys, and I wanted to explain. I reckon they allowed I was that man that that picter in the hall was painted after. I reckon they took me for him, see! But he aln't my style polyes and I reverse. he aln't my style nohow, and I never saw the pieter at all until after I'd toted you when you fainted up to yon house, or I'd have had my kalkelations and acted accord-ing. I'd have laid low in the woods, and got away without skeerin you. You see what I away without skeerin you. You see what I mean? It was mighty mean of me, I suppose, to have tetched you at all, without saying 'excuse me, miss,' and toted you out of the garden and up the steps into your or the garden and up the steps into your out and leave you lying there on the grass, didn't seem the square thing for me to lite own parlor, without asking your leave. But the whole thing tumbled so sudden. And it That's why. I'm sorry I skeert that old preacher, but he came upon me in the picter hall so suddent, that it was a mighty close call. I tell you to get for without a shing. call, I tell you, to get off without a shindy. Please forgive me. Miss Fontonelles. When you get this, I shall be going back home to you get this, I shall be going back home to America but you might write to me at Denver City saying your all right. I liked your style, I liked your grit in standing up to me in the garden until you had your say when you thought I was the Lord knows what, though I never understood a word you got off, not knowing French. But it's all the same now. Say! I've got your rose!

"Yours very respectfully.

"Richard Fountains."

Dick folded the epistle and put it in he

Dick folded the epistle and put it in h.s. cocket. He would post it himself on the norning before he left.

When he came down stairs he found his indefatigable host awaiting him, with the report of the veterinary blacksmith. There was nothing seriously wrong with the mustang, but it would be unfit to travel for several days. The landlord repeated his former offer. Dick, whose money was pretty well exhausted, was fain to accept, reflecting that she had never seen the mustang and would not recognize it. But be drew the line at the sombrero, to which his host had taken a great fancy. He had worn it before her!

Later in the evening Dick was sitting on the later in the serious productions the later in the serious set in the later. the low veranda of the cafe, overlooking the white road. A round white table was beside him, his feet were on the railing, but his him, his feet were on the railing, but his cyrs were resting beyond on the high moldy iron gates of the mysterious park. What he was thinking of did not matter, but he was a little impatient at the sudden appearance of his host-whom he had evaded during the afternoon-at his side. The man's manner was full of bursting loquacity and mysterious

Truly, it was a good hour when Dick had arrived at Fontonelles—"just in time." He could see now what a world of imbecile was France. What stupid ignorance ruled, what low cunning and low tact could achieve—in effect, what cretains and montebanks, hypocritical priests and licentious and lying hypocritical priests and licentious and lying noblesse made up existing society. Ah, there had been a fine excitement, a regular coup d'theater at Fontonelles; at the chateau yonder, here at the yillage, where the news was brought by frightened grooms and silly women! He had been in the thick of it all the afternoon! He had examined its lines. the afternoon! He had examined it-inter-rogated them like a judge d'instruction, sifted it. And what was it all? An attempt by these wretched priests and noblesse to revive in the nineteenth century—the age of elecin the nineteenth century—the age of elec-tricity and Pullman cars—a miserable me-diaeval legend of an apparition—a miracle! Yes; one is asked to believe that at the chateau yonder was seen last night three times the apparition of Armand de Fon-

tonelles!"
Dick started. "Armand de Fontonelles!"
He remembered that she had repeated that
name. "Who's he?" he demanded ab-

'The first Comte de Fontonelles! When monsieur knew that the first comte had been dead 300 years—he would see the imbecility "Wot did he come back for?" growled Dick

"Ah! It was a legend. Consider its artfulness! The Comte Armand had been a hard liver, a dissipated scoundrel, a reckless beast, a mighty hunter of the stag. It was said that on one of these occasions he had been warned by the apparition of St. Hu-bert, but he had laughed, for observe, he ilways jeered at the priests, too, hence this story; and had declared that the flaming ross seen between the horns of the sacred tag was only the torch of a poacher, he would shoot it. Good! The body of the comte, dead, but without a wound, was found in the word the next day, with his discharged arquebus in his hand. The arch-hishon of Pouce refractable. ishop of Rouen refused his body the rites of the church, until a number of masses were said every year and—paid for: One understands, too, that the affair takes place not in a cafe like this—not in a public place—but at a chateau of the noblesse, and s seen by —the proprietor checked the char-acters on his fingers—"two retainers, one young demoiselle of the poblesse, daughter of the chatelaine herself, and—my faith! It goes without saying, by a fat priest—the sure. In effect-two interested ones! And the priest—his lie is magnificent! Superb! For he saw the comte in the picture gallery.

n effect, stepping into his frame! "O, come off the roof!" said Dick impatiently; "they must have seen something, ou know. The—young lady—wouldu't lie!" M. Riband icaned over, with a mysterious ynical smile, and lowering his voice, said 'You have reason to say so. You have hit it, my friend! There was a something! And if we regard the young lady-you shall hear. The story of Mille de Fontonelles is that she has walked by herself alone in the gardenyou observe alone-in the mountight, near the edge of the wood. You comprehend? mother and the cure are in the house for the time-effaced. Here, at the edge of the wood-though why she continues a young demoiselle-to the edge of the wood does not

pedestal-young pale, but very handsome and exalte—pardon "Nothing," said Dick, burriedly, "go on!"
"She beseeches him why! He says he is lost! She faints away, on the instant, ther -regard me!-on the edge of the says. But her mother and M. le Cure find ber pale, agitated, distressed on the sofa in the salon. One is asked to believe that she is the salon. smith transported through the air—like an augel— were by the spirit of Armand de Fontonelles. Incredible!

make itself-she beholds her ancestor-as on

"Well, what do you think?" said Dick, sharply The cafe proprietor looked around him care. then lowered his fully. and ignificantly: 'A lover!

"A whit?" said Dick with a gasp. "A lover!" repeated Riband. "A lover!" repeated Riband. "You comprehend! Mademoiselle has no dot—the property is nothing—the brother has every-hing. Mile. de Fontonelles caunot marry thing. out of her class, and the noblesses are all poor. Mademoiselle is young—pretty, they say of her kind. It is an intolerable life at the old chateau. Mademoiselle consoles her-

M. Riband never knew how near he to the white road below particular moment! Luckily, Dick controlled himself, and wisely, as M. Riband's next sentence showed him.

"A romance!-an innocent, foolish liason if you like, but all the same if known of a Mile. de Fontonelles—a compromising—a fatal entanglement! There you are—look! For this, then, all this story of cock and bulls and spirits! Mademoiselle has been discovered with her lover by some one: This pretty story shall stop their mouths!"
"But wot," said Dick brusquely, "wot if
the girl was really skeert at something,
she'd seen and fainted dead away, as she

hat in the picture, whose drooping plume was that dreadful word still excited his admira- said she did and and " he hesitated "some stranger came along and picked her up?"

M. Riband looked at him pityingly: Mile, de Fontonelles is picked up by her servants, by her family—but not by the young man in the woods, alone. It is even

more compromising!"
"Do you mean to say," said Dick, Iuriously. "that the ragpickers and sneake that wade around in the slumgallion of this country would dare to spatter that young

I mean to say, yes-assuredly, positively yes!" said Riband, rubbing his hands a certain satisfaction at Dick's fury. you comprehend not—the position of la joune fille in all France! Ah! in America, the young lady she go everywhere, alone I have seen her-pretty, charming, fascinat ing-alone with the young man! But here no! never! Regard me, my friend! The French mother she say to her daughter's flance: "Look, there is my daughter. She has never been alone with a young man five minutes-not even with you! her for your wife!" It is monatrous, it is impossible!—it is so!"

There was a silence of a few minutes and Dick looked blankly at the iron gates of the park of Fontonelles. Then he said:

"Give me a cigar"
M. Riband, instantly produced his cigar case. Dick took a cigar, but waved aside the proffered match and, entering the cafe. took from his pocket the letter to Mile Fontonelle twisted it in a spiral, lighted it at a candle, lit his cigar with it, and returning to the veranda held it in his hand until the last ashes dropped on the floor. Then he said gravely to Riband:

"You've treated me like a white man, Frenchy, and I ain't goin' back on yer-tho' your ways ain't my ways allez, and I reekon in this yer matter at the Shotto you're a little too previous. For, though I don't as a ginral thing take stock in ghosts. I believe every word that them folk said up thar. And," he added, leaning his hand somewhat heavily on Riband's shoulder, "if you're the man I take you for you'll believe it, too. And if that chap, Armand de Fontonelles, hadn't hev picked up that gal at that mo-ment he hev deserve to rosst in hell another 300 years. That's why I believe her story. So you'll let these yer Fontonelles keep their ghosts for all they're worth, and when you next feel inclined to talk about that girl's lover you'll think of me and shut your head. You hear me, French shoutin'! And don't you forget it!"

Newertheless, early the next morning M. Riband accompanied his guest to the railway station and parted from him with great of fusion. On his way back an old-fashioned carriage with a postillion passed him. At a sign from its occupant the postillion pulled up and M. Riband turning to the door, approsched the window, and the pale, steri face of a dignified, white-haired woman of 60 which looked from it.

"Has he gone?" asked the lady. "Assuredly, madame; I was with him at the station."

"And you think no one saw him?"
"No one, madame, but myself."
"And—what kind of a man was he?" M. Riband lifted his shoulders, threw out his hands despairingly, yet with a world of significance, and said: "An American."

The carriage drove on and entered the gates of the chateau. And M. Riband, cafe proprietor and social democrat, straightener himself in the dust and shook his fist after it.

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