



TO MY BOYS.

Boys! your lives are all before you. Be they short or they long—

Should had fortune's smiles attend you, No'er forget the kindred tie.

Should temptations lure a brother From the path he should pursue.

Blood than water sure is thicker, When its fountain is the same;

WALKING THE PLANK.

The history of the West is one long record of bloody and atrocious deeds. Not the least in the dark and inextricable catalogue is the little event we are now about to lay before our kind readers.

After encountering innumerable hardships and many dangers, we found ourselves in the wildest kind of a region, many miles distant from the haunts of civilization.

Just about dark one evening in the latter part of July, after a hard days tramp, we halted for the night.

For some time we sat by our camp-fire without uttering a single word, and almost without moving.

After the lapse of some time, our fire burnt low, and I arose to replenish it. The bark of a wolf startled me, and I involuntarily addressed my companion.

Huff did not answer me, however, but, without noticing the circumstance, I threw a quantity of faggots on the fire and addressed him.

"Take a few hours rest, Andy, and I'll keep watch," said I, "and after that you can do the same by me."

"Anything the matter, Andy?" said I, regarding him closely.

"No answer again."

kept on the move, my eyes and ears open for any more nocturnal visitors.

"Hello, fellows, how'd yer do?" were the words which fell upon my ears, and aroused me to full consciousness.

I looked around in bewilderment. Our little camping ground was encircled by a dozen or more braves, fierce looking desperadoes.

"That depends on circumstances," responded Andy, unhesitatingly. "We are two good men, afraid of neither man or beast."

"Yeer won't now, will yer?" rejoined the desperado, tauntingly. "Thous ye'll have yer hands full of yer try that sort of game."

"No," was Andy's quick reply, and he took the words out of my mouth, "nor are you. But that's not the point," he added; "what do you want with us?"

"Yeer money, an' yer traps!" understood that sort of talk, don't yer?"

"Yeer, we understand that you're a gang of thieves and cut-throats!" responded Andy, severely; "but if you get anything from us, you've got to fight for it, though we are but two against a dozen."

"Now charge upon the thieves!" yelled Andy, in stentorian tones.

I followed my comrade's lead, and together we charged upon the remaining five outlaws, for that number were left.

I knew nothing more after that, for the next moment I was unconscious. When I came to myself, I found I was in a cave, and it was not long before I discovered that the cave was the haunt of robbers.

After a while, however, an old and raggedly ugly Indian Squaw made her appearance. She brought me food and medicine, and a temporary light. My wounds had already been dressed.

"My good woman," said I, very pleasantly, "I should like to know where I am—will you tell me?"

"She shook her head negatively, and to all I could say or do I got no other answer. I inquired about Andy, and other matters, but received no satisfaction.

"You told me so before Robert. Now, tell me the truth; have you not been running off to see the steamboat go off?"

"Other night, early on!"

"We were separately led to the brink of a chasm near, and made to look down into the almost unfathomable depths. A stream of water dashed along over the rocks at the bottom. It made me dizzy to look down. We were then stationed a few feet from the brink, with a guard over us.

"Now, drive the chap forward!" shouted the leader pointing to Andy. "Other fellow shall see him drop, an' then he follows after him. Drive him on that, husse!"

"Every effort was made to move Andy, but the poor fellow continued obstinate. The outlaws picked him with their knives, and beat him with their rifles but he refused to stir.

"What do you want to tell me something?" "What is it, Robert?" said his mother, looking at him from her work, and seeing that he looked as if something was the matter.

"The men who were standing on the other end of the plank jumped off, and plank and Andy whirled down into the scorching depths below. Despite the gag in his mouth, the poor fellow uttered a loud and terrifying shriek before he disappeared from sight forever.

"Now fur' other one!" shouted the leader, after the lapse of a few minutes. At that instant a loud report of firearms suddenly reverberated far and near, and half the bandits, at least, fell dead to the earth.

"I thanked God and the mountaineers for my own preservation, and quitted the scene with a sense of relief mingled with a feeling of sadness.

"Gentlemen, that was about the worst situation I was ever placed in, and may you never have a similar experience."

AFRAID TO GO BACK.

There was to be a trip by the steamboat at eleven o'clock, and many were going. There was to be a band of music and a flag flying, and Robert thought he would like to see them start.

"I hope I shall, mother."

"Don't you feel as if you loved Mr. Fairburn, for his kindness in taking you back, and making all right between you and your master?"

"I am sure I do, mother. I feel as if I shall always love him for it."

"That will be right, Robert. How much more, then, ought you to love the Lord Jesus; for, as the hymn we sing says—"

"I do, mother, I do. That is good!" English Magazine.

"I shall only expect you, Robert, to make one promise back to your master and to me, and that is this—that you will never run away again in this way without his permission."

"I am sure I will not, sir. I am afraid master will keep me for this."

"Come, we will go this time, and see what can be done."

Robert was an open-hearted lad, and he was so glad that Mr. Fairburn, the good old minister of the place of worship that his father and mother attended, had so kindly to him, that he could not help telling his mother about it that evening.

"What is it, Robert?" said his mother, looking at him from her work, and seeing that he looked as if something was the matter.

"I have had a good deal to say to Mr. Fairburn, and he has been very kind to me, and he has been telling me about his extra lesson, and having done, he shut the book, and lifting up his eyes had looking full in his mother's face as she sat at her needle, said in a low whispering tone—"

"I hope you will, my dear; and now, Robert, I hope you will listen better to Mr. Fairburn, who was your mediator, and especially when he is talking about Jesus Christ, the great mediator between God and man."

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"THE LIGHT IN THE HILLS."

The sun had nearly sunk behind the hills, leaving the valley in complete shadow, and it was the traveler that might come early that night.

"Why, who would care?" said Alice. "I would, replied her friend, laughingly; 'and you wouldn't much like it yourself, either; so come cheer up, and let us see who will be first home.'"

"But Alice was so full to be persuaded, and at last Ellen Wilson went on her way more quickly than before, to make up for lost time. Alice sat watching her retreating figure until a turn in the road hid her from view; then, slowly raising her own bundle, she began to walk in the same direction, but very slowly, and still weeping bitterly.

"The road stretched along the valley, and both the girls were walking towards two cottages which stood apart from the village and a good way up the hill; but the difference was great between the two children who were thus following the same path to homes that seemed so much alike. Both were very poor, and neither had what could be called a happy home; but the one loved God, and the other knew him not, or in other words, the one was happy, and the other was miserable.

"I am not always crying, sir," said Alice. "I dare say not," replied with a kind smile; "but it is one thing to be sometimes merry, and quite another thing to be always happy."

"None are happy on earth," he answered, "excepting those who love God, and the Lord Jesus who died to save us. This makes them contented with their lot in the world, whatever it may be, because it is God's choice for them. Do you see those two cottages high upon the hillside?"

"Yes, sir," said Alice; "we live in one, and Ellen Wilson and her father live in the other."

"Well," he said, "as I came along the valley this evening, your cottages were quite bright in the beams of the setting sun; but as it went down, they grew darker and darker, till I could scarcely find them out on a hillside. But now, don't you see how bright one of them is again? Can you tell me the reason of this?"

"There is a light within, sir," said Alice. "Ellen has got home, and she has kindled the fire."

"Yes," he said, "that is it; there is a light within! And it is with ourselves, whether old or young. It is easy to look bright when the sun is shining outside; but when darkness and trouble come, then we envy those who have a light within—"

"Here he stopped, for his road now lay in an opposite direction; but he gave Alice a little hymn-book, and told her to keep it in remembrance of an old friend, prayed that God would himself teach her the only way to be happy, both here and hereafter.

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"Mother! mother!" she cried, running into the cottage again, "why is it so dark?"

"Dark?" repeated her mother, "and the sun shining so bright. You're not awake yet, are you? You're blind, or idle, and that's more like to be the way of it. Get to your work, child, or I'll give you a beating that'll make you see right."

"Alice did not wait a second bidding; but as she went out again, she met several people, and when she spoke to them of the darkness, she saw that they only wondered, and thought that she was blind; but there was an unusual stir in the Wilson's cottage, so she turned to her bed. Ellen stood with her little bonnet and head on, and a small bundle and lantern in her hand.

"O! Ellen," she said, "where are you going?"

"Father is going to follow me," continued Ellen, "and you must come too; but I have no time to wait for you."

"So she trimmed her little lamp afresh, and left her home."

"Alice watched her as she hastened on through a rugged dale among the hills; sometimes the road looked very rough, sometimes smoother again, but she saw that the light which had burned dimly among the fogs of the valley, grew brighter and brighter as Ellen ascended the hill, till it threw quite a glory over the pathway and around her little figure; and Alice could see that the way was covered with golden inscriptions. One was, 'All ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace'; another was, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' But the one that pleased Alice best was this: 'The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' She gazed and gazed upon the glittering words until she forgot to look any more at Ellen. At last she seemed to hear confused noises, and dreamed something about a thunderstorm, till awakened by a violent shaking from her mother, and a storm of angry reproach for having slept so long.

"The poor child rose in a moment, and hastened to her morning work; but though her dream was gone, its pleasant memory remained. She eagerly told it all to Ellen, and said she thought it meant something like the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' but asked if it would not mean that Ellen was to die soon. Ellen smiled, and said, 'Perhaps it means that I have begun a pilgrimage to heaven, like Christ.'

"And who is your friend?" asked Alice. "That must mean Jesus," said Ellen; "and you know he has promised never to leave any that come to him."

"But I can't love Jesus!" exclaimed Alice. "I can't love him when I have not seen him, and when he makes me so poor and wretched."

"I used to think all that," said Ellen. "Mother used to tell me a great deal out of the Bible, but I did not care for it till she was dead. Then one night when my father was drunk, he beat me till I ran out of the house crying, and I thought, 'What a miserable, miserable world this is!' Then I remembered how Jesus had left his throne to come into this very world to suffer and die for us; and it seemed such wonderful love! I cannot tell how wonderful it seemed. And mother had bled me ask God for help; so I asked him then, and it makes me so happy to have learned to pray. Now when father beats me, I can bear it better, and sometimes I have such sweet thoughts!"

"What kind of thoughts?" said Alice. "I think," she said, "that heaven is my real home, where Jesus, and the angels, and my mother are; and this is only a school where God is giving me some hard lessons to learn for his sake."

"Now Alice wished that night that she might dream her beautiful dream again! But though it would not return at her bidding, it was never forgotten; for she felt as if all her life till now had been a dream, and that she had newly awakened to see why she had come into this world, and to hear of the glorious inheritance that might yet be hers."

The true light had shone into her heart, and even her mother wondered at the change, which she could not understand. Ellen rejoiced, and not a few days another little pilgrim had left the road for the narrow way, and was seeking a "better country, that is, an heavenly."—The Family Treasury.

"I am sure I do, mother. I feel as if I shall always love him for it."









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