

LOVE AND THE ECHO.

"Love me, love me," still he cried,
"Ever love, forever!"
Cupid, laughing, turned aside;
Echo from the hill replied,
"Never, never, never."

"Love me, for I love but thee,
Ever, love, forever.
Heart to heart for thee and me."
Echo sighed, "It may not be,
Never, never, never."

"Love me now in life and death,
Ever, love, forever."
Sadly, in an under breath,
Sobbing Echo answers, "Love?
Never, never, never."

"Love me, I shall worthy prove,
Ever, love, forever."
Cupid plumes for flight his wing
As the last faint echo rings—
"Never, never, never."

—Clara B. St. George, in Inter Ocean.

THE DEACON'S REVENGE.

I first met the deacon under rather odd circumstances. A persistent touch of rheumatism under my left shoulder, which defied liniments and plasters, sent me to the celebrated Hot Springs, seven miles north of Boomopolis, Southern California. The mud baths at these springs are justly celebrated for killing or curing all the ills that flesh inherits.

The long, low, narrow bath-house was not an inviting place. It smelled too much like an Inferno, and it was not clean. But rheumatism will take a man almost anywhere, and I did not shrink when I entered those dingy portals. The place was full of steam, through which I caught glimpses of muscular men in their shirt sleeves, the sweat pouring from their faces and their brawny arms as they handled long shovels. They were preparing the mud baths for the victims. A long trough ran the whole length of the building, filled with black, silky mud over which steaming water, which emitted a sulphurous odor, was running. When I stooped and put my finger into the uncanny liquid, I quickly lifted it out again and said "ouch."

At right angles with this main trough are smaller ones. At the head of each of these is a tub for a water bath, and beyond that is a dressing room. These divisions are separated by half partitions. A quantity of mud is taken from the big trough and stirred up in one of the little ones. When it has reached a proper consistency and temperature, the patient, who in the meantime has prepared himself for the ordeal in the adjoining dressing room, stretches himself at length upon the steaming mass and is covered by an attendant with more of the same material. A few gunny sacks, neatly arranged on the top to confine the heat, make an artistic finish, and the patient's head alone protrudes. The mineral waters, heated by nature, come constantly boiling and bubbling through the ground, and the baths can be made seven times hotter than Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, if desired. If the patient survives, fire baths get the glory; if he dies, his case was hopeless from the start. Deacon Hardwicke would remain in one of these baths an hour, enduring an experience which might have killed a man of less phlegmatic temperament. Then he would try to persuade others to follow his example, greatly to the disgust of the managers, who were afraid that somebody would die in a bath, and so ruin the reputation of their establishment. For similar reasons he was unpopular with the attendants.

Thus it happened that the deacon seemed to be deserted, when, balancing myself on the plank that edged the steaming pool, I halted at the foot of his grave and gazed, half in alarm, at his closed eyes and heavy immobile features, down which trickled little rivulets of perspiration.

"Will you kindly tell me what time it is?" he asked, in a sepulchral tone, which added to the horrors of the situation.

"Ten o'clock" I said. "Want to get out?" I'll call the attendant."

"Time isn't up for fifteen minutes yet," replied the deacon.

I picked up a sponge that was at hand, in a basin of cool water, and for the next fifteen minutes I bathed the deacon's perspiring forehead with the grateful fluid. Then the attendant came, prepared to lift the little gate at the deacon's feet, to slide the slippery coverlet of mud off from him and back into the trough from which it had come, and to help him out of the tenacious, plastic cast that he had made in his sticky bed into the water-bath, and thence into the dressing-room, where he would receive a thorough grooming and be put to bed between a couple of blankets, there to doze and sweat for an hour or two longer. At this stage of the proceedings I fled the scene. The spectacle of the deacon's long, lank, loose-jointed figure, clothed only in a thin, clinging coat of jet-black mud, would have been too horribly ludicrous.

"Don't want a mudbath? They are great things," asked the deacon, as I turned to go.

"Not to-day," I replied. "Tomorrow, maybe, or next day, perhaps I'll indulge."

"Take them about a hundred and ten and stay in three quarters of an hour, and they will cure your rheumatism," responded the deacon, reassuringly.

Two hours later the deacon joined the other guests at the hotel, professing to be greatly refreshed by his bath. His appearance was striking. He was tall, awkward and angular, yet dignified. His upper lip was smooth, but on his chin was a heavy, grizzled growth of beard. His way of speech was so slow and solemn as to seem afflicted. I was told he was a "49er"; that his title of deacon was only honorary, having originally been bestowed by his associates in the mines and clinging to him through many changes of fortune; and that his business was real estate. He was said to be very clever

in working off acreages of cactus bed, sage brush and hillside upon new comers. His ungainly, honest appearance favored him, and he could look the prospective purchaser in the eye and weave the most remarkable romances without a quiver of his clerical features.

We became fast friends, and I found him an interesting study. It was the deacon's custom to make frequent trips to Boomopolis on business, returning to the hotel for more of his beloved baths. To reach the Hot Springs the traveler crosses five miles of desert country, where the cactus flourishes like the green bay-tree and the coyote shrills at night his peculiar lay. Then he climbs "the grade," a rise of a thousand feet in two miles. This part of the way is over a mountain road which skirts precipices and winds in and out among canons in a way that makes timid people dizzy.

At this time the great boom in Southern California had just collapsed and numbers of men who had lost all their money found themselves in a strange land, penniless and friendless. As a result crime, particularly robbery, was rampant.

One bright, beautiful winter afternoon, Deacon Hardwicke started for the hotel. That morning he had procured at Boomopolis a livery team and a driver, and had been taken to different points about the valley, looking at lands which were offered for sale. Having completed his inspection he was driven to the foot of the grade, and there he dismissed the team. No one else would have done this after a hard day's ride; but the deacon thought that the horses were tired, and also that the exercise of climbing the grade would do him good. He had in his hands a little black leather wallet containing little, and as he walked along, in his slow and dignified fashion, his eyes bent on the ground, he looked like a gentleman of leisure, perhaps a wealthy Eastern tourist out for an airing.

At the foot of the grade is a little ranch house, and, just beyond, the road makes a turn almost at right angles and skirts the edge of a canon, where the traveler is hidden from view from either direction. In this angle of the way a man was waiting for the afternoon stage, which was about due. It carried the mail for the hotel, and sometimes considerable express matter, to say nothing of the passengers. But the deacon happened to come first, and, as he turned the corner, plodding slowly along, he heard a smooth, clear, firm, but impatient, voice say:

"Wait a moment, sir. And kindly hand over that grissack and your money."

Glancing up, the deacon beheld a big revolver pointed at his head.

Deacon Hardwicke was surprised and grieved. He was not a coward. He had come across the plains in '49. He had lived in many a lawless community, had seen men lynched, had himself been a target for bullets more than once. If he had been armed he would have fought—as he afterward assured me. But the appalling fact flashed over him that he had no "gun," and that the gentleman stranger "had the drop" on him. The politeness of the latter's address was not a balm for his wounded feelings.

"Come," said the highwayman, in a more threatening tone. "I mean business. Drop your wallet. Give me your money, or I'll let daylight through you."

The deacon halted and shook his fist at the man. What he said is not material to this recital. Then he turned and ran down the grade. His bobbed off and his long coat tails fluttered out behind. It was an undignified and risky proceeding, but there seemed no help for it, except to give up his money and the deacon did not consider that for a moment.

The highwayman fired twice, and the deacon afterward stated that the balls whistled in close proximity to his head. The shots festered him. He stumbled, tripped and fell. He bruised his shins and tore the skin from his wrists. The wallet flew from his hand and he lay in the road, howling with rage and pain.

The marauder advanced leisurely and picked up the wallet. Just then the stage, which was a trifle late as usual, rolled slowly around the turn in the road. The deacon's assailant leaped down the steep bank of the canon and rolled headlong among the chaparral. He regained his feet, crossed the rocky bed of the stream at the bottom of the canon, and disappeared among the bushes on the other side. The deacon lifted his long, bleeding arms toward heaven as he watched his foe depart beyond the reach of effective pursuit, and fairly screamed with impotent fury. The remarks of the passengers on the stage which picked him up and brought him to the hotel, did not tend to make him better natured. "Guess it was all a fake," "I didn't hear any shots," "More scared than hurt." These were some of the whispered comments that came to the deacon's ears. But he sat glum, indignant and silent until they reached the house.

Then he drew me aside, and I helped him put court plaster on his wounded wrists. "If I only had a gun that fellow would never have got out of there alive. I don't mind the pain. It's the disgrace that hurts. I don't see how I was careless enough to leave my gun at home these times," he said, with tears in his eyes.

"Still," I suggested, "as I understand it, he had the drop on you before you saw him. Perhaps it is just as well you did not have your gun. He might have killed you."

"Possibly," said the deacon; "but I would have fired as long as I could have crooked a finger. Now I shall be a laughing stock as long as I live. The boys will think it rich—simply rich."

"Do you think you would know the fellow should you see him again?" I asked.

"I should know him anywhere. He is short and wiry, dark hair, mustache, no beard, black eyes. And there is a great, red, flaring scar across his cheek—knife wound, I reckon."

"I am sorry for you," he said, slowly and simply.

"Oh—it's—all—right," gasped the wounded man, evidently speaking with great difficulty. "I came into—the game—on—a bluff, but you've—called—me—sure."

"Is there anything that I can do

for you?" asked the deacon. "Any message—any—"

"Bend down here," said the man. The deacon lowered his head, and the other whispered something to him.

"I'll do it," said the deacon, "I'll do it, so help me, God!"

That was all. The crowd of people, attracted by the firing and the news of the robbery, gradually went away. The physicians summoned to attend the wounded outlaw explained that nothing could be done for him, except to make him a trifle easier for an hour or two. The hours of the night passed quickly, but long before morning the useless, crime stained life was at an end.

The deacon grasped my hand in both of his, and wrung it until it ached.

"How can I thank you?" he exclaimed. "We'll go to-night. And if we catch him you will see the prettiest fight of your life."

I prepared myself for the expedition by donning an old suit of clothes and leaving my valuables at home. I had a perpetual winding Waterbury watch which I used when on hunting expeditions, and took it with me, also \$10 in silver and a small, plain, but serviceable revolver. We procured horses at the hotel stables and rode into town in the early evening.

Boomopolis at that time was only an infant among the cities of Southern California. There were huge gaps among its business houses, now filled with stately edifices. There were no pavements, and where a hundred globes of electric fire now glared at night upon the passerby, there was then only the dim and faint gleam of lamps from the windows of the scattered stores.

After an elaborate supper at the Transcontinental, prepared by a French chef from Dublin and served by retired cowboys from Arizona, we sallied forth to visit the saloons and gambling places in search of our robber. We made three or four circuits of the town without success, and finally found ourselves in the "Magnolia Club Rooms." The establishment was really only a single room, on the ground floor back of a cigar store, arranged for faro and other games of chance. It was lighted by a solitary, mammoth lamp, which was suspended from the ceiling over a long, green covered table, upon which were scattered cards and gold coins. Around it were perhaps a dozen men of various sorts and conditions, all intent upon "the game." As many more, including ourselves, were interested onlookers. The room was blue with tobacco smoke, and the door at the farther end, which afforded communication with an adjoining bar, was perpetually on the swing.

I was enjoying the character of a detective hugely. So far there was a pleasant tinge of excitement—or rather, an expectation of excitement—and very little danger. But as we scanned the faces of the company without seeing our man, the deacon's brow grew black with disappointment. It was now after midnight. The cigar store was closed, but the bar was kept open all night. Disappointed in our search, we became absorbed in watching the game. There was something of the gambler in every man, and, as I looked upon the tense excited faces of the players, the contagion of their example seized me, and I felt in my pocket for a coin. Finding nothing but silver, which I did not like to stake, as there was none on the table, I was on the point of borrowing a double eagle from the deacon, when I heard a quiet but distinct voice, at the end of the room, say:

"Hands up, gentlemen, if you please."

Glancing around, I saw a man standing at the door leading to the bar, with a revolver in each hand pointed at us. He was a short, slight man, with dark hair and a flaming scar across his face.

There was no confusion. One of the youngers quietly placed his back against the door leading to the cigar store and drew two revolvers, which he pointed along the table. Two others, evidently confederates also, stood at ease awaiting the next order. The rest of us lifted our hands simultaneously. Any one could see that it was the only thing to do. The deacon's face was white as snow and his jaws were set like a steel trap.

"The gents that are seated will kindly rise," said the voice near the door.

The gamblers rose as one man.

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