

THE MAIL

A PAPER FOR THE PEOPLE.

TERRE HAUTE, - AUGUST 11, 1877.

POOR BEAST.

Poor beasts that every day we see o'er-driven,
Flooding along their path in patient pain;
No hopes of future bliss stored up in heaven,
Their spirits cheer, their sinking hearts sustain.

Poor beasts, we see them toiling on the road,
While threats and curses against them freely flow,
Now beneath the cruel, heavy load,
Now shrinking from the oft-struck cowardly blow.

The dumb brute bears no malice to his heart,
For all the sufferings he must undergo;
Ill-treated, yet he bravely plays his part,
And meekly bears the heritage of woe.

I watched the two—the man that held the rein,
The bridled beast that at his bidding ran;
And asked which was the nobler of the twain,
The noble beast or the ignoble man?

I marked a gay young horse flash prancing by,
And wished to make those powers of speed my own,
Next year I saw him worn with cruelty;
To-day he dropped down dead, a mass of fleshy bone.

I count the strong man weak that does not dare
To check a wretch from torturing the dumb;
Who scoffs at mercy, and whom naught can scare,
But dread of punishment to swiftly come.

Shall we on whom a gracious God bestows
Heaven's hope to cheer us in life's darkest hour,
Be more impatient of our daily woes
Than they who lack such hope, such heart-sustaining power?

Joseph's Brother.

BY BRET HARTE.

They didn't call him Tom, or Jack, or Harry, but always spoke of him as 'Joseph's Brother.' And it was just as singular that they didn't say 'Joe,' instead of 'Joseph,' when speaking of or to the man.

The two had a wagon in the band dragging itself toward the Black Hills day by day and mile by mile. They messaged by themselves, scarcely spoke to each other, and their lives and their actions were a sort of mystery to the rest, who were a jolly set, drinking, carousing, fighting, playing cards, and wishing for a brush with the Indians. Some said that Joseph was a fugitive from justice, and that he wouldn't fraternize with them for fear of betraying himself when interrogated. Others thought he felt too proud to mix with such society, and between the two theories he had nearly all the men thinking ill of him before the wagon train was four days' travel from Cheyenne.

He keeps his brother hidden away in the wagon as if a little sunshine would kill the boy, growled one of a dozen gold hunters sitting around their campfire in the twilight.

'Perhaps he thinks our language isn't high-toned enough—blast his eyes!' exclaimed another.

'Ain't we all bound to the same place—all sharing the same dangers—one as good as another?' demanded a broad shouldered fellow from San Antonio.

'Yes, yes!' they shouted.

'Then don't it look low-down mean for this 'ere man Joseph to edge away from us as if we were pizen? If he's so mighty refined and high-toned, why didn't he come out here in a balloon?'

There was a laugh from the circle, and the Texan went on:

'I don't pretend to be an angel, but I know manners as well as the next. I believe that man Joseph is a regular starch, ready to wilt right down soon as I point my finger at him, and I'm 'goin' over to his wagon to pull his nose.'

'That's the game, Jack! Go in, old fellow! 'Rah for the man from Texas!' yelled the gold hunters as they sprang to their feet.

'Come right along and see the fun,' continued the Texan, as he led the way toward Joseph's wagon.

The vehicle formed one in the circle, and at a small fire a few feet from the hind wheels, Joseph and his brother, eating their frugal supper. As the crowd came near, the boy sprang up and climbed into the covered wagon, while Joseph slowly rose up and looked at them anxiously and inquiringly.

'See here, Mr. Joseph, what's your other name?' began the Texan as he halted before the lone man, 'we have come to the conclusion that you and that booby brother of yours don't like our style. Are we correct?'

'Have nothing against any of you,' quietly replied Joseph. 'The journey thus far has been very pleasant and agreeable to us.'

'But you are off—you don't speak to us!' persisted Jack.

'I am sorry if I have incurred any man's ill-will. I feel friendly toward you all.'

'O, you do, eh?' sneered the Texan, feeling that he was losing ground. 'Well, it's my opinion that you are a sneak!'

Joseph's face turned white, and the men saw a dangerous gleam in his eyes. He seemed about to speak or make some movement, when a soft voice from the wagon called out:

'Joseph, Joseph!'

A soft light came into the man's face. The Texan noted it, and, slapping Joseph's face, he blurted out:

'If we ain't a coward, ye'll resent that, sure!'

A boyish figure sprang from the wagon and stood beside the lone man. A small hand was laid on his shoulder, and a voice whispered in his ear:

'Bear that insult for my sake!'

There was a full minute in which no one moved. Joseph's face looked ghostly white in the gloom, and they could see him tremble.

'He's a coward, just as I thought!' said the Texan, as he turned away. The others followed him, some feeling ashamed, and others surprised or gratified, and by-and-by the word had reached every wagon that Joseph and Joseph's brother were cowards.

Next morning, when the wagon train was ready to move, the Captain passed near Joseph's wagon on purpose to say:

'If there are any cowards in this train, they needn't travel with us any further.'

'Never mind, Joseph; we are trying to do right.'

That night, when the wagon train of the gold hunters went into camp, they could not see the lone wagon, though many of the men, ashamed of their conduct, looked long and earnestly for it. They had seen Indians afar off, and they knew that the red devils would pounce down upon a single team as soon as they sighted it.

Darkness came; midnight came, and the sentinels heard nothing but the stamping of the horses and the howls of the coyotes. At two o'clock the report of rifles and the fierce yells of Indians floated up through the little valley, and the camp was aroused in a moment.

'The devils have jumped in on Joseph and his brother!' whispered one of the men, as he stood on a knoll and bent his head to listen.

'Good 'nuff! Cowards have no business out here!' growled the Texan.

The first speaker wheeled, struck the ruffian a sledge hammer blow in the face, and then, running to the horses, cried out:

'Come on! come on! A dozen of us can be spared for the rescue!'

Sixteen men swept down the valley like the wind. The firing and the yelling continued, proving that the men who had been called a coward was making a heroic fight. In ten minutes they came upon the lone camp, made light as day by the burning wagon. Fifty feet from the bonfire, and hemmed in by a circle of dancing, leaping, howling savages, was Joseph's brother standing over Joseph's dead body. The gold hunters heard the pop, pop, pop of the boy's revolver as they burst into view, and the next moment they were charging down upon the demons, using rifle and revolver with terrible effect. In two minutes not a live Indian was in sight. Joseph's brother stood over the body, and an empty revolver in his hand. The men cheered wildly as they looked around, but the boy looked into their faces without exultation, surprise or gladness.

There were three dead Indians beside the wagon, killed where the fight commenced, and the corpses in front of Joseph's brother numbered more than the victims of the sixteen men.

'Is Joseph badly hurt?' asked one of the men, as he halted his horse beside the boy.

'He is dead!' whispered the white-faced defender.

'He is? God forgive me for the part I took last night!'

'You called him a coward!' cried Joseph's brother, 'and you are to blame for this! Was he a coward? Look there! and there! and there! We drove them back from the wagon—drove them clear out here! Joseph is dead! You are his murderers!'

Every man was near enough to hear his voice and note his action as he picked up the rifle of an Indian and sent a bullet through his own head. With exclamations of grief and alarm trembling on their lips, the men sprang from their saddles. The boy was dead—dead as Joseph—and both corpses were bleeding from a dozen wounds.

'We'll carry 'em up to the train and have a burial in the morning,' said one of the men, and the bodies were taken up behind two of the horsemen. They did have a burial, and men looked into the grave with tears in their eyes, for they had discovered that Joseph's brother was a woman—yes a woman with the whitest throat and softest hands. It might have been Joseph's wife, or sister, or sweetheart. No one could tell that, but they could tell how they had wronged him, and they said, as they stood around the grave, 'We hope the Lord won't lay it up again us!'

The Old House.

The old house was slowly dropping to pieces about the young people. Yet, for all that, they were as happy as a king and queen, building up about them, with their hands, a new life; and it was sufficient to itself as Eden; it is only the unsatisfactory middle years, to which the loveliness of the virgin world has become a twice-told tale, that are insipid.

In truth, it should have been enough to content any of us simply to be Rose Marks—the rose of the valley, the lily of the south, sunshine not more golden than her hair, more dazzling than her smile; a lovely little soul and body enjoying every moment of her life, and making it precious to every one within her influence. She never thought of grumbling that the house was shabby and the food scanty, but contented herself with bread and butter, and when there was no dainty, and when the roof leaked moved her bed to another room where it did not leak so badly. Every timber in the old house was dear to her, and she never asked for a better.

No wonder everybody loved Rose Marks in general, and her cousin Roger loved her in especial, not her cousin, but her stepmother's nephew, yet always called a cousin, and always loved like a brother. A brother? Well, no, not exactly. People are not so very apt to think whether or no their brothers will like this ribbon or that flower, to blush damask if their brothers catch them gazing at themselves intently, to point at themselves from their brothers, or to have their hearts beat like wildfire at the touch of the brother's hand.

These two children were alone in the house now, for Mr. Marks and his wife had followed the elder children, who had died when the great typhoid epidemic raged some ten years ago; the old servant, who had never forsaken them, had gone her way too at last, and Louis, one day taking the ancient plate, sold it for enough to insure the house for a term of five years, and formally resigning all right and title in it to Rose, who had her and Roger good by and had gone to seek his fortune. So Rose kept the old house as she could, and Roger paid her a regular board from his little salary as clerk of the only store in the village. Rose cried every time she took it, but as all the rest she possessed happened to be the cow and the garden and what the grass sold for, there was nothing, of course, to do but take it. How many times Rose had resolved to go out by the day and do sewing since she had been sixteen. 'I could earn two hundred dollars a year easily, Roger,' she would say, as she was mapping t out to Roger in the evening, at the other side of the table where he was studying.

'And what would become of me?' Roger said.

'Why—why, you could have much better dinners, you know, Roger, at Mrs. Deane's.'

'Hang Mrs. Deane! I should have no home, I should go to the hotel. It is missionary duty to stay as you are.'

'But, Roger,' then Rose said, growing redder and redder, 'some day, you know, you will be married, and then you won't want me round.'

'Shan't I?'

'Your wife won't, at any rate; for you know I'm not even your sister, and your wife when you marry will tell you so.'

Roger, getting up and stalking out of the room, 'You won't forget how to sew, will you?' And Rose began to cry, and Roger

strode round the place till bed time like an unhappy ghost. He married! Why was he harping on that? Did he want to marry herself, and have him first put himself out of the way? And then he thought of a man in the world who would dare to think of such a sacrilege as marrying a poor woman who never should have loved him! He would make it impossible! And then he felt that he was a fool, and that he knew better; he knew the modest little Rose, living her secluded life, had never had the remotest idea of a lover; he knew now that she was lying all in white, wrapped in her innocent dreams, a thinking of nothing less, while he was marauding up and down the garden paths. 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