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TOM'S STRATEGY.

By HARRY STILLWELL EDWARDS.

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"Wha' yer gwine to do wi' dat gun?" It was Tempy Taylor who propounded that question, and she did it in a tone of voice that would have attracted anybody's attention. She was a tall, heavy masculine woman of some two hundred odd pounds, and as she straightened up over the washtub under the chinaber ry tree at the end of her cabin she was indeed a formidable looking figure. Her great black, muscular arms drooped toward the scrubbing board ages. Seminal Emissions. Loss of that reclined in the tub, and her hands grasped a wet garment upon which she had been expending some of her prodigious strength. The person addressed was a small old man whose face was pretty well covered with a gray, kinky beard. He nervously shifted the weapon he bore-an ancient muzzle loading fowling piece, with a wire wrapped stock and reed ramrod, and affected an easy.

conciliatory manner. "Des' gwine down yander on de crick. Ole buck rabbit down dere ev'y day 'bout dis time. 'Spec' he oughter be en de pan time Mammy Jo' git heah en de morndin." The voice was drawling and childlike in its modulations. He struck Mammy Jo' was the mother of the ama zon at the tub, and had sent word of her intended visit. The little old man moved off slowly, with a peculiar shuftion of his head toward the cabin, "but

As he passed on, his ear waited for a plunged a little more vigorously into her work. The little strip of pine woods toward which his face was turned seemed to approach at a snail's pace he stole a backward glance over his shoulder, and then abruptly quickened his motions. At the same instant his whole manner changed, and when presently he heard his name echo through the wood, borne upon the imperative tones of a pair of prodigious female lungs, he laughed aloud and held on his way. The woman at the tub talked to

"Mighty takin on bout Mammy Jo" ment should send or bring from two to all er sudd'n. Mammy Jo'! Mammy Jo'! little debbil." She gave the shirt of her absent lord a vicious wring, as if she felt him in it, and lifted up her voice, obey-

Perfected in old cases which have ing a sudden impulse: een neglected or unskillfully tr-ated. "You Torm!" There "You Torm!" There was no reply except a few echoes that mocked her. "He heah me," she continued, resuming Sis' Lizer; how yo' he'th terday, ma'am? Morndin, Sis' Chloey; I hope yer feelin-berry well, ma'am.'" She imitated the insinuating, childlike tones of berabsent sponse and repeated her scornful laugh. "Nex' time I heah 'bout 'im gwine over deir I'll bre'k ev'y bone en 'is triffin

But Tom was thinking no longer of his industrious and indignant spouse. He was rapidly moving along the new line of departure from home and the baunts of the buck rabbit in the creek bottom. He had a slight limp, caused by a bale of cotton rolling against his leg when he was young, and as he trotted along his funny little figure bobbing up and down caused the powder horn under his arm and the shot gourd to swing out and collide fiercely. A couple of miles glided away thus, when suddenly out from under his feet s rabbit scurried a few yards away, and pricking up his ears looked back at the rude disturber of his afternoon ramble. The sermon was delivered in a shout, Tom brought the gun down across his and wherever in a sentence the speaker knee, cocked it successfully, the hammer going back half a circle with three distinct clicks, rested it for a moment against a tree, aimed long and carefully and pulled the trigger. There was deafening explosion; the little old man staggered back six feet, the muzzle of his gun dropped to the ground, and the rabbit sprung high in the air, turned a somersault and fell dead. Had there observed that the ground about the unfortunate animal was more or less torn up for a space of twenty feet square. Tom rushed in and secured his prize,

MEDFORD, Ore then carefully reloaded his weapon and resumed his journey. He had not gone far before a rooster,

ing where stood a log cabin with a garden at the rear, guarded from a couple of cadaverous looking pigs and the chickens by a split picket fence re-enthe tight little rolls which all of the kinky headed race affect under the idea that straight hair will finally result

"How yer do, Sis' Chayney? How yo' he'th terday, ma'am?" Tom had re-duced his gait, and his voice rose and fell melodiously. The woman laughed, showing a mouthful of dazzling teeth. "I'm toler'ble. Set down. How yer

do. Unc' Torm?" "Des so so." He laid the rabbit on the single step beside her feet and con-

tinued faceticusly: "'Spec' dat rabbit knowed wha' I wnz gwine, an des git right en de way ter come erlong too." The woman laughed again. She stole a look at Tom as she sat up with both hands over her head engaged upon a final knot.

'How 'e know?" Tom raised his eyebrows and scratched

"He knowed I warn' gwine home," he anid slowly, and meeting the comic look on his face with one of intelligence she threw her head back and gave expression to her mood again. She did not thank him for the gift, but took it up as she rose and turned it over. "Rabbit fat," she said, and laid it on the water bucket shelf just inside. "How yer

lef,' Aunt Tempy?"
"She putty well," said Tom carelessly. He was studying the toe of his foot visible through a rift in his well worn brogan. Again the laugh of a woman, this time from the inside of the house, reached him.

"Tempy gwine ter be heah en dis worl' w'en you an me done gone," she called out. Tom passed his hand over his face and looked as if the idea was not a pleasant one. "Better bring yo' cher enside," added the woman after a she began to busy herself straightening things in the simple room, and as she worked the conversation went on.

"Unc' Josh Sims gwine ter preach termorrow," she said. "He come erlong heah des now an he low dat he wuz gwine ter turn all de niggers over boat heah, 'count er dey debblement."

"Dey es er needin hit," said Tom. "Ef I had er seen 'im I'd er got squar' wid some, sho's you born."

"Oom-hoo! An I reck'n some seen 'im 'fo' now an ten' ter dat 'head er you. Maybe some done got squar' wid ole she spoke, and gave him a sharp slap on no mo'.



"Shake off yo' weights!" When Tom, warned by the sinking sun, set his face homeward, he took a course that would carry him in or about the log church in which a neighborhood preacher or elder held forth every Sunday, except when the famous and eccenover yonner at de Stillson place, de lyin tric Reverend Joshua Sims visited it, which was three or four times a year. As he approached the edifice, which stood in a pine thicket and boasted of a bush arbor awning in front, he heard the voice of a preacher breaking loudly upon the afternoon calm. Never before had Tom known of a church meeting on Saturday her labors, and then she resumed, too, afternoon. It was the time universally the thread of her reverie. "Morndin, claimed by the negroes for town shop-Sis' Lizer; how yo' he'th terday, mu'am! ping or loafing. He knew of no one recently dead, and besides had any one died that late in the week the body

would have been saved until Sunday. In open mouthed astonishment Tom approached at the side. Sure enough, 'preaching" was going on. His first im alse was to enter, but, still suspicious he placed his eye at a crevice and looked through. There was only one person within the church, and that was the Rev. Joshua Sims. Standing in the pulpit, he was preaching to an imaginary audience the sermon evidently prepared for the next day. Tom squatted down on his haunches, and a broad, comprehensive grin lighted his face as he realized the situation. The speaker thundered over the book lying upon the pulpit, slapping it vigorously from time to

time, and walking from side to side. Half of the Reverend Joshua Sims' success lay in his figure, tempestuous delive ery and thrilling tones, and he knew it. sought for a word he would prolong the preceding tone with "er-rer." Sometimes saliva from his mouth flew over the pulpit into the vacant auditorium as foam is tossed from a horse's mouth. Tom had missed the text, and indeed most of the sermon, but this much reached him through the crevice.

"Shake off yo' weights! Shake 'em off! Dey es good ter put on er race been a witness present he would have horse wen dey es er trainin 'im, but w'en de time come ter race dey must be shook off. Ef yer gwine ter run er race wid de debble, shake off dem weights, an go et fum de drop er de hat.

"Shake off yo' weights! Shake 'em off! Sister, ef hit's fine clo'es, shake 'em off! Shake 'em off! Dey ain't no

Farmers

Write for our mammeth calculation a mode page by the control of the cont

Shake off yo' weights!

"Shake off yo' weights! Shake 'em forced with brush. In the doorway sat off, brudders! Yer can't run er race s young woman twisting her hair into wid de debble an yer full er whisky. Er water at de start an go bar'footed, like Moses roun de bush, an trus' de Lord when 'e want mo' ter run er branch 'cross de road, like he does fur de mule gwine ter town. Shake off de weights! Shake 'em off!

"Shake off yo' weights! How does po' sinner run? He runs wid de weights on. an debble keep right long at his heels, so close sinner hear him laugh. Dey trabble long tergedder, an bimeby, 'fo' dey gits ter de las' milepos', debble trip up po' sinner an win de race. Shake off yo' weights! Oh, shake 'em off! "How do de righteous run? He strips

off de weights an cuts out. Mos' 'fo' yer know 'e gwine run, 'e done gone, an debble come erlong an find trail so cole 'e don't know wha' good man gone, an 'e win de race. Shake off yo' weights! Yer all got weights, an I'm gwine tell yer bout 'em. Deir's sump'n enside already tell yer, but I'm gwine ter tell out loud so ev'ybody know yer been tole." He descended from the pulpit and marched up to the amen corner, still talking. Here 's Bre'r Dan! Here 's Bre'r Dan! Bre'r Dan got weights, an 'e ain' shake em off. What es dem weights' name? Too much corn en 'is crib fur de size er 'is crop! Too much cott'n en 'is crib fur de size er'is patch! Too many chickens en de pan fur two hens an er rooster! Too many shotes erbout Chrismus fur er no sow man. Shake off yo' weights, Bre'r Dan-shake 'em off! Oh, w'at es sech er sinner like? He like er one legged grasshopper, w'a' think 'e es er jumpin somewhar, w'en ev'ybody know e jes tu'nnin roun en de road, p'intin er

new way ev'y time." Tom rolled over on the ground outside and kicked his heels in the air, convalsed with langhter. "Somebody done got squar' wid Unc' Dan," he gasped. few moments, and he complied. Then Then he quickly rose up and glued his eye to the crack again. The preacher was standing with uplifted hands over another imaginary sinner.

"An heah ole Black Aleck! Bre'er Aleck got weights. No chutch on Sunday fur Aleck. Mus' fish tro'tline an hunt squ'r'l. Mus' hoe de gyardin an hunt guinea nes' en de jimsun weeds, Mus' do anythin but heah de Lord's word, 'cept'n' ole Unc' Josh come ter preach. Dem de weights Bre'r Aleck got. Shake 'em off, er-rer! Shake 'em off! Oh, w'at es sech er sinner like? He like er las' yer wasp en er spider web- laughed and slapped his companion on man Torm." She was passing him as holler an dry, an 'is wings won't flop the back. The Reverend Joshua Sims

W'at kind er weights 'e tryin ter run the night, and the possum decided the wid? Lazy weights. Won't work cottin patch, won't work tater patch, won't Tom, having got himself well under work collurd patch, won't work nowhar. | way, continued gayly: O Lord! did anybody ever see er lazy de weights. Bre'r Clay! Shake 'em off! he'd he'p bre'kfus' mightily." And he Oh, w'at es sech er sinner like? He like began to peer around with a great show of engerness.

APPLES, PEARS, PLUMS, began to peer around with a great show of engerness. dry up 'fo' time come fur 'im ter drop is tail an be er frog."

Tom went over on the ground while Black Aleck was being dealt with, and he was too weak with laughter to sit up during the time devoted to Clay. Presently he heard:

"An heah Sis' Tilly! Heah es dear She got weights ter shake off. She run down. roun tellin tales on oth'r 'comen's husbun's"-

"Ocom-hoo!" Tom cocked his head up as he uttered | this assenting exclamation and listened. "An she scole"-

"Dat's right!" "An mek troubl' ev'ywhar she go." "Somebody done got squar' wid Aun' Tilly." Tom ducked his head down and

rolled over again. "Shake 'em off, deah sister! Shake 'em off! Oh, w'at es sech er sinner like?

She like er cockleburr en de tail uv er

good heah an no good deir. "An heah Bre'r Torm!" The preacher was right over the crevice, and his voice

ary cownide an gone ter markit-no

sounded like thunder in the ears of the startled eavesdropper outside. "Little Bre'r Torm. He tryin ter run wid big weights. W'at es Bre'r Torm's weights? He heah ter see dis 'ooman, an yonder ter see dat 'ooman; fus' one way an den ernudder, an er wife down vonner home t'ink 'e gone huntin ev'y time 'e take 'is

A horrible groan broke from the lips of the trembling man without, and a cold sweat started forth all over him. In a frenzy of terror he raised himself to his knees and brought the old gun to full cock. Then realizing what he was doing he returned the hammer to a safer place with feverish anxiety. The Reverend Joshua Sims heard nothing but his own voice. "Shake 'em off, Bre'r Torm! Shake 'em off! Yer can't run no race wid dem weights er-hangin on ver. Oh, w'at es sech er sinner like? He like er snake en de grass, an fus' t'ing 'e know 'e gwine ter lan en de fire wid 'is back broke."

Tom's hilarity was all gone. If that sermon was preached on the morrow he might not literally land in the fire with his back broke, but his back would suffer until the sensations would make it appear so. He left almost as suddenly as his mirth. Gliding into the woodsh made his way to the bend in the road; then, as if struck with a new idea, stopped short and took a seat on a stump. In an attitude of profound reflection he waited until, having finished his sermon, the preacher came down the road with great dignity. When he reached the vicinity of the little man the latter started suddenly, looked over his shoulder, and an affable and delighted expression dawned upon his face.

"How do yer do, Bre'r Sims? Lord, I wuz des er-sayin how I 'u'd like ter see Bre'r Sims, an heah 'e come er-walkin right erlong." By this time he was up and she ring the newcomer's hand.

"Wha' yer wine dis time er day?" The Reverend J shua returned the greeting, but with less demonstration. "Well, I vuz er-gwine down ter Sis' Thomson's

"Wha' dat!" Tom threw up both hands in well affected astonishment. "Man, night ketch yer 'fo' yer git half way deir! No. sah; yer come erlong wid me. Tempy'll be proud ter see Bre'r Sims, an I 'spect by now dat possum w'at wuz ercookin 'while back done got done." Tom was a large, heavy man, with a round, "An heah es Bre'r Clay! Heah es my full jaw and a well fed look. It really dear Bre'r Clay! Bre'r Clay got weights. | mattered little to him where he spent

"I knowed dat possum up ter sump'n man win er race? 'T ain't gwine ter Las' night de rooster call me ter run he'p yer, Bre'r Clay, ter put on dem deir quick. Bre'r Possum was squattin good clo'es heah an say 'Amen,' an en de henhous' des like 'e been sont fur 'Bless de King,' an 'He'p Lord!' loud 'n an come, an heah 'tis." Tom wagged anybody ef yer lef' de ole 'ooman an de his head sagaciously. "Oomp! Ef 1 chillun ter work all de week. Shake off c'u'd des jump Bre'r Rabbit now, 'spect

"Didn't yer shoot erwhile back? Heah somebody over yonner bout Sis' Chay-

Tom shook his head. "Spect dat wuz one dem Gillus boys. Dey all time bang-in way over deir. When Tom shoot, sump'n gwine hang 'bout 'is clo'es." He lifted the gun quickly and sighted it to-Sis' Tilly. Wa't es Sis' Tilly's weights? ward a clump of bushes, then took it

"Dat muliein leaf down deir fool me. ook mighty like er molly cott'n." Brother Sims plodded along behind the loquacious little man-his mind on other CEORCE H. HASKINS things again.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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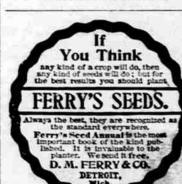
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