

A STEP BACKWARD

By WILLIS BEACH POTTER

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A young clergyman fresh from a theological seminary entered a gambling den in Dead Man's Gulch and standing in the center of the room, said in a sonorous voice:

"You are invited to attend a prayer meeting in Tompson's wood to commence at 5 o'clock. It is now a quarter to 4. I trust that every man present will be there."

Instead of every man showing a willingness to go to Tompson's wood every man proceeded with what he was doing, which was principally gambling.

The young clergyman—he might have been twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old—looked mildly upon this want of response, not in the least discouraged, and was about to leave the saloon when his attention was attracted to a young girl who came in, approached a table where half a dozen men were playing poker, and putting her arms around the neck of one of the players, begged him to leave.

"Do come home, father," she said. "Mother is sick and your being here worries her."

"After I've played a few hands more, Effie. I've had a long run of bad luck, which is sure to turn."

The clergyman from the moment the girl entered was visibly affected by her presence. Going to the table, he looked over the game for awhile, then said to her father, "If you go home I'll see what I can do to recover your losses." Every one looked up at the speaker surprised, especially the man addressed. He rose, leaving seven or eight dollars on the table, and telling his daughter to go home and say to her mother that he would be there soon, stood looking over the game.

His fellow gamblers were five stool pigeons and one card sharp. They had fleeced the man who had given up his place out of nearly all the money he possessed. The clergyman steadily won, but in small amounts, till he had increased the pile before him to several hundred dollars. Then the card sharp gave his stool pigeons a look and opened the next hand for a jack pot. All stayed in for one round, then dropped out on the second, and on the third the betting was left to the card sharp and the clergyman, who continued to raise each other till the pot resembled a miniature mountain.

By this time there were a number of lookers on, and the excitement waxed high. A clergyman playing against Dave Simpson, who was known for the slickest card sharp at Dead Man's Gulch, was an interesting sight to see. When the two men tired of raising each other Simpson "called" the clergyman. This by the rules of the game compelled the latter to show his hand first, an evident disadvantage to him, playing with a tight fingered opponent who might increase his hand after knowing what the clergyman held.

The broad brim of the parson's clerical felt hat was pulled down over his eyes, and his cards were held close under them. Presently he said mildly:

"I see four kings in my hand, and nothing will beat four kings except four aces. Since I've got an ace, too, there's no way for you to beat me except by introducing an ace from another pack, which would, to say the least, be irregular. I'm going to show my cards, and if you have that fifth ace I'd advise you to keep it dark."

The speaker seemed to be troubled by an itching at the back of his neck and put a hand up to scratch. When he withdrew his hand he held in it a knife eight inches long, which he held over his opponent. The latter retained his nerve, sitting motionless.

"You're no parson," he said. "Who are you?"

"I am a clergyman of the Methodist Episcopal church. My name is James Sykes, formerly a desperado and black-leg, but reformed."

Throwing his cards on the table, he told the man for whom he played to scoop in the pot.

Every one had heard of Jim Sykes, and not a man among the gamblers dared to tackle him. He went home with the man he had befriended and on arrival said:

"You people have forgotten me, but I haven't forgotten you. Once when a posse was after me to hang me this young lady, then a slip of a girl, hid me and saved my neck. These funds are a small token of my gratitude."

He took the girl's hand in his and looked into her eyes with his, which were full of gratitude.

"I remember," she said, "six or seven years ago a young man coming to our house and telling me that he was hunted for his life, but he could not possibly be you. He was a frightful looking object. You, on the contrary, are the personification of all that is good."

"And what made the change in me? The little girl who saved my life. I resolved that her effort should not be in vain. I determined to live for the good instead of the bad. I was converted by an evangelist and joined the Methodist church. Now I am a worker in the vineyard of the Lord."

And before he left he had secured a helpmeet to work with him in his new field. The couple worked exclusively among the roughest classes, for which labor on account of his experience with them the husband was eminently fitted. There are a number of these western towns which were once sinks of iniquity that are now reputable places, made so by our hero and heroine.

Took It to Himself.

There was a short, round woman standing in one of the ample doorways of the capitol, and there were other women about her. The short, round woman, however, was conspicuously present. A courteous senator came along with a couple of friends and remarked:

"I guess that we can get around this crowd."

"Don't you call me a crowd," indignantly shouted the round woman, and the senator went on, smiling, but saying nothing.—Detroit Free Press.

CANDIDATES!

Read This Every Morning

Make Every Minute Count From Now Till September 2nd

From now is going to be the most exciting period of the campaign and you should not sacrifice your good work of the past; but make an extra effort to get in the lead and stay there. Any of you can do it if you go at in a determined manner. In the words of Patrick Henry: "THE RACE IS NOT TO THE STRONG ALONE BUT TO THE VIGILANT, THE ACTIVE, THE BRAVE." Strive your utmost and the reward will be yours. The first grand awards, those beautiful Kimball Pianos are now on display at Huntley Bros. Company and Busch's Big Furniture Store. Candidates and friends are invited to call and inspect them.

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For further particulars address the

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