KEEPING BACK THE OCEAN WITH A WALL

CHINA'S ENORMOUS DIKES WHICH DEFEND THE COAST

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HAINING, Che Kiang, Dec. 28.—I have seen the greatest wonder of China. I might almost say the greatest wonder of the world. It is the fight between the waters of the ocean and those of the land, which takes place here at every tide, when the mighty Pacific, rearing its snow-white head to a height of many feet, comes galloping up the Bay of Hangchow in a vain attempt to conquer the Tsingtang River, which there meets it and is lost in its waters.

I saw the struggle standing on the sea wall, which the Chinese have here built to keep back the ocean. This wall is as high as a three-story house. It is built of granite, the stones in places being bound together with iron, and it runs from here all the way along the coast to the mouth of the Yangtse Kiang. It is 20 feet high and more than 100 miles long, and it is only one of the mighty creations of the Chinese in their struggle with Nature.

China Versus Holland.

We make much of the fight of Holland with the waves. The fight of the Chinese is far more wonderful. You could drop Holland amongst the vast regions of the Lower Yangtse Valley and you would have to hunt to find it. This whole country is a system of dikes and canals. I traveled up the Yangtse River for 1000 miles, and found enormous embankments everywhere along its course. I walked on the banks of waterways 40 feet above the lands, the tops of such embankments forming the roads and paths of the country. The great silk district about Haining is of a similar nature. Every farm lies below the level of the canal, and everywhere the people are dredging out the waterways and building up walls. The canals are crossed by hundreds of bridges, some of enormous size and of great beauty, and all representing a vast amount of money and work.

Take, for instance this huge wall of Haining, on which I am standing. At its foot are two terraces, about 20 feet wide, held back by piles, filled in with stones. Above these terraces the wall rises straight up about 15 feet. It is regularly built, being made of blocks of stone from a foot to 18 inches thick, one piled upon another as in building a house. Upon the terraces, which are high out of the water, is a long line of great junks filled with cargo for Haining. They have come in when the tide was high, and by its recession have been laid upon this great shelf. I have crawled down upon the terraces and I sit below the ships as I write these notes. They are at least 15 feet back from the water, and their tall masts tower high above the top of the wall. They are enormous vessels, which came here by sea from other ports. Their mighty sails are flapping in the breeze, and the great fish-like eyes, each as big around as a dinner plate, look down upon me as I work. The ships are anchored to the wall by cables of twisted bamboo as big around as your arm, and beyond and back of them I can see the pagodas, and other buildings of Haining, with the blue mountains rising behind them.

Stand beside me and let your eye follow the wall. Notice how it winds along with the sinuous curves of a snake, the stones as closely laid as though they were dovetailed. Those curves lessen the force of the mighty bore and aid in keeping the ocean out of the land.

Notice that great fascine or fortification of rushes and twigs which extends far out from the wall in the shape of a bow. It is 20 feet high and 60 feet in diameter and is made of sticks filled in with mud, the ends of the sticks facing outward. That wall is to protect these ships from the daily inroads of the Pacific, which might otherwise dash them to pieces against the stones.

Now look down at the bay. We are approaching low tide, and the water is still flowing out. The Goddess of the Tsingtang is supreme. The bay is filled with the silt brought down by it from the mountains. It is slimy and muddy, a great sheet of bright yellow, 10 miles in width, bordered at each end with navy blue mountains. The sky is bright blue, and filled with waves of fleecy clouds just above me. Far out beyond the yellow I can see the white caps on the Pacific, the realm of old Neptune, but as yet there is no sign of his invasion of the land.

I climb to the top of the wall, first having my guide draw my camera up with a string, and sit down and wait for the coming invasion. I am on a wide dike, shaded by long lines of willows, with the Hangchow bay and the ocean in front of me and behind and below me, a mighty garden spotted with clumps of green trees, and covered with a crazy quilt of luxuriant crops. There are patches of pink peach orchards just bursting forth into bloom, gray thickets of mulberry trees and clumps of feathery bamboos, out of which peep the thatched roofs of farmhouses. There are people wearing blue gowns and gray hats at work in the fields, lazy buffaloes dragging the plow through the furrows, and in the willows above me I hear the singing of birds. It is an ideal country scene, as peaceful and quiet as that of any part of the world, and I almost doze off as I look.

The Battle of the Waters.

But what is that sound in the distance? It makes me think of a railroad train at great speed, but far off. It slowly deepens and I look out to sea. It is the mighty Pacific gathering itself together for the great bore at Hangchow. With my glass I can see a faint line of white at the foot of blue islands about 10 miles away. It is now but a streak of silver cutting the sea. As I watch it it broadens and lengthens. The sound increases. See! There is a low wall of foam way out there in the water. There are great boats behind it which are floating in on the tide, and ships in front which it must swallow up as it comes onward. Now it is nearer and higher. With the naked eye I can see it throwing its foam into the air. The wall seems to be rolling over and over, while the bay at my feet is as still as a mill pond. Now the flood has caught the ships. They ride with it. They sway this way and that, apparently on their beam ends. Now they are lost, and a little later on I see them rising and falling with the swell behind it.

Now the wall of water is extending far out in the bay. It is dashing itself against the embankment some miles further up, and it is rolling, seething, foaming, roaring toward me. This wall is greater than that which engulfed Pharaoh's army. It makes me think of Niagara, and the thunder of its oncoming current is almost as great. It comes closer and closer until at last it dashes almost to my feet and goes roaring onward. It has caught the great junks on the terrace, swayed their masts to and fro, and, passing, has left them floating, for the bay is now filled and the terraces hidden. How the water seethes and boils! There are a myriad whirlpools in the bay. The ships are pulling at the great bamboo cables with which they are tied to the shore, and the whole for a moment is like the rapids below Niagara Falls.

A moment later and the contest is over. The Pacific has crowded the river far back. It has filled the bay, and the tide is felt far into the interior. The dykes and the walls, however, have protected the farms, and the people are working in the fields just as peacefully as before the great "White Terror" came galloping in.

On the Grand Canal.

I have been traveling for some days upon the Grand Canal, going off now and then into the smaller canals which cover this part of China like a net. The Grand Canal is a wonderful waterway. It is longer than from New York to Cleveland, and it passes through a region which contains more people than the whole United States. I saw it first at Tientsin, which city it taps on its way north to Pekin. I have traveled on it near Pekin, and also seen it at Chin-Kiang, where it crosses the Yangtse, and am now near its lower end, where it terminates at the great city of Hangchow.

Traveling upon it, you pass walled towns at every few hours, and now and then come to walled cities so large that you are half a day in getting through them. For hundreds of miles there are no locks, and north of the Yangtse the water is carried over the country on great stone embankments, 20 or more feet high, the stream within the embankments being several hundred feet wide. The smaller canals have floodgates and locks leading into the Grand canal, and in some places these are managed by soldiers. It is said a river was once conducted into it at a place above the Yangtse Kiang, and that it took 300,000 men seven months to turn the waters of that stream. A great part of the Grand canal is in bad repair, but south of the Yangtse it is a mighty trade route, filled with all kinds of vessels.

The labor upon the canal has been enormous and a vast amount of work is being done upon it today. At every few miles stone bridges have been built across it and many of these bridges have wide stone arches high enough for the boats to pass through. From the boat these arches are exceedingly picturesque. They form a frame for the long waterway covered with boats of all kinds. I counted 30 bridges in sight at one time and this not including the little stone bridges which cross the side canals at every few hundred feet.

The banks of all the canals have foot paths, worn smooth by the tread of thousands of bare feet. Many of the boats are hauled along by trekers, men, women and children, who are harnessed up like horses and who pull the boats onward by ropes attached to the masts. The women work as hard as the men, a thrifty boatman having several wives, each extra wife being an extra slave to the husband.

All the canals are filled with fish and there are fishermen everywhere. There are fishtraps built at intervals across the waterway, through which your boat goes with a scraping, grating sound. There are wicker fences, so fixed into the bed of the canal that they will bend down when the boat presses against them. They are meant to stop the fish from coming down or up stream and to turn them into the sinuous pens of bamboo at the sides, once in they cannot get out. Such pens are frequently near great stone bridges.

There are also fishermen using hooks and lines and fishing parties with nets and also many men fishing with cormorants. The cormorant fisherman paddles along in a canoe, upon the sides of which sit from 20 to 30 birds, which look much like ducks. They are in the rim of the boat fastened there by strings tied to their legs. At a word from their master they will dive down for fish and bring them up in their mouths. Each cormorant has a ring about its neck which prevents it from swallowing the fish it catches. The fisherman sits in the stern of the boat and paddles it along.

In Soochow.

One of the most important cities on the Grand canal is Soochow. It is bigger than St. Louis and was founded about 500 B. C. It is the capital of Kinagsu province and is in the heart of a district as thickly populated perhaps as any part of China. It is a very rich city and a great manufacturing center. It makes silks, linens, cottons and all sorts of things of iron, ivory and glass. In the new China it will be one of the great cities of the empire and one of the chief railroad centers. Railroads have already been surveyed to connect it with Shanghai and before many years it will be known all over the world. It is only five years now since it was opened to foreign trade. This was at the close of the Chinese-Japanese War. At present there is a foreign settlement and the English, Germans and Japanese are already beginning to do business.

Right near Soochow is the great Tahu Lake, which is connected with the Grand Canal by a marble bridge with 53 arches. This is one of the finest bridges in China. It is very long, and its arches are as perfectly made as though cut with a sculptor's chisel. I sailed by this bridge on my way to the city.

A New Road to Literature.

Soochow has many pagodas, and it is also celebrated as a literary center. One group of pagodas has a queer story connected with it, which shows the superstition of the Chinese. Originally the group contained but two pagodas with a pool of water near them. Not far away was the examination hall. Shortly after the pagodas were built it was noticed that the students from Soochow always failed in their examinations when they went to Pekin. The necromancers were asked to determine the cause. They found it in the pagodas. Said they:

"You have here the water," pointing to the pond; "you have also the ink brushes," pointing to the pagodas; "but you have no ink pot or ink block. How can your scholars write essays with only the brushes and water?"

"Ah!" said the Chinese, "we will fix that." And so they built a third pagoda in plain black the shape of a Chinese ink pot. This changed the fortunes of the scholars immediately, and Soochow since then has become the "Athens of China."

Walled Cities in 1902.

It took us a long time to get around the walls of Soochow into the city. Soochow has at least 12 miles of wall about it. The wall is as high as a three-story house, and as wide as the ordinary country road. It is today almost as perfect as when it was built, and there are parts of it which have been recently repaired. Other parts are being torn down and rebuilt. The Chinese have walls about all their cities, and if a new city were built today it would have a wall about it. Not long ago some hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent in repairing the wall of Nanking, and I suppose that one of the first appropriations made by the government after they have arranged for the interest on the foreign debt brought about by the late war will be to repair the walls of Peking.

Soochow fills the most of the space within this wall, and in places the city has gone outside. All along the banks of the canal under the wall are beggar huts, sheds of straw in which live people more ragged and filthy, perhaps, than any beggars of the world. Many of them go about in boats and whine for alms while they thrust out at you long poles to which are attached little baskets or bags, in which you are expected to put your gifts.

In Hangchow the other day I went through the biggest drug store of China and one which Consul-General Goodnow says is the largest drug store of the world. It covers a vast area, and is made up of many rooms in which Chinese clerks are selling drugs of all kinds and making remedies for all sorts of Chinese ailments. The store was filled with purchasers, wholesale and retail; and the talk was so noisy that it made me think of the stock exchange in Wall street during a panic. In the factory I found them grinding roots and bones to powder for pills. The grinding was done in mill stones moving one on top of the other, and fed through a hole in the top stone. The motive power of each mill was a half-naked man, perfectly blind, who pushed around a pole attached to the top stone like a horse in the bark mill of a tannery. I asked why blind men were employed, and was informed that it is for two very good reasons: One is that it is considered charitable to give blind men work, and another is because it is cheap.

Leaving the grinding I went into another department where scores of men were molding pills and putting them away in stone jars. Adjoining this room was another which might be called a pill warehouse. It contained an enormous number of stone jars, each holding about 50 gallons of pills. There were enough pills there to physic all China. The jars were arranged in sections. They had different labels upon them, although those on one side of the room seemed to have about the same characters as those on the other. I asked the men how the pills were graded. He said that they were packed up according to the diseases for which they were intended; and also according as they were for women or men. Each sex must have its own pills, whether they be for the headache, the colic or whatnot.

Deer Horns and Tiger Bones.

A curious department of the store was a menagerie. This was a little zoological garden containing animals which were to be ground up into medicine. There were about 20 deer, ranging from fawns just born to old stags with great antlers. Deer horns are supposed to have great medicinal properties, and these deer are kept for their horns, which are cut off and ground up for medicine. Great quantities of deer horns are imported. This is also true of tiger bones and especially of tiger whiskers. Pills made of these things are worth their weight in gold.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

WALL AND SHIPS AT HAINING— "THE WALL IS 100 MILES LONG AND KEEPS OUT THE OCEAN."

"NOTICE THAT FASCINE"—MR. CARPENTER STANDING ON STONE WALL IS FIVE FEET EIGHT INCHES HIGH—MRS. CONSUL-GENERAL GOODNOW AND TWO CHINESE ON TOP OF WALL.

STORIES of WOLFVILLE

HOW COLONEL COYOTE CLUBBES SCARED UP DOC PEETS

BY ALFRED HENRY LEWIS (DAN QUIN)

"WHICH as a roole," said the Old Cattleman, "I speaks with deference an' yields respects to whatever finds its source in nacher, but this yere weather, simply makes sech attitoode reedic'lous, an' any encomiums passed tharon would sound sarkastic." Here my friend waved a disgusted hand towards the rain-whipped panes and shook his head. "Thar's but one way to meet an' cope successful with a day like this," he ran on, "an' that is to put yourse'f in the hands of a joodicious barkeep—put yourse'f in his hands, that a-way, as a sacred trust, an' let him pull you through. Actin' on this idee, I jest dispatches my black boy Tom for a pitcher of Peach an' Honey; an' onless you-all has better plans afoot, you might as well camp an' wait developments, like old man Wasson does when he's treed by the b'ar."

Promptly came the Peach and Honey, and with its appearance the pelting storm outside lost all power to annoy. My companion beamingly did me honor in a full glass. After a moment filled with silence and Peach and Honey, and possibly, too, with some notion of pleasing my host with a compliment, I said: "That gentleman with whom you were in converse last evening told me he never passed a more delightful hour than he spent listening to you. You recall whom I mean?"

"Recall him? Shore," retorted my friend as he recurred to the Peach and Honey for a second installment. "You-all alloodes to the little gent who's lame in the nigh hind laig. He appeals to me, speshul, as he puts me in mind of old Colonel Coyote Clubbs, who scares up Doc Peets that time. Old Colonel Coyote is lame same as this yere person."

"Frighten Peets!" I exclaimed with a great air; "you amaze me! Give me the particulars."

"Why, of course," he replied, "I wouldn't be onderstood that Peets is terrorized outright. Still, old Colonel Coyote shore stampedes him an' forces Peets to fly. It's either vamos or shoot up pore old Colonel Coyote, an' nacherally as Peets wouldn't do the latter, his only alternative is to go scatterin' off, as I states.

"This yere Old Colonel Coyote Clubbs has a camp over some 10 miles to the no'th of Wolfville, off to one side of the trail to Tucson. Colonel Coyotte lives alone, an' has built himse'f a dug-out—a sort o' log hut that's half in an' half outen the ground. His mission on earth is to slay coyotes—'wolfin'" he calls it—for their pelts, which Old Coyote gets a dollar each for them furs, an' the New York store which buys 'em tells Coyote to go as far as he likes. They stands eager to purchase all he can peel offen them anamiles.

"No; Coyote don't shoot these yere little wolves; he p'isens 'em. Coyote'll take about 12 foot, say, of a pine tree he's cut down—this yere timber is mebby eight inches through—an' he'll bore in it a two-inch augur hole every two foot. These holes is some deep; about four inches ji's likely. Old Coyote mixes his p'isen with beef tallow, biles them ingreedients up together a whole lot, an' then while she's melted that a-way, he pours it into these yere augur holes an' lets it cool. It gets good an' hard, this arsenic-tallow does, an' then Coyote drags the timber thus organized out onto the plains to what he regyards as a elegible local'ty an' leaves it for the wolves to come an' batten on. Old Coyote will have as many as a dozen of these sticks of timber, all bored an' framed up with arsenic-tallow, scattered about. Each mornin' while he's wolfin' that a-way, Coyote makes a round-up an' skins an' counts up his dead wolves. An' son, you hear me! he does a flourishin' trade.

"Why don't Old Coyote p'isen of meat, you asks? For obvious reasons. In sech events the victim bolts the piece of beef an' lopes off mebby five miles before ever he succumbs. Which with this yere augur hole play it's different. The wolf has to lick the arsenic-tallow out with his tongue, an' the p'isen has time an' gets action. That wolf sort o' rots down right thar in his tracks. At the most, he ain't further away than the nearest water; arsenic makin' 'em plenty thirsty as you-all most likely knows.

"Old Colonel Coyote shows up in Wolfville about once a month, packin' in his pelts an' freightin' over to his wickeyup whatever in the way of grub he reckons he needs. Which, if you was ever to see Old Coyote once you would remember him. He's shore the most egregious person for looks; an' in appearance is a cross between a joke, a disaster an' a curiosity. I don't reckon now pore Old Coyote ever sees the time when he weighs 100 pounds; an' he's thin an' grizzled an' little an' lame of one laig; while his face is like a squinch owl's face—kind o' wide-eyed an' with an expression of ignorant wonder, as if life that a-way is a never endin' surprise party.

"Most likely now what fixes him firmest in your mind is he don't drink none. He declines nose-paint in every form; an' this yere abstinence, the same bein' yoonique in Wolfville, together with Old Coyote conductin' himse'f as the p'litest an' best-mannered gent to be met with in all of Arizona, is apt to introode on your attention. Colonel Sterett once mentions Coyote's manners.

"'Which he could give Chesterfield, Old Coyote could, kyards an' spades,' observes the Colonel. I don't myse'f know this Chesterfield none, but I can see by the fashion Colonel Sterett alloodes to him that he's a jodarter on manners an' etiquette.

"As I says, a pecoolar trait of Old Coyote is that he won't drink nothin' but water. Despite this blemish, however, when the camp gets so it knows Old Coyote, it can't he'p but like him a whole lot. He's so quiet an' honest an' ignorant an' little an' lame an' so plumb p'lite besides, he grows on you. I can almost see the weazened old outlaw now as he comes reckin' into town with his six or seven burros packed high as their y'ears with pelts.

"This time when Old Coyote puts Doc Peets in a toomuit is when he's first pitched his dug-out camp an' begins to honor Wolfville with his visits. At that time none of us appreciates pore Old Coyote at his troo worth, an nacherally, on account of them egreegious an' guileless looks of his, sech humorists as Dan Boggs an' Texas Thompson seizes on him as a source of merriment.

"It's Old Coyote's third expedition into town, an' he's hoverin' about the New York store waitin' for 'em to figger up his wolf pelts an' cut out his plunder so he frights it back to his dug-out. Dan an' Texas is also procrastinatin' 'round, an' they sidles up, allowin' to have their little jest. Old Coyote don't know none of 'em—quiet an' sober an' p'lite like I relates, he's plumb slow gettin' acquainted—an' Dan an' Texas, as well as Doc Peets is like so many onopened books to him. For that matter, while none of them pards of mine knows Old Coyote, they manages to gain a sidelight on some of his characteristics before ever they gets through. Doc Peets later grows ashamed of the part he plays, an' two months afterwards, when Old Coyote is chewed an' clawed to a standstill by an infooriated badger he done mixes himse'f up with, Peets binds him up an' straightens out his game an' declines all talk of recompense complete.

"'It's merely payin' for that outrage I attempts on your feelin's when you re-bookes me so handsome,' says Peets, as he turns aside Old Coyote's dinero an' tells him to replace the same in his war-bags.

"However does Old Coyote get wrastled by that badger? It's another yarn, but at least she's brief, an' so I'll let you have it. Badgers, you saveys, is sour, sullen an' lonesome. An' a badger's feelin's is allers hurt about something—an' you never meets up with him when he ain't hostile an' half way bent for war. Which it's the habit of these yere morose badgers to spend a heap of their time settin' half in an' half outen their holes, considerin' the scenery in a dissatisfied way like they has some grudge ag'inst it. An' if you approaches a badger while thus employed, he tries to run a blazer on you; he'll show his teeth an' stand pat like he meditates trouble. When you've come up within 30 feet, he changes his mind an' disappears back'ard into his hole; but all plumb malignant an' reluctant.

"Now, while Old Coyote saveys wolves, he's a heap dark on badgers that a-way. An' also thar's a badger who lives clost to Old Coyote's dugout. One day, while this yere ill-tempered anamile is cocked up in the mouth of his hole, blinkin' hatefully at surroundin' objects, Old Coyote cuts down on him with a Sharp's rifle he's got kickin' about his camp, an' turns that weepon loose.

"He missed the badger utter; but he don't know it none. Comin' up to the hole, Old Coyote sees the badger, kind o' quiled up at the first bend in the burrow an' he exultin'ly allows he's plugged him, an' tharupon reaches in a whole lot to retrieve his game. That's where Old Coyote makes the mistake of his c'reer; that's shorely where he drops his watermelon!

"That badger's alive an' onhurt, an' as hot as a lady who's lost money. Which he's simply retired a few foot into his house to reconsider Old Coyote an' that Sharp's rifle of his. Nacherally when the onfaught Old Coyote lays down on his face an' goes to gropin' about to fetch that badger forth, the latter never hesitates. He grabs Old Coyote's hand with tooth and claw, braces his back ag'in the ceilin' of his burrow an' stands pat.

"Badgers is plumb big people an' strong as ponies, too. An' obdurate! Son, a badger is that decided an' set in his way that sech feather-blown things as rocks and hills is vacillatin' by comparison with 'em. This yere partic'lar badger has them fam'ly weaknesses fully deeveloped, an' the moment he cinches onto Old Coyote, he shore makes up his mind never to let go ag'in in this world nor the next.

"As I tells you; Old Coyote is little an' weak, an' he can no more move that hardened badger, nor yet fetch himse'f loose, than he can sprout wings, an' soar. That badger's got Old Coyote; thar he holds him, prone an' flat, ag'in the ground for hours. An' at last Old Coyote swoons away.

"Which he'd shore petered right thar, a prey to badgers, if it ain't for a casooal cowpuncher—he's one of Old Man Enright's riders—who comes romancin' along an' is attracted to the spot by some cattle who's prancin' an' waltzin' about, sizin' Old Coyote up as he's layin' thar; an' snortin' an' curvin' their tails in wonder at the spectacle. Which the visitin' cow sharp seein' how matters is headed, shoves his six-shooter in alongside of Old Coyote's arm, drills this besotted badger, an' Old Coyote is saved. It's a case of touch an' go at that. But to caper back to where we leaves Dan an' Texas on the verge of them jocyoolarities with Old Coyote:

"'No, gentlemen,' Old Coyote is sayin' in response to some queries of Dan an' Texas; 'I've wandered hither an' yon a heap in my time, an' now I has my dug-out done, an' seein' wolves is oncommon plenty, I allows I puts in what few declinin' days remains to me right where I be. I must say, too, I'm plumb pleased with Wolfville an' regyards myse'f as fortunate an' proud to be a neighbor to sech excellent folks as you-alls.'

"'Which I'm shore sorry a lot,' says Dan, 'to hear you speak as you does. Thar's a rapacious sharp about yere, who, the instant he finds how you makes them dug-out improvements, sends on an' wins out a Gov'ment patent an' takes title to that identical quarter section which embraces your camp. Now, he's allowin' to go squander in over to Tucson an' get a docyment or two from the Jedge an' run you out.'

"Son, this pore, innocent Old Coyote takes in Dan's fictions like so much spring water. He believes 'em utter. But the wonder is to see how he changes. He don't say nothin', but his eyes sort o' sparks up, an' his face gets as gray as his ha'r. It's now that Doc Peets comes up.

"'Yere is this devourin' scoundrel now,' says Texas Thompson, p'intin' to Peets. 'You-all had better talk to him some about it.' Then turnin' to Peets with a wink, Texas goes on: 'Me an' Mister Boggs is tellin' our friend how you gets a title to that land he's camped on, an' that you allows you'll take possession mebby next week.'

"'Why, shore,' says Peets, enterin' into the sperit of the hoax, an' deemin' it a excellent joke; 'be you-all the maverick who's on that quarter section of mine?'

"'Which I'm Colonel Coyote Clubbs,' says Old Coyote, bowin' low, while his lips trembles, 'an' I'm at your service.'

"'Well,' says Peets, 'it don't make much difference about your name. All you has to do is pull your freight. I needs that location you've squatted on because of the water.'

"'An' do I understand, sir,' says Old Coyote, some agitated, 'that you'll come with off'cers to put me outen my dug-out?'

"'Shore,' says Peets, assoomin' a case-hardened, pitiless tone, 'an' why not? Am I to be debarred of my rights by some coyote-slaughterin' invader, an' then onmurmurin'ly accede tharto? Which I should say otherwise a whole lot!'

"'Then I yereby warns you, sir,' says Old Coyote, gettin' pale as paper. 'I advises you to bring your coffin when you comes for that land, for I'll down you the moment you're in range.'

"'In which case,' says Peets, assoomin' airs of high an' blood-thirsty trucyoolence, 'thar's scant use to wait. If thar's goin' to be any powder burnin' we might better burn it now.'

"'I've no weepon, sir,' says Old Coyote, limpin' about in a circle, 'but if ary of these gentlemen will favor me with a gun, I'll admire to put myse'f at your service.'

"Which the appearance of Old Coyote when he utters this an' him showin' on the surface about as war-like as a prairie-dog, convulses Dan an' Texas. It's ain't they can do to keep up a grave front, while pore Coyote in his ignorance calls the bluff of one of the most deadly an' gamest gents who ever crosses the Missouri—one who for nerve an' finish is a even break with Cherokee Hall.

"'Follow me,' says Peets, frownin' on Old Coyote like a thunder cloud. 'I'll equip you with a weepon myse'f. I reckons now your death an' destruction thar a-way, is after all the best trail out.'

"Peets moves off a heap haughty, an' Old Coyote limps after him. Peets goes over where his office is.

"'Take a chair,' says Peets, as they walks in, an' Old Coyote camps down stiffly in a seat.

"Peets crosses the room to a rack an' takes down a 8-inch Colt's. Then he turns towards Old Coyote.

"'Which the discovery grieves me,' says Peets, an' his words comes cold as ice, 'but now we're assembled here, I finds that I've only one gun.'

"'Well, sir,' says Old Coyote, gettin' up an' limpin' about in his nervous way, his face workin' an' them sparks in his eyes beginnin' to mount into flames; 'well, sir, may I ask what you aims to propose?'

"'I nacherally proposes to beef you right here,' says Peets, as f'rocious as a grizzly. 'Die, you miscreant!' An Peets throws the gun on pore Old Coyote, the big muzzle not a foot from his heart.

"Peets, as well as Dan an' Texas, who's enjoyin' the comedy through a winder, ondoubted looks for Old Coyote to wilt without a sigh. An' if he does this, the joke would have been complete. But Old Coyote never wilts. He moves so quick no one ever does locate the darkened recess of his garments from which he lugs out that knife; the first news of any of 'em gets is that, with the same breath wherein Peets puts the six-shooter on him, Old Coyote's organized in full with a 9-inch bowie.

"'Make a center shot, you villyun!' roars Old Coyote, an' straight as adders he la'nches himse'f at Peets' neck.

"Son, it's the first an last time that Doc Peets ever runs. An' he don't run now, he flies. Peets comes pourin' through the door an' into the street, with Old Coyote frothin' after him not a yard to spare. The best thing about the whole play is, Old Coyote's a cripple; it's this yere element of lameness that a-way that lets Peets out. As it is, he can run 30 foet to Old Coyote's one, an' the result occurs in a splendid safety by the breadth of a hair. It takes two hours to explain to Old Coyote that this episode is merely humor, an' ca'm him an' get his emotions bedded down. At last, what you-all describe as yoonited Weifville succeeds in beatin' the trooth into him an' he permits Peets to approach an' apol'gize.

"'An' you can gamble all the wolves you'll ever kill an' skin,' says Doc Peets, as he asks Old Coyote to forgive an' forget, 'that this yere is the last time I embarks in a jest of a practical character or gives way to humor other than the strictly oral kind. Barkeep, my venerated friend yere will have a glass of water; but you give me Valley Tan.'"

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