

RETRIBUTION

(Original.)

The great American desert is the home of queer people and queer things generally. With us the rattlesnake is the most dreaded of reptiles, but out there they have what they call the Gila monster, that is more terrible than the rattler. Its bite is almost certain death, and men have been known to end their lives with a revolver rather than endure the agony resulting from a Gila bite. When I went out there I had never heard of a Gila, but after I had seen one and its effect I never wanted to see another.

One afternoon while riding past a house, or, rather, hut, belonging to one of the herders of a ranch near by I heard a clatter and, turning, saw a man come galloping down the road. A child about two years old had just come out of the house and was toddling across the road. The horseman paid no attention to it. I thought he didn't see the little fellow, but he did, for just before reaching him he gave a whoop, cutting at him at the same time with his quirt. The child, too young to heed, stooped to pick up something that pleased its baby fancy. The horseman rode straight over him.

The boy's mother came to her door just in time to see what had occurred. With a shriek she rushed to her child, picked him up and ran with him into the house. I would have followed to administer to her, but there were others with her, and, to tell the truth, I had no heart for the work. The man rode on to a saloon farther up the road, where he dismounted and went inside.

I have never felt so ashamed of myself for omitting to do what honor seemed to call for as in this case. In the east I would not hesitate to protect a lady from a ruffian, yet here was a woman whose child had been purposely trampled before her eyes, and I did not raise a hand to avenge her. But what could I do? Any interference on my part must result either in my death or that of the man who had committed the outrage.

I reported the matter to the owner of the ranch, who told me that the boy's father was in his employ and was then away herding cattle. There was a feud between him and the man, a worthless and desperate vagabond who had ridden down the child to avenge some fancied injury. When the father returned one of the other would doubtless bite the dust.

"And if the father falls there will be two victims instead of one," I remarked.

"We can't help that out here," replied my informant. "There's too little law to cover such cases."

The next morning while riding over the plain I came upon the child's mother. She carried a stick and a coarse bag and was evidently looking for something. I did not see her face, for her back was turned. Suddenly I saw her raise the stick and strike at something on the ground. In a few moments she picked up what resembled a young alligator, holding it by the tip of the tail, dropped it in the bag, tied up the bag's mouth and carried her burden away, holding it apart from her. Then she turned and came toward me. I would have liked to ask her what she had been about, but there was a look in her face that decided me not to question her, and she passed on without seeming to be aware of my presence.

Curiosity got the better of me, and I turned and followed her. She went to the saloon up the road, and before reaching it I saw a man asleep on the porch, though I could not see who he was. The woman drew near him stealthily, pausing occasionally, with her eye fixed on him, till at last, coming upon him from a point where he could not see her, she untied the mouth of her bag, held it above him, and the alligator thing it contained fell on his breast.

The man started up and on seeing what had awakened him gave a cry as piercing, as full of despair, as had been given by the woman when her child was run down. I saw him struggling with something that had fastened upon one of his hands and finally throw it from him. It crawled away, and I saw it no more. The woman turned and walked toward her home.

I had seen the dreaded Gila monster. The woman had learned that her enemy was asleep on the saloon porch and, going out on the plain, had found a Gila. When attacked the monster feigned to be dead. She had therefore no difficulty in carrying out her purpose. She knew that when her husband returned the man who had run down his child would expect to die or kill his adversary. Her husband, not knowing of the outrage, would be taken unawares. She had resolved on her own method of felling their enemy and avenging her child.

I was surprised to learn that the child had not been killed. It had not seemed to me that there was one chance in a thousand for its survival. Perhaps it was that the horse—one of the noblest and kindest of dumb brutes—tried not to touch it; perhaps it was good luck; perhaps an interposition of

Divine Providence. Be this as it may, the child, though severely injured, lived.

But the man who had sought to kill it—day after day, night after night, we heard the maniacal cries in his delirium and agony. It was a terrible but deserved retribution. One day he found relief, and the next the child he had sought to kill toddled out, and all who saw him rejoiced that it was his would be murderer and not he who had succumbed.

S. MARSHALL PHELPS.

MY ONE FACULTY

(Original.)

I am an example of the value of possessing one faculty alone in a very high degree. As a boy at school I never could learn my lessons, and my father, who otherwise would have wished me to take a profession, put me on a ship as cabin boy, remarking that such a career was good enough for a dunce.

The captain took a fancy to me and tried to teach me navigation, but there were so many sines, cosines, arcs and angles about it to bewilder me that he soon gave it up in despair. So it seemed that I must continue to wait on the ship's company, clean the cabin windows and at mealtimes assist the cook in the galley.

One morning when I was washing the breakfast dishes I noticed that the ship had been brought up to the wind, which was flapping in the sails. Soon after, having occasion to go to the after cabin, I saw the captain and the first mate standing looking at the rudder post. Though the tiller was lashed fast, the rudder swayed with the waves. This was because the rudder post was defective. As the rudder moved the post would twist, opening and closing huge cracks. Of course the ship was without steering. The captain looked anxious.

"Captain," I said, "when the cracks open fill them with wedges, and your post will hold firm."

The captain turned and looked at me, astonished that a cabin boy should dare to advise him. Then he gruffly ordered the mate to go and get the wedges. They were driven in the cracks, iron bands were put around the post, and it held good till we reached port.

It had become evident that I possessed ingenuity.

The captain considered that by my suggestion I had saved the ship and on reaching home told the owners, who placed a thousand dollars in bank to be given me on my coming of age. My father was much perplexed at the story and, thinking that perhaps my teachers had been at fault, wished me to remain at home and try school again. But I hated books and took kindly to a roving life on the ocean. So my father, deciding that there must be some mistake about my ingenious suggestion, relapsed into the belief that I was still a dunce and the position of cabin boy quite good enough for me. But he was again doomed to revise his opinion when I returned from the next voyage.

We were in the China sea not far from the Malay peninsula, having aboard a cargo of oil. There is no part of the globe where piracy has been and is today more common. One evening just before sunset I went on deck and saw the captain and both mates examining with glasses a small vessel to the leeward, which was towing a good sized bark. Suddenly the smaller vessel drew away from the other and sailed toward us. Though she showed no flag, our captain knew her to be a pirate with a prize in tow, and, since we had nothing with which to defend ourselves except small arms, he had no doubt that as soon as the craft could reach us we would walk the plank.

"Captain," I said, "get up a barrel of oil and pour it over the decks, except the poop. Then get the men up there, with the arms, hoist the white flag and let them come aboard."

The captain stared at me for a moment, the color gradually coming to his cheeks with hope, then ordered not one barrel but a dozen brought up and stove at different parts of the deck. The ratlines, the bulwarks, every bit of surface was shining with oil. Then the men were gathered with the small arms on the "poop." By this time the "skull and crossbones" were raised on the pirate, and in a few minutes more she was within hailing distance. Since there was no appearance of resistance, she sent out the boats, loaded with copper colored villains, leaving only a small crew aboard. There was considerable sea on, and we were rolling heavily. One boat made for the bow, the other for the waist, and the crews climbed up on to the deck. The first man to reach it slid on to it from the oiled gunwale. His feet shot out from under him, and he coasted into the scuppers. In a few moments some twenty men were sliding about as the ship rolled, while we, taking out our guns, which we had concealed under our jackets, opened fire. Before the pirates could get their legs we had peppered every one of them except those who had not left the boats. They, seeing the disaster, pulled for their vessel, but we picked them off as they rowed. The men on the pirate, terror stricken at what they could not under-

stand, put their ship before the wind and sailed away.

We found some shoemaker's wax aboard, with which we covered the soles of our shoes. Then when he had heaved overboard the dead and wounded pirates we made sail for the ship they had left. She proved a fat prize, and we took her in tow. When we got home the captain and crew, after collecting the prize money, were so grateful to me for the suggestion that had saved their lives that they relinquished every dollar to me. When the money was deposited in bank, together with a handsome sum from the owner of our own ship, I had a fortune such as my father had never come near attaining.

It was suggested that I become an inventor, but I never could think of any ingenious expedient unless stimulated by some special happening, some great necessity. The consequence is I have lived on the interest of my prize money and have no desire to put myself in a way to make any more.

WENDELL C. M'LAIN.

A MIGHTY "LAND GRABBER."

Chenonceaux Built at the Bidding of Diana of Poitiers.

Chenonceaux was one of the earliest chateaux that represented the new spirit. It was built on the site of the old feudal fortress in a sort of freak of the sense of opportunity. It was meant to give room and verge enough to a generation bent on having a good time in hall and bower. It was still a fortress of a kind, but this only as an afterthought. In the main it was a palace for sport and festival. It might have stood on dry land; it preferred to bridge a river. There was no want of space in other directions, but this seemed best as a stroke of constructive impudence. The architect at the bidding of Diana of Poitiers jumped the Cher as a schoolboy would have jumped a brook. The huge arches never carried anything of use to mankind at large, not even a right of way.

At first most of them had no superstructure, and the bridge might have been called "Diana's folly." But she knew what she was about. She was a mighty man subduer, with a heart as cold as the stone of her new dwelling and a face and form kept beautiful forever by the studious avoidance of every pang—a wonderful creature withal, for she contrived to die in her bed, though she crossed the path of Catherine de' Medici. She ruled a king by the usual methods and by studious deference to him kept him her obedient, humble servant to the day of his death. She inspired one of the greatest sculptors of her time in his creation of a Venus that rivaled the antique.

She was one of the mightiest land grabbers of history, adding chateau to chateau with a purpose that never faltered and by methods of smooth, unemotional persistence that never failed. She started with everything against her in that epoch of the worship of youth when she began her siege of the heart of the dauphin of France. She was a widow, and a widow with a family, yet she knew no pause in her triumphant career till she had married and dowered them all and provided herself with a choice of palaces for her old age. She never made an enemy or—which was quite as much to the purpose—a friend who was not likely to be of use. She died in the sanctity of faultless manners and an unruffled brow. Her heart of ice kept her a Venus to the last. Had her prototype been anything but a goddess Diana might have given her points in the wise avoidance of the ravages of temperament.—Century.

DON'TS FOR BACHELORS.

Don't sew up your pockets while trying to sew on a button to stay.

Buy a thimble that fits. Don't push your needle through with your teeth.

Don't start a piece of sewing with a thread long enough to hang yourself.

Don't attempt to push a No. 3 needle through a No. 10 hole. Profanity is bad form.

Don't be afraid of a needle. It will not stick you unless you attack the wrong end of it first.

Select the proper size button before you sew it on. Don't cut the button-hole larger with a penknife so as to make it fit the button.

And don't—oh, don't—leave the needle in your chair when you are through sewing. You may discover it unexpectedly.—Kansas City Star.

Racing Ponies in India.

Not much more enviable than the lot of the unfortunate man who is reported to have grown shorter is that of racing ponies in India, Egypt and elsewhere, which are made to measure from three-quarters of an inch to a full inch lower than their natural measurements. Paring the hoof can only be done to a certain extent. But ponies can be educated to stand with their heels apart, and if the head is tied up for some time before they are put under the standard they will stand to their best advantage. Two pounds avoirdupois per quarter inch is the regular allowance in the "scale for age class and inches."—London Pall Mall Gazette.

The Cavities.

"Name the cavities," said a school-teacher to a small boy, according to the

Chicago Inter Ocean. The boy was very round. His body was round, his eyes were round and his legs were round, and one of them drew up as if by pulley as he screwed his head on his neck and twisted his round mouth to say: "T-t-the head cavity, the thorax cavity and the borax cavity. The head cavity's what we keep our brains in to think with and the thorax cavity's what we keep our lungs in to breathe with and the borax cavity's what we keep the vowels in, consisting of A, E, I, O and U and sometimes W and Y."

No Quarter Granted.

This story, which is told of a Scottish highlander who served in the French war, illustrates either the bloodthirstiness or the unique ideas of humor of the Scotchman.

This highlander had overtaken a fleeing Frenchman and was about to strike him down when, falling on his knees, the Frenchman cried:

"Quarter! Quarter!"
"I'll no' ha' time to quarter ye," the Scot answered. "I'll just cut ye in twa."

He Had to Laugh.

"I had to laugh the other day"—
"You don't mean you were absolutely compelled to, I hope?"

"That's just what I mean. This was my employer's joke."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Shrinking.

Mrs. Brown—My husband says there has been quite a shrinkage in the stock. Mrs. Jones—I see. They have the same trouble in Wall street that we do in dry goods—you can't always get goods that won't shrink.—New York Press.

They Didn't Have Time.

A short time ago some men were engaged in putting up telegraph poles on some land belonging to an old farmer who disliked seeing his wheat trampled down, according to the veracious Register of Great Bend, Kan. The men produced a paper by which they said they had leave to put the poles where they pleased. The old farmer went back and turned a large bull in the field. The savage beast made after the men, and the old farmer, seeing them running from the field, shouted at the top of his voice: "Show him the paper! Show him the paper!"

Subtraction.

A teacher in a western public school was giving her class the first lesson in subtraction. "Now, in order to subtract," she explained, "things have to be always of the same denomination. For instance, we couldn't take three apples from four pears or six horses from nine dogs."

A hand went up in the back part of the room.

"Teacher," shouted a small boy, "can't you take four quarts of milk from three cows?"—Harper's Weekly.

With the Ring on It.

Grayce—Edythe is pretty foxy. She won't say anything about her love affairs, but I have an idea that she has finally accepted young Sapleigh. Gladys—In that case she is apt to soon show her hand.—Louisville Courier-Journal.

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