

A Righter of Wrongs

By Dix Drummond Osmun.

THE big cowboy pushed through the circle of dilapidated-looking people until he was face to face with the old woman sitting on a broken trunk surrounded by a miserable assortment of household goods.

"What seems to be the matter, ma'am?" he asked politely, taking off his broad-brimmed hat.

The woman did not cease her weeping, and Jim glared angrily around at the gaping crowd.

"If you low-down critters has been tormentin' the ol' lady, I'd sure be pleased tuh know about it," he declared menacingly.

"We ain't done nuthin', mister," explained a man. "She's been turned out fer not payin' her rent."

Jim stared. "Yuh mean that some snake-livered coyote put that po' ol' dame out fer not payin' a little money?"

"Sure—dat's what they done."

"How much?" he asked tersely.

"Nine dollars an' six bits," volunteered a woman. "Bad luck to the hard heart of him who done it!"

"Same here, lady," responded Jim. "Howsomever, the first thing tuh be done accordin' to my notions is to put her back agin. Such a triflin' sum ain't nuthin' tuh me, an' I'd be proud tuh help an old lady tuh that amount, an' then some fer grub an' things which it looks like tuh me she ain't had plenty of in some time."

"Hivin' bless yer fer that, mister," cried the woman who had spoken before. "May the blissid saints—"

"Sure, that's all right," broke in the embarrassed Jim. "Now, who's goin' tuh help get this truck back?"

There were a score of willing hands at his service.

The old woman could not understand at first what was happening, but when she did she made her rescuer exceedingly uncomfortable by her voluble thanks. He hastily shouldered the trunk and, guided by a small urchin, traversed dirty halls and ascended even dirtier stairways until he arrived at a squalid room, lighted only by one window, and that opening into an air shaft. He set the trunk down and looked about him in consternation.

"Why, this ain't fitten fer no human bein' tuh live in," he stated emphatically. "Say, what got inter the feller that built this place? Looks tuh me 'sif he was plumb locoed."

"Guess you ain't wise to the city," answered his guide. "This here place is what they calls a tenement, and they puts as many rooms in as they can so's to git more rent."

Jim scowled; it was not his idea of making money.

"Who owns this shacks, son?"

"I dunno—nobody don't know. I guess the guy would be ashamed to let on."

"How does he get the rent, then?" asked the unsophisticated Jim.

"Oh, a agent gits it."

Jim waited long enough to see the old woman installed, and leaving her a generous roll of bills, departed and retraced his steps back to the hotel at which he was staying.

"Say," he told the clerk, "I just seen the hellover thing," and narrated his experiences, leaving out only his generosity. "There was a donation took up," was the way he explained that part of it.

"I'd feel real pleased tuh know the name of the skunk that owns that there shack," he concluded wrathfully.

The clerk leaned over the desk and whispered a name in his ear.

"Yuh joshin'!"

"No, I'm not. That's straight goods. My cousin is his agent."

"Why, th' ornery dog!" exploded Jim, "an' him the richest man in the State!"

After expressing a few more uncomplimentary remarks, Jim went up to his room, and was still boiling when sleep cut short his maledictions. He awoke the next morning with a well-defined groneh, and ate breakfast in a melancholy silence.

"What yuh sore about?" asked a voice in his ear, as a newcomer pulled out the next chair and sat down.

"Shack! Well, by Cripes! I was just wishin' yuh was here. When'd yuh git in?"

"Minute ago. What's doin'?"

"Hellover lot. Listen here."

"An' I'm cravin' revenge," he wound up, "just like that feller we seen in the show last winter."

"What yu goin' tuh do? Course I'm in with yuh. He'd oughter be strung up, that's what, only this dern country's gettin' so blame ladylike."

"I dunno. I can't think uh nuthin'."

A gloomy silence fell upon the two. They finished their meal and trailed out into the office.

"Get over your mad yet?" asked the clerk pleasantly.

"No, an' I ain't goin' tuh," replied Jim. "Me an' my pardner here is pinin' tuh do somethin', but we can't figger out anything."

"By the way," said the clerk casually, "old Lawrence is going out to his ranch—the Arrow Seven, you know—in his automobile this morning. Funny how that road winds along in that gulch. I've often wondered he didn't have a hold-up, going back and forth, as he does, with only his kid chauffeur."

"Why, it does seem sorter resky," assented Jim. "Come on, Shack," he added to his friend, "we gotter be goin' if we want tuh keep that business engagement."

"What business have we got tuh tend tuh?" asked Shack when they reached the street.

"We're goin' tuh take a ride, me an' you, an' we gotter git another cayuse besides ourn."

Shack looked surprised, but as the younger man of the two it was not for him to ask questions. Not until they were fully five miles from the city, following a trail-like road, did Jim divulge the "business."

"An' here's the spot," he wound up. "When we see him comin' we'll each git one side uh the road, an' if he don't stop, plug a tire—that'll break in on his hurryin' any."

Some minutes later the red touring car of Randall Lawrence was held up in approved bandit style. The owner, being a timid man, offered no resistance to the masked robbers who ordered him to alight.

Mr. Randall was not a western product. He had lately come from the East with money to invest, and had proceeded to invest it wherever the promise of dividends seemed largest. At first the people of Benson City and the surrounding country had hailed with delight the advent of a real live capitalist within their borders; but a growing familiarity with Mr. Lawrence's methods tempered their delight considerably. It is even probable that had the majority of the citizens who abode in that section of Wyoming seen the great financier in his present position they would not have been greatly displeased.

"Now, Mr. Lawrence," said Jim gruffly, "this ain't no picnic, an' then agin it ain't no proper hold-up. We ain't after your money, but yuh is our pris'ner just the same. First thing yuh does is tuh shed them duds, an' put on some we has 'special pervided for the 'casion. An' we must ask yuh tuh cut off them whiskers, unless yuh would rather for us tuh do the job. I got the seissors in my pocket for cuttin' 'em."

"This is an outrage," fumed Mr. Lawrence, his fat, puffy face livid with anger, "a dastardly outrage."

"Uh-huh," assented Jim calmly. "That's the way it would look tuh most people. Howsomever, if you'll just change them duds and the rest of it, it'll same time an' trouble."

The capitalist looked keenly at the other, and failed to find any comfort in the cold eyes shining through the "I don't know what your game is, but I have \$200 with me, which I will give you in exchange for my liberty, and let it end the matter. I am a busy man, and my time is worth money. I—"

"It's no use," snapped Jim. "I told yuh what tuh do, and I'm gittin' prety tired uh waitin'."

While the magnate was disgustedly following out the humiliating orders under the direction of Shack, Jim led the chauffeur to one side.

"Now, son," he explained, "yuh want tuh do everything just as I lays it out for yuh. First off yuh goes on tuh

the ranch and say that your boss sent yuh out for suthin'. Then you have a tire bust or the machin'ry explode, an' let on yuh can't get home till to-morrer. Then about sundown to-morrer, yuh gets powerful excited an' rip aroun' an' say that yuh just cayn't keep still no longer—that the boss done got held up by two desp'radoes. Got that straight, son?"

"Yes, sir," answered the boy.

"Good. Yuh sem tuh me tuh be a real sensible young feller. Well, about two days from now, yuh come tuh the house which is writ on this paper I'm goin' tuh give yuh, an' yuh'll find the boss there safe an' sound, an' maybe git a reward. Now, son, I ain't goin' tuh be harsh with yuh, but if yuh don't do exactly as I tells yuh, there'll be sunthin' comin' your way, an' it'll come good and plenty. Yuh'll be good, won't yuh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Right! An' now there's one thing more. After yuh git the boss out, yuh let on that yuh know who's been keepin' him captive. It was Jim Hunter an' Shack Morley. Don't fergit them names—Jim Hunter an' Shack Morley."

"You want me to tell on you?" asked the amazed chauffeur. "Say, I don't care what you do to him. I won't tell anything if you'd rather not. He's the meanest man I ever worked for, and he's got a lot coming to him. He—"

"Easy there, son," reprimanded Jim. "Don't yuh ever run down a man when yuh takin' his money. If yuh don't like him, quit yuh job an' then shoot yuh mouth off some if it'll help yuh any, but 's long as he's yuh boss stand on his side. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, now hike along an' do's I said."

Randall Lawrence, bereft of his Van Dyke beard, and clothed in overalls and a blue flannel shirt, rode through the streets of Benson City between his two captors late that evening, and was duly imprisoned in vile quarters. He languished in his cell for some two days before he was discovered by his chauffeur and released. Coincident with his rescue he received news which caused him to procure warrants for the arrest of Jim Hunter and Shack Morley.

"Yuh wait till the trial," was all they could be induced to say.

"If them two boys swore on the Bible that they held up that there ol' skunk, I wouldn't believe it, unless uh course they done it fer some kind of a joke," declared the foreman of the Bar O outfit, which numbered Jim and Shack among its members, and his declaration voiced the sentiments, not only of the Bar O people, but also of everyone who had ever come in contact with the two culprits.

The day of the trial saw the population of Benson City considerably augmented by a rough and noisy element who loudly voiced their belief in the prisoners' innocence, and evinced a readiness to pull Benson City apart if the jury should decide otherwise.

In the crowded courtroom Jim and Shack listened to the ravings of the prosecuting attorney with unmoved faces. Mr. Lawrence was equally serene. He told his story simply and truthfully, dwelling much on the discomforts of his imprisonment.

"Gentlemen," he said impressively, "the room where I was confined was not fit for a hog to live in. I breed some pretty good hogs, and I'll tell you honestly that if they had found themselves in that room they would have died for lack of air and sunshine."

The jury laughed and Mr. Lawrence descended from the witness stand well pleased with himself.

At last it was the turn of the lawyer for the defense, Jim Hunter.

He lazily stretched his six feet of height upward till he was standing erect.

"Now, Judge, I don't know much about this law business, an' I wants tuh ask yuh, Judge, cayn't I tell the thing in my own way, an' will yuh kindly keep that there feller that's been roasin' me an' Shack, quiet till I gets through?"

The judge nodded.

"Well, then, Mr. Judge, an' fellers on the jury. Me an' Shack done kidnaped Mr. Lawrence, an' we done put him in a pretty mean room. I admits that what he says about them there pigs uh his is right, 'cause that room wasn't fitten fer no pig tuh live in. There wasn't no fresh air, as he says, 'an the smells was suthin' orful, but I don't see why Mr. Lawrence is raisin' such a holler about it. That there room was in a ten'mint house at No. 3 River street, an' Mr. Lawrence owns it, an' if it's so plumb bad fer him tuh stay two days, what's it like fer them po' folks that's there all the time? That's what we shut him up fer—so's he could know what it was like."

The courtroom laughed—yelled is a better word. In vain the judge rapped for order. Even the jury rocked back and forth holding its side in merriment. Mr. Lawrence rose hastily and tried to reach the door, but the crowd held him back. The prosecuting attorney attempted to make a speech, but he himself recognized its futility. Already the jury had reached a decision, and nothing that he could say would alter it.

"I fell plumb mean about it," said Jim some time later to an admiring audience, who were thrusting upon him and Shack every token of its worship—for a joke is still a joke in the West. "I feel plumb mean about it," he repeated. "We mighter done 'most anything tuh him, an' he'd 'a' got over it, but tuh mak him a laughin' stock like we done—it's goin' tuh stick tuh him fer the rest of his life."

Gates for the Garden.

The garden should have two gates, one small one and one large one. The small gate should be convenient to the house and the large one convenient to the barn, for hauling manure and entering with team and tools.

Cheapening the Rations.

The Iowa station has found that a small amount of oil meal or cotton-seed meal added to corn and oats improves and cheapens the ration for work horses. A mixture of 77 pounds of shelled corn, 15 pounds of oats and 8 pounds of oil meal gave somewhat better results than oil meal, and the ration was a little cheaper in the proportion of 79 pounds of corn, 15 pounds of oats and six pounds of oil meal.

Success May Be Further Down.

In many instances the yield of gardens can be increased by simply getting down a few inches deeper with fork or spade. The French gardeners can give Americans many lessons in this respect.

The soil should be pulverized, but work should not be commenced too early. Plowing the ground while it is too wet will cause the soil to pack in solid lumps. Good land is almost ruined in this manner.

The Kentucky senate has passed a bill authorizing the employment of convicts in the manufacture of articles for state use.

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