

Bound by a Spell

CHAPTER XXX.—(Continued.)

A few doors farther down the corridor, in a chamber more somber and gloomy than any we have visited, was Judith. She is lying back listlessly, in an easy chair, with her red hair loosely falling around her pallid, worn face. The tears roll down her cheeks, at intervals, in large, heavy drops. She is weeping over the ashes of love, over wrecked hopes, and a lost life. Heavily over her broods the spirit of the night, boding of death.

As the night advances, the clouds have it all their own way, veiling the sky with profound darkness; and the winds wail fiercer. The air is filled with the alternate shrieks, and sobs of terrified nature. There is heavy rain, with whirling it, and scattering it in gusts, and eddies, and masses.

Heavy footsteps upon the carriage drive; but the tempest absorbs every sound into itself. Over the gravel, which stands out lightly from the blackness that encompasses it, moves a large, dark, lumbering object. It is a man, bearing another, seemingly senseless, upon his back. Slowly, staggering, and swaying at times under the weight and the wind, he advances to the hall door. There he lays down his burden, and seems to ponder for a moment. Then he walks cautiously round the house, looking up at all the windows. There is a faint light in two, but seemingly emitted only by night tapers. All seem to be sleeping.

He cautiously tries the windows upon the ground floor. All were securely fastened. In a corner of the building there was a smaller window, like that of a pantry. With his diamond ring he cut out one of the panes of glass, but his arm through the cavity and with some difficulty succeeded in reaching the fastening that secured the sash. He raised the window and crept through. He took a lantern and some matches from his pocket and struck a light.

It was not a pantry he was in, but a small bedroom. Passing out at the door, he found himself in the servants' offices. He took off his boots and crept noiselessly along the passage, until he reached the corridor. He halted at Silas Carleton's door and listened, with his ear to the keyhole. All seemed quiet.

He ascended the stairs. As he reached the first corridor he became sensible of a strong, pungent odor and a mistiness in the air, like smoke. He looked about him for some cause and crept further along the corridor. Beneath the door, and through the keyhole of one of the rooms, shone a red glow.

Great heavens! had accident anticipated his intention? Was this fire? He turned the handle of the door—it was not locked. His doubts were solved in an instant. A body of hot, blinding smoke rushed into his face, nearly overpowering him. The room was in flames!

Hanging across the arm of a chair was the body of a man, either dead or insensible. Lost and awestricken, Rodwell stood helpless and transfixed, gazing upon the awful sight.

At that moment Judith, hurrying out of her room, appeared upon the scene.

Miles away, a carriage containing an old gentleman is speeding furiously along the Essex road. Upon the box are two policemen.

On through the pelting rain and the rushing wind, beneath the shadows of overhanging trees and along the open road, the soaked, blinded driver, scarcely able to see a yard before him, gallops the horses.

"Look, look!" cries a policeman, suddenly pointing ahead.

There is a glare rising up in the black sky—a wavering, red glare, that brightens and fades, fades and brightens.

The old gentleman within, who, spite of the storm, is continually putting his head out of the window to see what progress is being made, sees it, too.

"Faster, faster, for heaven's sake!" he cries. "Do you not see that fire? It must be the Manor House; there is no other house near."

What is that dark object advancing so swiftly towards them? A horse, galloping furiously, darts past like an arrow, and is lost in the darkness.

"What is that?" cries the old gentleman, looking out of the window again. But only the wind hears his voice.

The glare in the sky grows stronger, nearer. Up rise showers of sparks, and up rolls the red smoke, and faster and faster speed the horses, until they seem running a race with the wind, matching themselves against the tempest.

Judith and Rodwell face one another—but only for an instant. With a cry of agony, she rushes towards her father. The fire surrounds him now, screening him from all human help. The flames and smoke drive her back with their scorching breath. With wild fury, she turns upon Rodwell. Recovered from his momentary panic, he is flying; but as he reaches the head of the stairs, she is upon him, with the grip of a tigress, and calling wildly for help.

He struggles fiercely, twines his fingers in her long hair, and with the other hand rains heavy blows upon her head and face; but still she holds on, never ceasing her wild cries for help. Other cries begin to mingle with hers, and the sounds of battering at doors. The prisoners are aroused to a sense of their danger, as well as the servants below. He will be detected, after all, and through this wild cat of a woman. Suddenly there is a dull thud—her voice is silenced—she has hurled her over the balustrade.

Down the stairs he springs. In the hall he meets the two terrified servants in their night dresses, who scream and run back. Quick as lightning he shoots back the ponderous bolts of the door, and the next moment is flying along the gravelled drive, through the iron gates and out into the highway, where he has left his horse, tied to a tree. One bound and he is in the saddle, barefooted and bareheaded. One look behind—a red glare is shining through the windows—and away he dashes through the darkness, and the rain, and the howling wind.

On, on, over the open common, where the tempest rages in unceasing fury—then under the swaying, groaning trees, plunging into yet deeper darkness. Down, down, down—the speed redoubles, he is rapidly descending, but whither? Impenetrable by sight as a wall of iron is the black gulf before him. He pulls the reins with all his strength; but down, down, down, still gallops the horse with awful rapidity. Crash! a low, projecting branch has caught him across the forehead, and dashes him from the animal's back; there is a heavy plash, and then a rushing sound—the horse is breasting the water; another moment, he is scrambling up the opposite bank, riderless.

Within the Manor House the flames are spreading with frightful rapidity. Judith lies in a motionless heap, and two hapless beings are locked within their rooms; upon the chamber above, the fire has already seized; upon the one below it is rapidly advancing.

The fire is consuming one side of Clara's room—it has fastened upon the stairs—no one can mount them. Who can save her now?

Flames dart above the roof, and through the windows, and up into the black sky rise volumes of lurid smoke, chasing away the darkness and illuminating every object around with a fearful radiance.

What new figure is this come upon the scene? A man who seems to have arisen from the bowels of the earth. He looks strange and bewildered. The women catch sight of him, and shrieking with a new terror, fly away and cover upon the sodden earth, under the dripping branch of a tree. He sees an arm grasping at a window frame. He goes to him.

"Unlock the door—the key is outside!" cries a frantic voice within.

The stranger comprehends—dashes through the hall door, which stands wide open. The flames rolling down the stairs show him the key. He turns it. As he does so, he sees a senseless woman huddled at his feet. He does not recognize her, but quick as lightning he raises her in his arms and bears her safely out into the air, followed by Silas.

Only just in time—the flames are already licking the spot she laid upon.

"Is it Clara?" cries Silas, frantically. They turn over the body and disclose the death-like face of Judith.

"Where is she—oh, heaven, where is she? She has perished in the flames!" exclaimed Silas.

A wild, piercing cry of agony rises above the roar of the elements. They raise their eyes. Standing on the extreme edge of the window sill, with outstretched arms, the flames darting around her, is Clara.

A frightful scream bursts from Silas' lips; but his companion grasps his hands, drags him under the window, and stretching out both their arms, shouts to her to jump. Just in time—the flames cling to her dress as she falls.

At that moment a carriage tears up the drive—two policemen spring from the box, and an old gentleman jumps out, and falls into the group.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A soft evening in June. The sky of a deep, cloudless blue, save towards the west, where the sun is sinking into a sea of crimson light. Not a breath of air is stirring—the trees are motionless; not the quiver of a leaf. There is a buzz of insect life in the air, mingled with the music of the birds. Upon a lawn, over which is scattered numerous flower beds, gay with bright colored blossoms, stretching before a picturesque cottage covered with roses, sit three men. One is young, not more than twenty; the second is a stout, florid, benevolent looking man; the third is thin-visaged, sad-looking, with iron-gray hair. The three men were I, Silas Morant, Mr. Jonathan Rodwell, and my father. My father was speaking—"What his ultimate intentions could have been, I am at a loss to understand. Probably to fast me, in my insensible state, into the flames."

"Which, it seems, after all, he did not kindle," said Mr. Jonathan, shuddering at the remembrance.

"That is the most wonderful circumstance of all. Chance, or destiny, or whatever you please to call it, had actually anticipated him. Porter must have overthrown his lamp in a state of stupor. Judith lived long enough to tell how she had seen the fire first in her father's room, and he lying across the chair, dead or insensible."

"I could not help pitying the unfortunate creature," said Mr. Jonathan, "in spite of the evil she had wrought. She at least deserved a better fate than to perish by the brutal violence of the man whom she loved so devotedly."

"I have often thought," said my father, "what a divine mercy it was that only one of the telegrams fell into that wretched man's hands. It appears that the lad had put one in his pocket—the one addressed to you, Mr. Rodwell—and was holding the other in his hand, when he ran against his master, who snatched it from him and forbade him to leave the house. The lad said nothing about the other, but watched his opportunity to leave the premises, and deliver it at the office. The delay, however, was very near proving fatal to more than one of us."

"That unhappy man," said Mr. Jonathan, "had telegraphed to say that he would be with me that night. But I felt half inclined to start for Essex without waiting for him, and chance the condition of the house. But look! here are two old friends of yours coming this way, Silas."

Such was the fact. Walking up the pathway towards the house were Martha Jennings and Josiah Cook.

I hastened to meet the good, kind creature who had sheltered me, fed me and clothed me when I was homeless and destitute. She was dressed with unusual smartness—a white bonnet, a blue silk dress, and a bright-colored, or rather many-colored, shawl. Josiah was also got up in an unusual style; bright green satin necktie, buff waistcoat and white hat.

After a little conversation, the secret came out; the worthy pair had been mar-

ried that morning.

"Married!" I exclaimed; "why I had not the least idea that such a thing was ever thought of!"

"No more had we, Master Silas, a few weeks ago," answered Martha, blushing, "and, you know, you have not seen us since Christmas. So, as you had kindly sent me an invitation to come down and see you, I thought I would take the liberty to bring Josiah along with me, and make it a sort of marriage trip."

"I am very much delighted to see you both, and you shall stay with us for your honeymoon," I said, shaking a hand of each. "But you might as well have invited us to your wedding."

Martha laughed and blushed; and then my father and Mr. Jonathan offered their warm congratulations to the happy bride and bridegroom.

"And are you still at the Corinthian, Josiah?" I inquired.

"No," he answered; "Martha has persuaded me to relinquish public life, and her father has procured for me an appointment upon the railway as a porter."

A little time afterwards, Martha came to me with a radiant countenance. "Only think," she said; "that dear, good Mr. Jonathan is going to set us up in business for your sake! And, Master Silas, what did I use to say when you made such a fuss about the little I could do for you—didn't I tell you you would be rich some day, and what fine things you would do for me?"

"But I am not rich, my good Martha," I said, smiling, "and it is not I who have done this for you."

"Oh, but it's all the same, sir," she said, with a very shy look.

Presently my father, Martha, and Josiah went into the house. But Mr. Jonathan remained behind, and taking my arm, strolled with me across the lawn.

"Silas, my lad," he said, in a kind voice, "the sight of that 'happy couple' has set me thinking upon a subject I have long had in my heart! Although I have never mentioned it, I know all about you and Clara. Mrs. Wilson told me what she knew, and I have picked up the rest here and there. I have waited, however, until now. In the first place, I wished to know you better, to judge of your disposition; and, in the second place, although the ties that bound you to that unhappy woman were of the weakest, yet, after the dreadful circumstances that attended her death, we were compelled in decency to allow a certain time to elapse before the subject of love and marriage could be broached."

"Clara has ceased to love me. She will never forgive the wicked weakness of my conduct in gaining her love while another claimed me as her husband."

"It was very culpable," answered Mr. Jonathan, gravely; "and in any other person I could never have pardoned it, but your life, my poor boy, has been so exceptional, that it would be hard to judge you by the rules of every-day life."

"And you forgive me, darling?" I whispered as I held Clara in my arms.

"I was never angry with you," she answered, softly. "I only felt sad, and that I wished to die."

She was mine—mine at last! Nothing could stand between us now save death! Oh, the bliss, the rapture of that moment!

I am lying at her feet, with my head resting against her, and my face upturned towards hers, as I used to in the old days. The cool air of the soft summer's night, laden with the perfume of the clustering roses, steals through the open lattice. There is no light save that of the moon, that streams through the window, chequering the floor with the shadows of the overhanging leaves. One broad beam glances over my darling's head, making her golden hair glisten like threads of gold, and falls full upon the portrait of her mother that hangs behind her. She is translating the rhapsodies that fill the souls of both into love's own language—music. Oh, those wild, passionate strains, how they thrill through my soul! They tell all the story of our love—soft, melancholy, mysterious—then broken by sobs and wails—swelling into horror and cries of agony—then melting into a soft, dreamy harmony too ecstatic for joy, too hopeful for sadness—and so they die away into the passionate silence of love.

(The end.)

Older Than China.

Older even than China, the oldest existing nation, are the cliff dwellings of southwestern United States, homes of a race whose very name has been pushed from the earth. Explorers, puzzling through the Mancos and Casa Verde canyons of Arizona and New Mexico, have found the houses of this strange people in the wildest and most inaccessible of the mountain sides. Did the cliff dwellers antedate the pyramids of Egypt? Were they of blood relation to the early inhabitants of the land where the Nile is god? Some students are prepared to answer both questions affirmatively and to give what is to them abundant proof. The pottery from their long-wrecked homes suggests Egypt, and the few inscriptions found have similar suggestions. Mummies, bodies wrapped in cloth, feathers from the breast of the turkey have been dug from burial places among the cliffs, and, in bone and hair much unlike the Indian of today, there is a hint of resemblance to a more oriental type. If the cliff dwellers left any descendants, however remote, they are doubtless the Moki and Zuni Indians, who, resembling them in habits and appearance, are their closest kinsmen.

Nothing to Regret.

"Ah me," sighed the spinster as she gave a backward glance at her wasted life. "I have selfishly lived alone all these years and made no man happy!"

"Oh, yes you have," rejoined the bachelor with the ingrown hair. "Don't you remember I proposed to you 20 years ago and you turned me down?"

Unconscious Insult.

Mrs. Homer—Do have some more of the ice cream, Miss Guestly!

Miss Guestly—Well, just a little, as you insist; but only a mouthful, mind.

Mrs. Homer—Jane, fill Miss Guestly's plate up again.

WICKLY'S WOODS

By H. W. TAYLOR

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

Imaginative boys of fifteen have repeatedly precipitated a panic by dashing down the Overcoat road with certain news of the rapid approach of the enemy, now that everybody knows that Sandtown is in the lawful, and peaceful possession of the Sandtown Circuit Court—Judge Jim Skillet upon the bench for the purpose of hearing motions in injunction proceedings, in a vast number of cases of sales to take place on the morrow, unless enjoined.

Squads of riflemen marching in no particular order so far as the keeping of step and alignments are concerned—but not a whit the less formidable, be it understood—marched or straggled out along the Overcoat road past the fields of half-grown corn on the one side and the hazel-fringed edge of "Wickly's Woods," as the timbered hills upon the left had been christened a year ago.

Away to the east along this junction of bottom prairie and wooded hills there were unwonted movements of men across little patches of corn, or standing low and steadily behind a "string" of north and south fence from which the occasional scintillation of the sun upon a rifle barrel gave ominous electric warnings of the presence of imminent war in the land.

All manner of reports came thronging into the Redden mansion, and directly up to the bedroom where Lizzy Wickly and her mother sat at an east window, and watched and thought, but spoke little save in answer to the frequent reports and comments that some one or another of the numerous visitors brought up at frequent intervals.

Now it was that Mr. Mason had been captured by the sheriff's re-enforced posse; and the Big Rattlesnake Creek wore upon the point of "hossing him up," as the expression was, for summary and dire vengeance. This frequently recurring form of the report always had its effect upon Lizzy. Always startled her out of a pleasant reverie in which she was going over some part of last night's final colloquy with variations of her own invention in the line of her after thoughts and wishes.

Again there were martial stories of sanguinary encounters somewhere in the depths of "Wickly's Woods," or upon the neighboring banks of Big Rattlesnake, where, according to all accounts, the warlike clans were encamped and fortified.

One man brought in a new and unheard-of story to the effect that Conrad Redden and the sheriff were not in the hands of Mason and his men; but were captives in the camp of an opposing armed body of railroaders belonging to another and opposition company. He said, too, that the whole difficulty was really and in fact a sharp, keen trial of shrewd overreaching between two rival railroad companies. That Mason, representing one of these, had secured a legal advantage over the other in the purchase of some mortgage notes upon some very valuable mining property somewhere. And the other company discovering this, had sent down a force of armed operatives to prevent the making of a track upon the mining lands. He also said that Conrad Redden and the sheriff's posse had not been held prisoners by anybody. According to his story there had been a sharp and determined encounter between the men of the two contending interests, in which a number had been seriously or slightly wounded, and several killed outright. And that up to the present time Mason had the best of the fight, and his men were working like beavers, protected by two lines of rifle-men. He himself had seen a few of these men on picket guard in some openings of the woods; and the hills fairly rang with the echoing blows of hundreds of axes, and the crash of falling trees.

This story, not at all suited to the notions and preconceived opinions of the people at Conrad Redden's, was generally discredited—especially as no one seemed to be "acquainted" with the man who told it. And hence, he was without a voucher, and his story was without corroboration.

However, word was brought down directly from Judge Jim Skillet that five hundred armed men had been sworn in as deputy sheriffs for the purpose of arresting a large number of railroad employees who had been fighting—one party against another. That these deputy sheriffs in columns of fours had ridden out of town and would be heard from before night.

This news was brought by Columbus Redden, who had prudently refrained from joining his four brothers in the morning hunt for their father, but who now had his Colt hitched in the front yard, where he wouldn't be in danger from the teeth or heels of the rapacious mares of Redden township that were making day hideous with their squealing and trampling in perpetual combat. Immediately after dinner Columbus was to take the road in person; and everybody believed that he, too, would be heard from.

In this state of active siege, with so many sorties in progress or contemplation; with hundreds of rumors coming and going, and the sight of little squads of men riding this way and that, becoming of less and less moment to Lizzy and her mother, the day went by.

Long before it had passed the hungry Hoosier mothers of Redfoot Pond, and vicinity had filled their good, strong, reliable stomachs to repletion; had smoked comfortable pipes of twist tobacco, and had talked in loud, strong voices all at once on the south porch and the north porch, and the back porch, from all of which quarters a roar of "s's's" and "s's's's" had gone up about the four corners of the Redden mansion unrestrained by any of the modern tricks of courtesy that throw plentiful dashes of cold water upon general conversation, with numerous "excuse me's" and "beg pardon's" interrupting, etc., etc. And having performed all these neighborly and patriotic offices, by far the larger number had led their refractory mares up beside convenient fences; had seated themselves on saddles of women's and saddles of men's, and even upon tanned sheepskins and folded horse blankets—single, double and sometimes treble—as to riders; had

ridden away in various directions to "see to the house" or "milk," or "feed," or "git supper fur" "Jim" or "Bill," or "Jawn," according to the wording of the various apologies for not remaining longer.

Then, with the coming of night, there fell down upon all the length and breadth of the Overcoat road and its tributaries and purlieus, a supplanting of all the sounds of human life by the strange, lonely, incessant, stridulous discords of the multitudinous and multifarious insect life of the new country. The sharp, clear grating of the myriads of black and gray crickets, the loud humming of thousands of huge black beetles, the higher and finer shrillings of smaller unknown winged flies of the outer night, all welded together with the thin, resonant hum of the little creatures of the mosquito tribes—these, with the soft flutter of bats' wings, and the frequent loud, hoarse, rubbing sound made by the half-closed wings of the bull-bat, falling from unseen heights of night air with mouth wide open in order to sweep myriads of flying insects into his rapacious maw, in this long and lightning-like dive through the thin lake of transparent, star-lit air—all these small, shrill, unceasing discords of the night took oppressive possession of the world of sounds, leaving the human sense of sound upon tip-toe, and in breathless suspense.

CHAPTER XVII.

Far in the night the mother and daughter again lay down to sleep that came readily to the elder woman, and far more tardily to the younger. In Lizzy's central thought two opposite and irreconcilable solutions of one problem continued for sole recognition. Had Mr. Mason played parts in everything he had done, as she had charged him yesterday evening, and which he had not denied in so many words? She had charged him with this, and much more! She had charged him with studied and persistent eulogiums of an unknown man for the purpose of piquing her womanly curiosity, and thereby amusing himself. He had gone on with it day after day, week after week, and month upon month, until he had fully succeeded in bringing her to love him and to yearn for him.

How many and many anxious hours she had passed in doubts and fears for his safety! How eagerly she had pored over chance newspapers from the great city, and from remote parts of the country, hoping and fearing that she might see some mention of the beloved man. And how she had beamed with gladness at each return of the absent man, announced always by his assistant, and by no one else!

What a fool she had been! Even he said, last night, something about her suspicion reaching its zenith weeks ago instead of beginning to dawn only the day before, when she had seen him driving through the streets of Sandtown, and without his principal!

His principal!—indeed! She had thrown that word at him hard enough, she hoped. She had given him to understand that there was no longer the slightest chance to continue that imposition upon her.

Mr. Huntley, the man of straw! The myth! The creation of the man who had palmed himself off on her as the assistant of his man of straw! A noble and a worthy work for a man of his attainments! All this merely to amuse himself, while he was living in an enforced exile from the city! She had hoped she had thrown that at him hard enough.

But again, there were many, many sincere looking and earnest-sounding things that he had done and said, all along. He had sought her company from the first day, and persistently and continuously kept it. His manner was not that of the languid and impatient man of the world, tired of his enforced seclusion. No. He had set himself about a laborious task of bringing her to see some glaring deficiencies in what she had thought was her all-sufficient self. He had gone further. He had shown his great liking for her. He had, in effect, sought to tell her what everybody had long before said again and again—that it was the plainest of all plain propositions, that he loved her! She had laughed at that! She had even confessed her love for his principal—Huntley, the man of straw; the myth; the creation of an idle fancy! Not only so, but she had told him plainly that she could not then tell whether she were not irrevocably bound, by a strangely romantic passion, to what she at last recognized as the mere creature of another man's idle fancy. That had gone home to him! That had hurt—if he could be hurt.

And here, upon this very point, were a few things that she could not help going over and over. And never did she, in reminiscence, approach the chief of these episodes that her heart did not leap and her ultimate fibrils tingle, with something closely akin to happiness.

First, that sudden and unexpected appearance in that cone of light that seemed to have been photographed upon her retina, so constant was the picture. How well he looked! How fittingly that half-military engineer's dress became him! And what a startling transformation was there in everything that had made the assistant geologist tame and commonplace. Even to the black, close-cut hair. She had forgotten that among her charges of duplicity. Perhaps the fact that she admired black hair had been taken as a silent condonation of the offense to having concealed it under a brown wig. Had he really loved her when he was playing his many parts on the little Sandtown stage? If she had been sure of that would she have arraigned him so bitterly?

Had she been shrewish? Had she shown an ugly temper? She didn't believe she had an ugly temper. But what had he thought of it? Certainly he had seen no display of it in all his former acquaintance with her. And in that intimate relation that must exist among people who gather in the same room every evening, and eat at the same table three times every day—not forgetting the Sundays in which he had hardly left her side half an hour for the whole day; if she had known this, what a splendid opportunity to have appeared at her very

best. For really, she had not tried to appear well. She had teased him unmercifully. She had taunted him with remaining contented with a subordinate place and a scant salary. She could see now how it was that he could bear such teasing as that with a smiling stoicism.

But, ah! the very last words he had said to her! And the very last thing he did! Her face crimsoned at the recollection, but always wreathed with her sweetest, softest smiles, too. He had looked even in that dim starlight, so eager, so earnest, so handsome. He had said almost in the manner of giving his invisible pledge—that he would see her soon again! Remember that, Lizzy! He would see her soon if it lay within his power. If it lay within his power!

And then he started away, up the dark road. And before he had gone ten steps, he turned and saw her still standing there and looking after him. Maybe that was how it came that he thought of running back. Very well! If she had done anything to bring him back for that supplemental parting, she was glad of it. He had held her a moment to his breast. His strong arms had been about her. Even now, at the reminiscence, she felt the tingling that had rippled along every little nerve from her crown to her soles, and to her finger ends. And then the pressure of his warm lips upon her own. Actually upon her lips! This bold, audacious semi-soldier that he was! She would punish him for that. How? By having him kiss her again? Well, the unusual and startling surroundings must be his good excuse. Only let him come soon!

CHAPTER XVIII.

In spite of the prediction that Judge Jim Skillet's extraordinary posse comitatus would "be heard from" and that soon, it was no sooner enveloped in the dim and leaf-arched aisles of Wickly's Woods, than it passed as far beyond the ken of the Sandtown people as if it had freighted a Spanish galleon and sailed away down the Wabash with current and wind both favoring the voyage.

'Twas, that certain adventurous spirits came back at intervals, riding down the already drying sands of the Overcoat road as if they brought tidings of stirring things. But they rode straight to the court room, where the judge sat in the midst of his bar and four strange, city gentlemen, who were the clients of Billy Biler, our Congressman, and who represented the interests of the new Sandtown and Northwestern Railroad. Having ridden straight to the door and dismounted, these messengers would run into the court room, advance straight to the judge, who, seeing them coming, would be upon his feet in an instant, and would lead the way to the grand jury room, where they would remain for some minutes free from intrusion or interruption of any sort.

Then they would all come out, wearing grave and determined faces, the judge coming back to his chair, and the couriers going back to their saddles, and away, up in the Overcoat road and into the mysterious fastness of Wickly's Woods.

To those who were bold enough to ask Judge Jim what it meant, he replied uniformly, that negotiations were in progress, but that he was by no means at liberty to say of what nature, or with what prospect of success.

But while this simple declaration was quite sufficient to persuade the Hoosier people of Sandtown and vicinity that the very best was being done for all concerned, it did not satisfy the few polished and well-dressed, easy-mannered gentlemen who represented the new S. & N. W. And they manifested their dissatisfaction through their attorney, Congressman Biler, in many motions with which he attempted to move the court to proceed then and there with the sales of land under mortgage, and assigned to the aforesaid S. & N. W. by the Farmers' Bank of Sandtown. To all of these motions Judge Jim, true to the long training he had received under the noted old Judge Barks, had repeatedly said:

"I am in some measure the custodian of the private interests of the parties to all the proceedings in my court. In these mortgage sales it has come to my knowledge that the property will bring a greatly enhanced price through another bidder, who will certainly be in town, as I am informed, before 5 in the afternoon." And although the sales had been lawfully advertised for that day at 10 a. m., he had advised the sheriff not to proceed with the sales until further notice. No question of the legality of the sale could be entertained in his court. And, happily, at that day it could be entertained nowhere else until it had first been entertained there.

(To be continued.)

Depth of the Ocean.

Contrary to former opinion, recent research has clearly proved that the greater depths do not lie in the middle of the ocean, but in the neighborhood of the dry land. The latest ascertained depth of the waters covering the earth is thus stated by Prince Albert of Monaco, following Prof. Krummel, to be the average in fathoms: Atlantic, 2,012; Indian, 1,828; Pacific, 2,125; Antarctic, 1,804; Arctic, 841; Mediterranean, 732.

The greatest depth yet sounded in the Atlantic was originally discovered by the ship Gettysburg, ninety-five miles north of St. Thomas, latitude 19 degrees 41 minutes, longitude 65 degrees 7 minutes. It is 3,875 fathoms below sea level.

Prof. Agassiz, in the Albatross expedition of 1900, made a sounding of the Pacific of 5,540 fathoms off the Tonga Islands, and there are believed to exist still deeper basins near Japan. But four miles and a half may be taken to be the greatest depth of the Atlantic. The average depth of the whole ocean may be taken as about two English miles.

An Old Story.

Dix—I'm afraid that new roomer is slightly demented. She says the reason she left her last boarding place was because they had turkey so often she couldn't stand it.

Mix—Perhaps she isn't so far off. Maybe it was the same turkey.

Good qualities are the substantial riches of the mind; but it is good breeding that sets them off to advantage.—Locke.

The average depth of the Atlantic is estimated to be about 18,000 feet.