



**By Owen Wister
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"Once upon a time Michigan was an unwelcome guest to the Union. Daniel Webster would not have bought the whole country of Texas if it cost more than a quarter. In our day, civilization is bringing out the better in us.. Some Pilgrim will put half a glass of water in the middle of the table and ask, 'Is this here glass half empty or half full?' And it don't matter which side you take your position will prove you're a brainless fool. Back in 1890 the biggest question on the documentary ledger of the United States Congress was to determine if Arizona was plumb full or plumb empty. No matter which side you took, the other side was a fixing to skin your head up till it looked like boiled cabbage."

~ Lin Stone

Arizona was the unknown country I had chosen for my holiday, and I found them describing it in our National House of Representatives, where I had strolled for sight-seeing but stayed to listen.

The Democrats were hot to make the Territory a State, while the Republicans objected that the place had about it still too much of the raw frontier. The talk and replies of each party were not long in shaking off restraint, and in the sharp exchange of satire the Republicans were reminded that they had not thought Idaho and Wyoming unripe at a season when those Territories were rumored to be Republican.

"Arizona might be Democratic, but neither cattle wars nor mine revolutions flourished there. Good order and prosperity prevailed." A member from Pennsylvania presently lost his temper, declaring that gigantic generalities about milk and honey and enlightenment would not avail to change his opinion.

Arizona was once a part of New Mexico. Divided almost in half the Arizona portion was right at three times the size of New York — It had a hundred and thirteen **thousand** square miles. Square miles of what, though? That was the question Congress wished to determine.

"The desert of Sahara was easily twice as big as Arizona, and it is one of the largest misfortunes on the face of the earth."

Arizona had sixty thousand inhabitants, or as one was wont to put it, not quite so many as could be found in the town of Troy. And what sort of people? Why, He understood that cactus was Arizona's chief crop, stage-robbing her most active industry, and the Apache her most civilized citizen.

And then the Boy Orator of the Rio Grande took his first shot. I forgot his sallow face and black, unpleasant hair, and even his single gesture — that straining lift of one hand above the shoulder during the suspense of a sentence and that cracking it down into the other hand at the full stop -- endless as a pile-driver. His facts wiped any trick of manner from my notice. Indians? Stage-robbers? Cactus? Yes, by golly, and he would add famine, drought, impotent law enforcement, daily murder; he could have gone on to add much more, but it was all told in Mr. Pumpelly's book, true as life, published thirty years ago — but doubtless still the latest news to reach Pennsylvania! Had this report discouraged the gentleman from visiting Arizona, perhaps?

Why, he could go there to-day in a Pullman car by two great roads and eat his three meals in security. But Eastern statesmen were too often content with knowing their particular corner of our map while a continent of ignorance lay unmined in their shallow minds.



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Politics / Current Events	(1)

At this stroke, applause sounded beside me, and, turning, I had my first sight of the yellow duster. The bulky man that wore it shrewdly and smilingly watched the orator, who now dwelt upon the rapid benefits of the railways, the excellent men and things they brought to Arizona, the leap into the brilliant stream of civilization that the Territory had taken.

"Let Pennsylvania come see those blossoming fields for herself," said he, "those boundless contiguities of shade."

And a sort of cluck went off down inside my neighbor's throat, while the speaker with rising heat gave us the tonnage of plums exported from the Territory during the past fiscal year. Wool followed.

"Sock it to 'em, Limber Jim!" murmured the man in the duster, and executed a sort of step. He was plainly of a personal acquaintance of the speaker's.

Figures never stick by me, nor can I quote accurately the catalogue of statistic abundance now recited in the House of Representatives; but as tons of wheat, corn, peaches, apricots, oranges, raisins, spices, the rose and the jasmine flowered in the Boy Orator's eloquence, the genial antics of my neighbor increased until he broke into delighted mutterings, such as "He's a stud-horse," and "Put the kybosh on 'em," and many more that have escaped my memory.

But the Boy Orator's peroration I am glad to remember, for his fervid convictions lifted him into the domain of metaphor and cadence; and though to be sure I made due allowance for enthusiasm, his picture of Arizona remained vivid with me, and I should have voted to make the Territory a State that very day.

"With her snow-clad summits, with the balm of her Southern vineyards, she loudly calls for a sister's rights. Not the isles of Greece, nor any cycle of Cathay, can compete with her horticultural resources, her Salt River, her Colorado, her San Pedro, her Gila, her hundred irrigated valleys, each one surpassing the shaded Paradise of the Nile, where thousands of noble men and elegantly educated ladies have already located, and to which thousands more, like patient monuments, are waiting breathless to throng when the franchise is proclaimed. And if my death could buy that franchise, I would joyfully boast such martyrdom."

The orator cracked his hands together in this supreme moment, and the bulky gentleman in the duster drove an elbow against my side, whispering to me at the same time behind his hand, in a hoarse confidence: "Deserted Jericho! Why, little California only holds the record on stove productions now."

"I'm afraid I do not catch your allusion," I began. But at the sound of my voice he turned sharply, and, giving me one short, ugly stare, went to looking about him.

Evidently he was at some loss, until a man at his other side pulled at his duster, and I then saw that he had all along been taking me for the younger companion he had come in with, and with whom he now went away. In the jostle we had shifted places while his eyes were upon the various speakers, and to him I had seemed to be an eavesdropper.

Both he and his friend had a curious appearance, and they looked behind them, meeting my gaze as I watched them going; and then they made to each other some laughing comment, of which I felt myself to be the inspiration.

I was standing absently on the same spot, still in a mild puzzle over California and the record on stoves. Certainly I had overheard none of their secrets, if they had any; I could not even guess what might be their true opinion about admitting Arizona to our Union.

With this last memory of our Capitol and the statesmen we have collected there to govern us, I entered upon my holiday, glad that it was to be passed in such a region of enchantment. For peaches it would be too early, and with roses and jasmine I did not importantly concern myself, thinking of them only as a pleasant sight by the way.

But on my gradual journey through Lexington, Bowling Green, Little Rock, and Forth Worth I dwelt upon the shade of the valleys, and the pasture hills dotted with

the sheep of whose shining wool the Boy Orator had spoken; and I wished that our cold Northwest could have been given such a bountiful climate. Upon the final morning of railroad travel I looked out of the window at an earth which during the night had collapsed into a vacuum, as I had so often seen happen before upon more Northern parallels.

The evenness of this huge nothing was cut by our track's interminable scar, and broken to the eye by the towns which now and again rose and littered the horizon like boxes dumped by emigrants. We were still in Texas, not distant from the Rio Grande, and I looked at the boxes drifting by, and wondered from which of them the Boy Orator had been let loose.

Twice or three times upon this day of sand I saw green spots shining sudden and bright and Biblical in the wilderness. Their isolated loveliness was herald of the valley land I was nearing each hour. The wandering Mexicans, too, bright in rags and swarthy in nakedness, put me somehow in mind of the Old Testament.

In the evening I sat at whiskey with my first Arizona acquaintance, a Mr. Mowry, one of several Arizona citizens whom my military friend at San Carlos had written me to look out for on my way to visit him. My train had trundled on to the Pacific while I sat in a house once more — a saloon on the platform, with an open door through which the night air came pleasantly. This was now the long-

expected Territory, and time for roses and jasmine to begin. Early in our talk I naturally spoke to Mr. Mowry of Arizona's resources and her chance of becoming a State. "We'd have got there by now," said he, "only Luke Jenks ain't half that interested in Arizona as he is in Luke Jenks."

I reminded Mr. Mowry that I was a stranger here and unacquainted with the prominent people.

"Well, Luke's as near a hog as you kin be and wear pants. Be with you in a minute," added Mr. Mowry, and shambled from the room. This was because a shot had been fired in a house across the railroad tracks. "I run two places," he explained, returning quite soon from the house and taking up the thread of his whiskey where he had dropped it. "Two outfits. This side for toorists. Th' other pays better."

"I trust no one has been — hurt?" said I, inclining my head towards the farther side of the railroad.

"Hurt?" My question for the moment conveyed nothing to him, and he repeated the word, blinking with red eyes at me over the rim of his lifted glass. "No, nobody's hurt. I've been here a long while, and seen them as was hurt, though." Here he nodded at me depreciatingly, and I felt how short was the time that I had been here. "Th' other side pays better," he resumed, "as toorists mostly go to bed early. Six bits is about the figger you can

reckon they'll spend, if you know anything." He nodded again, more solemn over his whiskey. "That kind's no help to business. I've been in this Territory from the start, and Arizona ain't what it was. Them mountains are named from me." And he pointed out of the door. "Mowry's Peak. On the map." With this last august statement his mind seemed to fade from the conversation, and he struck up a succession of matches along the table and various parts of his person.

"Has Mr. Jenks been in the Territory long?" I suggested, feeling the silence weigh upon me.

"Luke Jenks? He's a hog. And him the people's choice! But the people of Arizona ain't what they was. Are you interested in silver, by any chance?"

"Yes," I answered, meaning the political question. But before I could say what I meant he had revived into a vigor of attitude and a wakefulness of eye of which I had not hitherto supposed him capable.

"You come here," said he; and, catching my arm, he took me out of the door and along the track in the night, and round the corner of the railroad hotel into view of more mountains that lay to the south. "You stay here to-morrow," he pursued, swiftly, "and I'll hitch up and drive you over there. I'll show you some rock behind Helen's Dome that'll beat any you've struck in the whole course of your life.

"It's on the wood reservation, and when the government abandons the Post, as they're a going to do — "

There is no need for my entering at length into his urgency, or the plans he put to me for our becoming partners, or for my buying him out and employing him on a salary, or buying him out and employing some other, or no one, according as I chose — the whole bright array of costumes in which he presented to me the chance of making my fortune at a stroke. I think that from my answers he gathered presently a discouraging but perfectly false impression. My Eastern hat and inexperienced face (I was certainly young enough to have been his grandchild) had a little misled him; and although he did not in the least believe the simple truth I told him, that I had come to Arizona on no sort of business, but for the pleasure of seeing the country, he now overrated my brains as greatly as he had in the beginning despised them, quite persuaded I was playing some game deeper than common, and either owned already or had my eye upon other silver mines.

"Pleasure of seeing the country, ye say?" His small wet eyes blinked as he stood on the railroad track bareheaded, considering me from head to foot. "All right. Did ye say ye're going to Globe?"

"No. To San Carlos to visit an army officer."

"Carlos is on the straight road to Globe," said Mr. Mowry, vindictively. "But ye might as well drop any idea of Globe, if ye should get one. If it's copper ye're after, there's parties in ahead of you."

Desiring, if possible, to shift his mind from its present unfavorable turn, I asked him if Mr. Adams did not live between here and Solomonsville, my route to Carlos. Mr. Adams was another character of whom my host had written me, and at my mention of his name the face of Mr. Mowry immediately soured into the same expression it had taken when he spoke of the degraded Jenks.

"So you're acquainted with him! He's got mines. I've seen 'em. If you represent any Eastern parties, tell 'em not to drop their dollars down old Adams's hole in the ground. He ain't the inexperienced juniper he looks. Him and me's been acquainted these thirty years. People claim it was Cyclone Bill held up the Ehrenberg stage. Well, I guess I'll be seeing how the boys are getting along."



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With that he moved away. A loud disturbance of chairs and broken glass had set up in the house across the railroad, and I watched the proprietor shamble from me with his deliberate gait towards the establishment that paid him best. He had left me possessor of much incomplete knowledge, and I waited for him, pacing the platform; but he did not return, and as I judged it inexpedient to follow him, I went to my bed on the tourist side of the track and at the time he had prescribed.

In the morning the stage went early, and as our road seemed to promise but little variety — I could see nothing but an empty plain — I was glad to find my single fellow-passenger a man inclined to talk. I did not like his mustache, which was too large for his face, nor his too careful civility and arrangement of words; but he was genial to excess, and some thoughtful of my comfort.

“I beg you will not allow my valise to incommode you,” was one of his first remarks; and I liked this consideration better than any Mr. Mowry had shown me. “I fear you will detect much initial primitiveness in our methods of transportation,” he said.

This again called for gracious assurances on my part, and for a while our polite phrases balanced to corners until I was mentally winded keeping up such a pace of manners. The train had just brought him from Tucson, he told me, and would I indulge? On this we shared whiskey.

"From your flask I take it that you are a Gentile," said he, smiling.

"If you mean tenderfoot," said I, "let me confess at once that flask and owner are from the East, and brand-new in Arizona."

"I mean you're not a Mormon. Most strangers to me up this way are. But they carry their liquor in a plain flat bottle."

"Are you a — a — " Embarrassment took me as if I were checking myself on the verge of asking a courteously disposed stranger if he had ever embezzled.

"Oh, I'm no Mormon," my new friend said, with a chuckle, and I was glad to hear him come down to reasonable English. "But Gentiles are in the minority in this valley."

"I didn't know we'd got to the valleys yet," said I, eagerly, connecting Mormons with fertility and jasmine. And I lifted the flaps of the stage, first one side and then the other, and saw the desert everywhere flat, treeless, and staring like a lidless eye.

"This is the San Simon Valley we've been in all the time," he replied. "It goes from Mexico to the Gila, about a hundred and fifty miles across."

"Like this?"

"Well, south it is rockier. It would be best if you would put the flap down."

"I don't see where people live," I protested as two smoky spouts of sand jetted from the tires and strewed over our shoes and pervaded our nostrils. "There's nothing — WAIT! yes, there's one bush coming up at us." I fastened the flaps.

"That's Seven-Mile Mesquite. They held up the stage at this point last October. But they made a mistake in the day. The money had gone down on the afternoon before, and they only got about a hundred dollars, all told."

"I suppose it was Mormons who robbed the stage?" I asked.

"Don't talk quite so loud," the stranger said, laughing. "The driver's one of them."

I had to ask, "One of the Mormons or one of the robbers?"

"Well, all we can prove is, he's a Mormon."

"He doesn't look twenty. Has he many wives yet?"

"Oh, they keep that thing very quiet in these days, if they do it at all. The government made things too hot altogether. The Bishop here knows what hiding for polygamy means."

"Bishop who?"

"Meakum," I thought he answered me, but was not sure in the rattle of the stage, and twice made him repeat it, putting my

hand to my ear at last. "Meakum!
Meakum!" he shouted.

"Yes, sir," said the driver.

"Have some whiskey?" said my friend,
promptly; and when that was over and the
flat bottle passed back, he explained in a
lower voice, "He's a son of the Bishop's."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed.

"So was the young fellow who put in the
mail-bags, and that yellow-headed duck in
the store this morning." My companion, in
the pleasure of teaching new things to a
stranger, stretched his legs on the front
seat, lifted my coat out of his way, and left
all formality of speech and deportment.

"And so's the driver you'll have to-morrow
if you're going beyond Thomas, and the
stock-tender at the sub-agency where
you'll breakfast. He's a yellow-head too.
The old man's postmaster, and owns this
stage-line. One of his boys has the mail
contract. The old man runs the hotel at
Solomonsville and two stores at Bowie and
Globe, and the store and mill at Thacher.
He supplies the military posts in this
district with hay and wood, and a lot of
things on and off through the year. Can't
write his own name. Signs government
contracts with his mark. He's sixty-four,
and he's had eight wives. Last summer he
married number nine — the rest are all
dead, he says, and I guess that's so. He
has fifty-seven recorded children, not
counting the twins born last week.

"Any yellow-heads you'll see in the valley'll answer to the name of Meakum as a rule, and the other type's curly black like this little driver specimen."

"How interesting there should be only two varieties of Meakum!" said I.

"Yes, it's interesting. Of course the whole fifty-seven don't class up yellow or black curly, but if you could take account of stock you'd find the big half of 'em do. Mothers don't seem to have influenced the type appreciably. His eight families, successive and simultaneous, cover a period of forty-three years, and yellow and black keeps turning up right along. Scientifically, the suppression of Mormonism is a loss to the student of heredity. Some of the children are dead. Get killed now and then, and die too — die from sickness. But you'll easily notice Meakums as you go up the valley. Old man sees all get good jobs as soon as they're old enough. Places 'em on the railroad, places 'em in town, all over the lot. Some don't stay; you couldn't expect the whole fifty-seven to be steady; but he starts 'em all fair. No matter. We have six in Tucson now, or five, maybe. Old man's a good father to them all."

"They're not all boys?"

"Certainly not; but more than half are."

"And you say he can't write?"

"No, he can't, nor read, except print, and he has to spell out that to get it right."

"But, my goodness, he's postmaster!"

"What's that got to do with it? Young Meakums all read like anything. He don't do any of that drudgery."

"Well, you wouldn't catch me signing any contracts I couldn't read."

"Wait, Do you think you'd catch anybody reading a contract wrong to old Meakum? Oh, mamma! Why, he's king round here. Fixes the county elections and the price of tomatoes. Do you suppose any Tucson jury'll convict any of his Mormons if he says nay? No, sir! It's been tried. Why, that man ought to be in Congress."

"If he's like that I don't consider him desirable," said I.

"Yes, he is desirable," said my friend, roughly. "Smart, can't be fooled, and looks after his people's interests. I'd like to know if that don't fill the bill?"

"If he defeats justice — "

"Oh, rats!" This interruption made me regret his earlier manner, and I was sorry the polish had rubbed through so quickly and brought us to a too precipitate familiarity. "We're Western out here," he continued, "and we're practical. When we want a thing, we go after it."

"Bishop Meakum worked his way down here from Utah through desert and starvation, mostly afoot, for a thousand miles, and his flock to-day is about the only class in the Territory that knows what prosperity feels like, and his laws are about the only laws folks don't care to break. He's got a brain. If he weren't against Arizona's being admitted — "

"He should know better than that," said I, wishing to be friendly. "With your fruit exports and high grade of citizens you'll soon be another California."

He gave me an odd look.

"I am surprised," I proceeded, amiably, "to hear you speak of Mormons only as prosperous. They think better of you in Washington."

"Now, see here," said he, "I've been pleasant to you and I've enjoyed this ride. But I like plain, honest talk."

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"And I don't care for Eastern sarcasm."

"There was no intention — "

"I don't take offence where offence is not intended. As for high-grade citizens, we don't claim to know as much as — I suppose it's New York you come from? Gold-bugs and mugwumps — "

"If you can spare the time," said I, "and kindly explain what has disturbed you in my remarks, we'll each be likely to find the rest of these forty miles more supportable."

"I guess I can stand it," said he, swallowing a drink. He folded his arms and resettled his legs; and the noisome hatefulness of his laugh filled me with regret for the wet-eyed Mowry. I would now gladly have taken any amount of Mowry in exchange for this; and it struck me afresh how uncertainly one always reckons with those who suspect their own standing.

"Till Solomonsville," said I, "let us veil our estimation of each other. Once out of this stage and the world will be large enough for both of us." I was wrong there; but presentiments do not come to me often. So I, too, drank some of my own whiskey, lighted a cigar, and observed with pleasure that my words had enraged him.

Before either of us had devised our next remark, the stage pulled up to change horses at the first and last water in forty miles. This station was kept by Mr. Adams, and I jumped out to see the man Mr. Mowry had warned me was not an inexperienced juniper. His appearance would have drawn few but missionaries to him, and I should think would have been warning enough to any but an over-trustful child of six.

"Are you the geologist?" he said at once, coughing heavily; and when I told him I was simply enjoying a holiday, he looked at me sharply and spat against the corner of the stable. "There's one of them fellers expected," he continued, in a tone as if I need not attempt to deny that, and I felt his eye watching for signs of geology about me. I told him that I imagined the geologist must do an active business in Arizona.

"I don't hire 'em!" he exclaimed. "They can't tell me nothing about mineral."

"I suppose you have been here a long while, Mr. Adams?"

"When I came here that little hill you see out there was a lake. There's just three living that come in ahead of — " The cough split his last word in pieces.

"Mr. Mowry was saying last night — "

"You've seen that old scamp, have you? Buy his mine behind Helen's Dome?"

My mirth at this turned him instantly confidential, and rooted his conviction that I was a geologist. "That's right!" said he, tapping my arm. "Don't you let 'em fool you. I guess you know your business. Now, if you want to look at good paying rock, thousands in sight, in sight, may I remind you — "

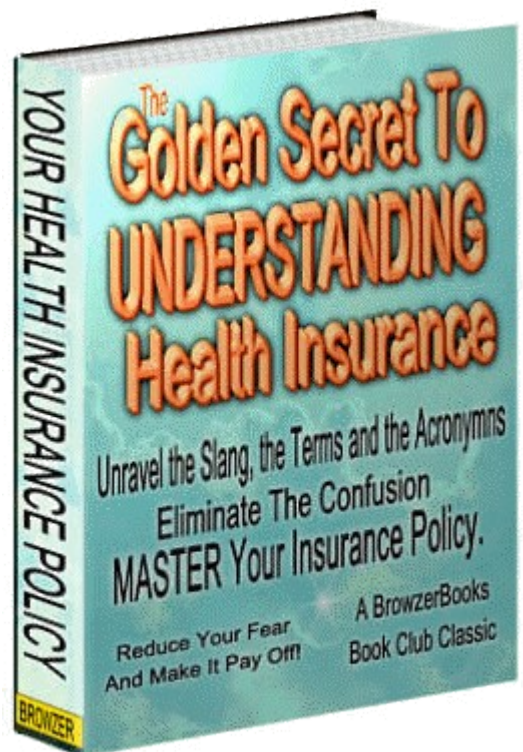
"Are you coming along with us?" called the little Meakum driver, and I turned and saw the new team was already expertly harnessed and the driver ready on his box with the reins threaded in his hands. So I was obliged to hasten from the disappointed Adams and climb back in my seat. The last I saw of him he was standing quite still in the welter of stable muck, stooping to do his cough, the desert sun beating on his old body, and the desert wind slowly turning the windmill above the shadeless mud hovel in which he lived alone.

"Poor old devil!" said I to my enemy, half forgetting our terms in my contemplation of Adams. "Is he a Mormon?"

My enemy's temper seemed a little improved. "He's tried most everything except jail," he answered, his voice still harsh. "You needn't invest your sentiment there. He used to hang out at Twenty Mile in Old Camp Grant days, and he'd slit your throat for fifty cents."

But my sentiment was invested somehow. The years of the old-timers were ending so gray. Their heyday, and carousals, and happy-go-luckiness all gone, and in the remaining hours — what? Empty youth might seem like such a grand easy thing, and empty age looks so grim!

"Has Mowry tried everything, too?" I asked.



"Including jail," said my companion; and gave me many entertaining incidents of Mowry's career with an ill-smelling saloon cleverness that put him once more into a favorable humor with me, while I retained my opinion of him. "And that uneducated sot," he concluded, "that hobo with his record of cattle-stealing and claim-jumping, and his acquittal from jail through railroad influence, actually undertook to run against me last elections. My name is Jenks. By the way; Luke Jenks, Territorial Delegate from Arizona." He handed me his card.

"I'm just now from Washington," said I.

"Well, I've not been there this session. Important law business has detained me here. Yes, they backed Mowry in that election. The old spittoon had quite a following, but he hadn't the cash to buy my votes. That gives you some idea of the low standards I have to combat. But I hadn't to spend much. This Territory's so poor the voters come cheap. Seventy-five cents a head for all the votes I wanted in Bisbee, Nogales, and Yuma; and up here the Bishop was my good friend. Holding office booms my business some, and that's why I took it, of course. But I've had low standards to fight."

The Territorial Delegate now talked freely of Arizona's frontier life. "It's all dead," he said, forgetting in his fluency what he had told me about Seven-Mile Mesquite and last October.

"We have a community as high toned as any in the country. Our monumental activity — " And here he went off like a cuckoo clock, or the Boy Orator, reciting the glories of Phoenix and Salt River, and the future of silver, in that special dialect of platitudes which is spoken by our more talkative statesmen, and is not quite Latin, quite grammar, or quite falsehood. "We're not all Mowrys and Adamses," said he, landing from his flight.

"In a population of fifty-nine thousand," said I, heartily, "a stranger is bound to meet decent people if he keeps on."

Again he misinterpreted me, but this time the other way, bowing like one who acknowledges a compliment; and we came to Solomonsville in such peace that he would have been astonished at my private thoughts. For I had met no undisguised vagabond nor out-and-out tramp whom I did not prefer to Luke Jenks, vote-buyer and politician. With his catch-penny plausibility, his thin-spread good-fellowship, and his New York clothes, he mistook himself for a respectable man, and I was glad to be done with him.

I could have reached Thomas that evening, but after our noon dinner let the stage go on, and delayed a night for the sake of seeing the Bishop hold service next day, which was Sunday, some few miles down the valley. I was curious to learn the Mormon ritual and what might be the doctrines that such a man as the Bishop would expound.

It dashed me a little to find this would cost me forty-eight hours of Solomonsville, for there was no Sunday stage running. But one friendly English-speaking family — the town was chiefly Mexican — made some of my hours pleasant, and others I spent in walking. Though I went early to bed I slept so late that the ritual was well advanced when I reached the Mormon gathering. From where I was obliged to stand I could only hear the preacher, already in the middle of his discourse.

“Don’t empty your swill in the door-yard, but feed it to your hogs,” he was saying; and any one who knows how plainly a man is revealed in his voice could have felt instantly, as I did, that here was undoubtedly a leader of men.

“Rotten meat, rotten corn, spoiled milk, the truck that thoughtless folks throw away, should be used. Their usefulness has not ceased because they’re rotten. That’s the error of the ignorant, who know not that nothing is meant to be wasted in this world.

“The ignorant stay poor simply because they break the law of the Lord. Waste not, want not. The children of the Gentiles play in the door-yard and grow sickly and die. The mother, only working in the house, has a pale face and poison in her blood. She cannot be a strong wife. She cannot bear strong sons to the man or fair daughters to herself.

"The man stays healthy because he toils in the field. He does not breathe the tainted air rising from the swill in the door-yard. Yes! Swill is bad for us, but it is good for swine. Wasted by the threshold it soon becomes deadly, and a curse falls upon the house. The mother and children are sick just because she has broken a law of the Lord. Our Heavenly Father will not save us from the consequences of what we so willfully do.

"Do not let me see this sin when I come among you in the valley. Fifty yards behind each house, with clean air between, let me see the well-fed swine receiving each day, as was intended, the garbage left by man. And let me see flowers in the door-yard to beautify the home, and let there be stout, blooming children playing tag outside."

He paused for some moments, then said, "We will sing the twenty-ninth hymn."

I didn't learn until later that it is uncommon for the Bishop to speak in the morning service. Men, and women, and even children are more usually heard, and each of them on a different subject or from a different viewpoint. Nonetheless, the scales had dropped from my eyes many hours ago, and I saw Arizona clearly, and felt no to cast repining sighs for roses and jasmine. Those allusions had been a politician's way of foisting one more silver State upon our Senate that never went anywhere to see for themselves what the true state was.

I eagerly renounced them for the real thing I was getting; for my holiday already far outspangled the motliest dream that ever visited me, and I settled down to it as we settle down in our theatre chairs, well pleased with the flying pantomime. And when, after the hymn and a blessing — the hymn was poor stuff about wanting to be a Mormon and with the Mormons stand — I saw the Bishop get into a wagon, put on a yellow duster, and drive quickly away, no surprise struck me at all. I merely said to myself: Certainly. How dull not to have foreseen that! And I knew that we should speak together soon, and he would tell me why California only held the record on stoves.

But oh, my friends, what a country we live in, and what an age, that the same stars and stripes should simultaneously wave over this and over Delmonico's! This too I kept thinking as I killed more hours in walking the neighborhood of Solomonsville, an object of more false hope to natives whom I did not then observe. I avoided Jenks, who had business clients in the town.

I went among the ditches and the fields thus turned green by the channelled Gila; and though it was scarcely a paradise surpassing the Nile, it was indeed grassy and full of sweet smells until after a few miles each way, when the desert suddenly met the pleasant verdure full in the face and corroded it to death like vitriol. The sermon came back to me as I passed the little Mormon homes, and the bishop rose

and rose in my esteem, though not as one of the children of light. That sagacious patriarch had told his flock the things of week-day wisdom down to their level, the cleanly things next to godliness, to keep them from the million squalors that stain our Gentile poor and keep them poor; and if he did not sound much like the Gospel I am accustomed to hear, the Bishop and Deuteronomy were as alike as two peas.

With him and Moses thus revolving in my thoughts, I came back after sunset, and was gratified to be late for supper. Jenks had left the dining-room, and I ate in my own company, which had become lively and full of intelligent impressions. These I sat recording later in my journal, when a hesitating knock came at my bedroom, and two young men in cowboy costume entered like shy children, endeavoring to step without creaking.

"Meakums!" my delighted mind exclaimed, inwardly; but the yellow one introduced the black curly one as Mr. Follet, who, in turn, made his friend Mr. Cunningham known to me, and at my cordial suggestion they sat down with increasing awkwardness, after first leaving their hats outside the door.

"We seen you walking around," said one.

"Lookin' the country over," said the other.

"Fine weather for traveling," said the first.

"Dusty though," said the second.

Perceiving them to need my help in coming to their point, I said, "And now about your silver mine."

"You've called the turn on us!" exclaimed the one with yellow hair, and the one whose hair was black and curly slapped his knee. Both of them sat looking at me, laughing enthusiastically, and I gathered they had been having whiskey this Sunday night. I confess that I offered them some more fuel, and when they realized my mildness they told me with length and confidence about the claims they had staked out on Mount Turnbull. "And there's lots of lead, too," said yellow.

"I do not smelt," said I, "or deal in any way with ore. I have come here without the intention of buying anything."

"You ain't the paymaster?" burst out black curly, wrinkling his forehead like a pleasant dog.

Yellow touched his foot.

"Course he ain't!" said curly, with a swerve of his eye. "He ain't due. What a while it always is waitin'!"

Now the paymaster was nothing to me, nor whom he paid. For all I knew, my visitors were on his roll; and why yellow should shy at the mention of him and closely watch his tipsy mate I did not try to guess. Like every one I had met so far in Arizona, these two evidently doubted I was here for my pleasure merely; but it

was with entire good-humor that they remarked a man had the right to mind his own business; and so, with a little more whiskey, we made a friendly parting. They recommended me to travel with a pistol in this country, and I explained that I should do myself more harm than good with a weapon that any one handled more rapidly than I, with my inexperience.

“Good-night, Mr. Meakum,” I said.

“Follet,” corrected black curly.

“Cunningham,” said yellow, and they picked up their hats in the hall and withdrew.

I think now those were their real names — the time was coming when I should hear them take oath on it — yet I do not know. I have heard so many curious oaths taken.

I was glad to see black curly in the stage next day, not alone for his company, but to give him a right notion of what ready money I had about me. Thinking him over, and his absence of visible means of support, and his interest in me, I took opportunity to mention, quite by the way, that five or six dollars was all that I ever carried on my person, the rest being in New York drafts, worthless in any hands but mine. And I cast lingering glances at the time once or twice just for him to perceive the very cheapness of my nickel-plated watch.



That the Bishop was not his father I had indirect evidence when we stopped at Thacher to change horses and drop a mail-sack, and the Mormon divine suddenly lifted the flap and inspected us. He nodded to me and gave Follet a message.

“Tell your brother” (wouldn’t a father have said Tom or Dick?) “that I’ve given him chances enough and he don’t take ‘em. He don’t feed my horses, and my passengers complain he don’t feed them — though that’s not so serious!” said he to me, with a jovial wink. “But I won’t have my stock starved. You’ll skip the station and go through to Thomas with this pair,” he added to the driver in his voice of lusty command. “You’ll get supper at Thomas. Everything’s moved on there from to-day. That’s the rule now.” Then he returned to black curly, who, like the driver, had remained cowed and respectful throughout the short harangue. “Your brother could have treated me square and made money by that station. Tell him that, and to see me by Thursday. If he’s thinking of peddling vegetables this season I’ll let him sell to Fort Bowie. Safford takes Carlos, and I won’t have two compete in the same market, or we’ll be sinking low as Eastern prices,” said he to me, with another wink. “Drive on now. You’re late.”

He shut the flap, and we were off quickly — too quickly. In the next few moments I could feel that something all wrong went on; there was a jingle and snapping of

harness, and such a voice from the Bishop behind us that I looked out to see him. We had stopped, and he was running after us at a wonderful pace for a man of sixty-four. "If you don't drive any better than that," said the grizzled athlete, arriving cool and competent, "you'll saw wood for another year. Look how you've got your team trembling already."

It was a young pair, and they stood and steamed while the broken gear was mended. I unloaded from the stage and walked aimlessly towards the men. "What did California hold the record in before the Boy Orator broke it?" said I.

The Bishop shot at me the same sinister look I had seen in the Capitol, the look he must always wear, I suppose, when taken aback. Then his strong pleasant laugh broke forth so heartily that it nearly made me like him. "So you're that fellow! Ho, ho! Away down here now. Oh, ho, ho! Just what is your business?"

"You wouldn't believe if I told you," said I, to his sudden sharp question.

"Me? Why, I believe everything I'm told because I know the truth when I hear it spoken by an honest man."

"Will you believe I haven't come to buy anybody's silver mine?"

"Silver? I don't keep it. I unloaded all my shares ten years ago, just a few months before the rabbit died."

"Then you're the first anti-silver man I've met," I observed.

"I'm anti anything that can't be sold, young man. Here's all there is to silver: Once upon a time it was hard to get, and we had to have it. Therefore it sold high. Now it's laying all around us, easy to get -- and nobody wants it.

"When anything gets as common as dirt it'll be as cheap as dirt. The same thing applies to any crop, such as watermelons.

When there's a big crop of anything, the price will fall. D'you follow me? That's the way of silver, and that's the only reason I don't want it. So ,you've come away down here to find out the value of stove lids? Well, what did you say your name was?"

I told him.

"Politician?"

"God forbid!"

"Oh, ho, ho, and you're an honest man, too! Well, yes. I took a look at those buzzards there in Washington. Our Senate and Representatives. They were going at it so loud the reporters woke up. According to them it was all about ratios. You'll be sawing wood yet!" he shouted to the driver, and strode up to help him back a horse. With that work done he turned back to me. "Now ratio is a good word on the tongue of an honest man, and I guess that's why politicians chew on it so much.

They use a better line of language than they apply to at home, just so those reporters will wake up and report it. But, I'll tell you all about Congress. You can divide them birds in two lots. Those who know better and those who don't. D'you follow me?"

"And which kind is the Boy Orator?"

"Limber Jim? Oh, he definitely knows better. I know Jim. You see, we used to have a saying in Salt Lake that California had the smallest stoves and the biggest liars in the world. But you'll see Arizona'll go back on the Democrats. If Congress will put wool on the free list Arizona'll stay Republican, and them sweet-talking fellows won't want her admitted, which suits me first-rate. My people here are better off as they stand."

"What? But your friend Mr. Jenks favors admission!" I exclaimed.

"Luke? He's been talking to you, has he? Well now, Luke. Here's all there is to him: Natural gas. That's why I support him, you see. If Arizona sent a really smart man to Washington he might get us made a State. Ho, ho! But Luke stays here most of the time, and he's no good at negotiating anyway. So you're not going to be buying no mines this season?"

Once more I found myself narrating the insignificance of my visit to Arizona — the Bishop must have been a hard inquisitor

for even the deeply skilful to elude — and for the first time in Arizona my word was believed, immediately and completely. He quickly took my measure in a second, saw that I had nothing to hide, and after telling me I could find good hunting and scenery in the mountains north, paid me no further attention, but masterfully laid some final commands on the intimidated driver. Then I bade good-bye to the Bishop, and watched that old locomotive moving vigorously back along the road to his manifold business.

The driver was ill pleased to go hungry for his supper until Thomas, but he did not dare complain much over the new rule, even to black curly and me. This and one other thing impressed me. Some miles farther on we had passed out of the dust for a while, and rolled up the flaps.

“She’s waiting for you,” said the driver to black curly, and that many-sided youth instantly dived to the bottom of the stage, his boots and pistol among my legs.

“Throw your coat over me,” he urged.

I concealed him with that and a mail-sack, and stretched my head out to see what lioness stood in his path. But it was only a homelike little cabin, and at the door a woman, comely and mature, eying the stage expectantly. Possibly a wife, I thought, or, more likely a mother, and I asked, “Is Mrs. Follet strict?” choosing a name to fit either.

The driver choked and chirruped, but no sound came from under the mail-sack until we had passed the good-day to the momentous female, whose response was harsh with displeasure as she wheeled into her door. A sulky voice then said, "Tell me when she's gone, Bill." But we were a safe two hundred yards on the road before he would lift his head, and his spirits were darkened during the remainder of the journey.

"Come and live East," said I, inviting him to some whiskey at the same time. "Back there they don't begin sitting up for you so early in the evening."

This did not enliven him, although upon our driver it seemed to bring another fit as much beyond the proportion of my joke as his first had been. "She tires a man's spirit," said black curly, and with this rueful utterance he abandoned the subject; so that when we reached Thomas in the dim night my curiosity was strong, and I paid little heed to this new place where I had come or to my supper.

Black curly had taken himself off, and the driver sat at the table with me, still occasionally snickering in his plate. He would explain nothing that I asked him until the gaunt woman who waited on us left us for the kitchen, when he said, with a nervous, hasty relish, "The Widow Sproud is slick," and departed.

Consoled by no better clew than this I went to bed in a down-stairs room, and in my strange rising next day I did not see the driver again. Callings in the air awaked me, and a wandering sound of wheels. The gaunt woman stood with a lamp in my room saying the stage was ready, and disappeared. I sprang up blindly, and again the callings passed in the blackness outside — long cries, inarticulate to me. Wheels heavily rolled to my door, and a whip was struck against it, and there loomed the stage, and I made out the calling.

It was the three drivers, about to separate before the dawn on their three diverging ways, and they were wailing their departure through the town that travelers might hear, in whatever place they lay sleeping. "Boo-wie! All aboa-rd!" came from somewhere, dreary and wavering, met at farther distance by the floating antiphonal, "Aboa-rd, aboa-rd for Grant!" and in the chill black air my driver lifted his portion of the strain, chanting, "Car-los! Car-los!" One last time he circled in the nearer darkness with his stage to let me dress. Mostly unbuttoned, and with not even a half minute to splash cold water in my eyes, I clambered solitary into the vehicle and sat among the leather mail-bags, some boxes, and a sack of grain, having four hours yet till breakfast for my contemplation. I heard the faint reveille at Camp Thomas, but to me it was a call for more bed, and I pushed and pulled the grain-sack until I was able to distribute myself and in a manner doze.



I was shivering in my overcoat. Not the rising of the sun upon this blight of sand, nor the appearance of a cattle herd, and both black curly and yellow out there driving it among its dust clouds, warmed my frozen attention as I lay in a sort of spell. I saw with apathy the mountains, extraordinary in the crystal prism of the air, and soon after the strangest scene I have ever looked on by the light of day. For as we went along the driver would give a cry, and when an answering cry came from the thorn-bush we stopped, and a naked Indian would appear, running, to receive a little parcel of salt or sugar or tobacco he had yesterday given the driver some humble coin to buy for him in Thomas. With changeless pagan eyes staring a moment at me on my sack of grain, and a grunt when his purchase was set in his hands, each black-haired desert figure turned away, the bare feet moving silent, and the copper body, stark naked except the breech-clout, receding to dimness in the thorn-bush. But I lay incurious at this new vision of what our wide continent holds in fee under the single title United States, until breakfast came. This helped me, and I livened somewhat at finding the driver and the breakfast man were both genuine Meakums, as Jenks had told me they would be.



It surprised me to discover now that I was looked for along the Gila, and my name approximately known, and when I asked if my friend Captain Stirling had spoken of my coming, it was evidently not he, but the news was in the air. This was a prominence I had never attained in any previous part of the world, and I said to the driver that I supposed my having no business made me a curiosity. That might have something to do with it, he answered (he seemed to have a literal mind), but some had thought I was the paymaster.

"Folks up here," he explained, "are liable to think they know who's coming."

"If I lived here," said I, "I should be anxious for the paymaster to come early and often."

"Well, it does the country good. The soldiers spend it all right here, and us civilians profit some by it."

Having got him into conversation, I began to introduce the subject of black curly, hoping to lead up to the Widow Sproud; but before I had compassed this we reached San Carlos, where a blow awaited me. Stirling, my host, had been detailed on a scout this morning! I was stranded here, a stranger, where I had come thousands of miles to see an old friend. His regret and messages to make myself at home, and the quartermaster's hearty will to help me to do so could not cure my blankness. He might be absent two weeks or even longer.

I looked round at Carlos and its staring sand. Then I resolved to go at once to my other friends now stationed at Fort Grant. For I had begun to feel myself at an immense distance from any who would care what happened to me for good or ill, and I longed to see some face I had known before. So in gloom I retraced some unattractive steps. This same afternoon I staged back along the sordid, incompetent Gila River, and to kill time pushed my Sproud inquiry, at length with success. To check the inevitably slipshod morals of a frontier commonwealth, Arizona has a statute that in reality only sets in writing a presumption of the common law, the ancient presumption of marriage, which is that when a man and woman go to house-keeping for a certain length of time, they shall be deemed legally married. In Arizona this period is set at twelve months, and ten had run against Mrs. Sproud and young Follet. He was showing signs of leaving her. The driver did not think her much entitled to sympathy, and certainly she showed later that she could devise revenge.

As I thought over these things we came again to the cattle herd, where my reappearance astonished yellow and black curly. Nor did the variance between my movements and my reported plans seem wholly explained to them by Stirling's absence, and at the station where I had breakfasted I saw them question the driver about me.

This interest in my affairs heightened my desire to reach Fort Grant; and when next day I came to it after another waking to the chanted antiphonals and another faint reveille from Camp Thomas in the waning dark, extreme comfort spread through me. I sat in the club with the officers, and they taught me a new game of cards called Solo, and filled my glass. Here were lieutenants, captains, a major, and a colonel, American citizens with a love of their country and a standard of honor; here floated our bright flag serene against the lofty blue, and the mellow horns sounded at guard-mounting, bringing moisture to the eyes. The day was punctuated with the bright trumpet, people went and came in the simple dignity of duty, and once again I talked with good men and women. God bless our soldier people! I have said it often.

They somewhat derided my uneasiness in the Gila Valley, and found my surmisings sensational. Yet still they agreed much ready money was an unwise thing on a stage journey, although their profession (I suppose) led them to take being "held up" less seriously than I with my peaceful traditions of elevators and the down-town lunch. In the wide Sulphur Springs valley where I rode at large, but never so long or so far that Fort Grant lay not in sight across that miracle of air, it displeased me to come one morning upon yellow and black curly jogging along beneath the government telegraph line.

"You cover a wide range," said I.

"Cowboys have to," they answered. "So you've not quit us yet?"

"I'm thinking of taking a hunt and fish camp towards Fort Apache."

"We're your men, then. You'll find us at Thomas any time. We're gathering stock up these draws, but that'll be through this week."

They spurred their horses and vanished among the steep little hills that run up to Mount Graham. But indeed they should be no men of mine! Stirling had written me his scout was ended, and San Carlos worth a longer visit than I had made there, promising me an escort should I desire to camp in the mountains. An escort it should be, and no yellow or black curly, over-curious about my private matters! This fell in excellently with the coming paymaster's movements. Major Pidcock was even now on his way to Fort Grant from Fort Bowie; and when he went to Thomas and Carlos I would go, too, in his ambulance; and I sighed with pleasure at escaping that stage again.

Major Pidcock arrived in a yellow duster, but in other respects differed from the Bishop, though in his body a bulky man. We were introduced to each other at the club. "I am glad, sir, to meet you at last," I said to him. "The whole Gila Valley has been taking me for you."

"Oh — ah!" said Pidcock, vaguely, and pulling at some fat papers in his coat;

"indeed. I understand that is a very ignorant population. Colonel Vincent, a word with you. The Department Commander requests me — " And here he went off into some official talk with the Colonel.

I turned among the other officers, who were standing by an open locker having whiskey, and Major Evlie put his hand on my shoulder. "He doesn't mean anything," he whispered, while the rest looked knowingly at me. Presently the Colonel explained to Pidcock that he would have me to keep him company to Carlos.

"Oh — ah, Colonel. Of course we don't take civilians not employed by the government, as a rule. But exceptions — ah — can be made," he said to me. "I will ask you to be ready immediately after breakfast to-morrow." And with that he bowed to us all and sailed forth across the parade-ground.

The Colonel's face was red, and he swore in his quiet voice; but the lips of the lieutenants by the open locker quivered fitfully in the silence.

"Don't mind Pidcock," Evlie remarked. "He's a paymaster." And at this the line officers became disorderly, and two lieutenants danced together; so that, even without catching Evlie's evidently military joke, I felt pacified.

"And I've got to have him to dinner," sighed the Colonel, and wandered away.

"You'll get on with him, man — you'll get on with him in the ambulance," said my friend Paisley. "Flatter him, man. Just ask him about his great strategic stroke at Cayuse Station that got him his promotion to the pay department."

Well, we made our start after breakfast, Major Pidcock and I, and another passenger too, who sat with the driver — a black cook going to the commanding officer's at Thomas. She was an old plantation mammy, with a kind but bewildered face, and I am sorry that the noise of our driving lost me much of her conversation; for whenever we slowed, and once when I walked up a hill, I found her remarks to be steeped in a form of flighty charm.

"Fo' Lawd's sake!" said she. "W'at's dat?" And when the driver told her that it was a jack-rabbit, "You go 'long!" she cried, outraged. "I'se seed rabbits earlier 'n de mawnin' dan yo'self." She watched the animal with all her might, muttering, "Law, see him squot," and "Hole on, hole on!" and "Yasser, he done gone fo' sho. My grashus, you lemme have a scatter shoot-gun an' a spike-tail smell dog, an' I'll git one of dey narrah-gauge annie-lobes."

"I shall not notice it," said Major Pidcock to me, with dignity. "But they should have sent such a creature by the stage. It's unsuitable, wholly."

"Unquestionably," said I, straining to catch the old lady's song on the box:

“Don’t you fo’git I’s a-comin’ behind you

—

Lam slam de lunch ham.”

“This is insufferable,” said Pidcock. “I shall put her off at Cedar Springs.”

I suppose the drive was long to him, but to me it was not. Noon and Cedar Springs prematurely ended the first half of this day most memorable in the whole medley of my excursion, and we got down to dine. Two travellers bound for Thomas by our same road were just setting out, but they firmly declined to transport our cook, and Pidcock moodily saw them depart in their wagon, leaving him burdened still; for this was the day the stage made its down trip from Thomas. Never before had I seen water in so precious a commodity that it was paid for. When the Major, with windy importance, came to settle his bill, our dozen or fourteen escort horses and mules made an item, the price of watering two head being two bits, quite separate from the feed; and I learned that water was thus precious over most of the Territory.

Our cook remounted the box in high feather, and began at once to comment upon Arizona. “Dere ain’t no winter, nor no spring, nor no rain de hole year roun’. My! what a country fo’ to gib de chick’ns courage! Dey hens must jus’ sit an’ lay an’ lay. But de po’ ducks done have a mean time.

“O — Lawd!

Sinner is in my way, Daniel.”

“I would not permit a cook like that inside my house,” said Major Pidcock.

“She may not be dangerous,” I suggested.

“Land! is dey folks gwineter shoot me?” Naturally I looked, and so did the Major; but it was two of our own mounted escort that she saw out to the right of us among the hills. “Tell dem nigger jockeys I got no money. Why do dey triflin’ chillun ride in de kerridge?” She did not mean ourselves, but the men with their carbines in the escort wagon in front of us. I looked out at them, and their mouths were wide open for joy at her. It was not a stately progress for twenty-eight thousand dollars in gold and a paymaster to be making. Major Pidcock unbuttoned his duster and reclined to sleep, and presently I also felt the after-dinner sloth shutting my eyes pleasantly to this black road.

“Heave it, chillun! can’t you heave?” I heard our cook say, and felt us stop.

“What’s that?” I asked, drowsily.

“Seems to be a rock fallen down,” the Major answered. “Start it, men; roll it!”

I roused myself. We were between rocks and banks on the brow of a hill, down which the narrow road descended with a slight turn. I could see the escort wagon halted ahead of us, and beyond it the men stooping at a large stone, around which

there was no possible room to drive. This stone must have fallen, I reflected, since those travelers for Thomas — There was a shot, and a mule rolled over.

I shall never forget that. It was like the theatre for one paralyzed second! The black soldiers, the mule, the hill, all a clear picture seen through an opera-glass, stock-still, and nothing to do with me — for a congealed second. And, dear me, what a time we had then!

Crackings volleyed around us, puffs of smoke jetted blue from rock ramparts which I had looked at and thought natural — or, rather, not thought of at all — earth and gravel spattered up from the ground, the bawling negress spilled off her box and ran in spirals, screaming, "Oh, bless my soul, bless my soul!" and I saw a yellow duster flap out of the ambulance. "Lawd grashus, he's a-leavin' us!" screeched the cook, and she changed her spirals for a bee-line after him. I should never have run but for this example, for I have not naturally the presence of mind, and in other accidents through which I have passed there has never been promptness about me; the reasoning and all has come when it was over, unless it went on pretty long, when I have been sometimes able to leap to a conclusion. But yes, I ran now, straight under a screen of rocks, over the top of which rose the heads of yellow and black curly. The sight of them sent rushing over me the first agreeable sensation I had felt — shapeless rage — and I found myself

shouting at them, "Scoundrels! scoundrels!" while shooting continued briskly around me. I think my performance would have sincerely entertained them could they have spared the time for it; and as it was, they were regarding me with obvious benevolence, when Mr. Adams looked evilly at me across the stones, and black curly seized the old devil's rifle in time to do me a good turn. Mr. Adams's bullet struck short of me ten feet, throwing the earth in my face. Since then I have felt no sympathy for that tobacco-running pioneer. He listened, coughing, to what black curly said as he pointed to me, and I see now that I have never done a wiser thing than to go unarmed in that country. Curly was telling Mr. Adams that I was harmless. Indeed, that was true! In the bottom of this cup, target for a circled rim of rifles, separated from the widely scattered Major and his men, aware of nothing in particular, and seeing nothing in particular but smoke and rocks and faces peering everywhere, I walked to a stone and sat upon it, hypnotized again into being a mere spectator. From this undisturbed vantage I saw shape itself the theft of the gold — the first theft, that is; for it befell me later to witness a ceremony by which these eagles of Uncle Sam again changed hands in a manner that stealing is as good a name for as any.

They had got two mules killed, so that the stage would not be driving away in a hurry, and I saw that killing men was not a part of their war, unless required as a

means to their end. Major Pidcock had spared them this necessity; I could see him nowhere; and with him to imitate I need not pause to account for the members of our dismounted escort. Two soldiers, indeed, lay on the ground, the sergeant and another, who had evidently fired a few resisting shots; but let me say at once that these poor fellows recovered, and I saw them often again through this adventure that bound us together, else I could not find so much hilarity in my retrospect. Escort wagon and ambulance stood empty and foolish on the road, and there lay the ingenious stone all by itself, and the carbines all by themselves foolish in the wagon, where the innocent soldiers had left them on getting out to move the stone. Smoke loitered thin and blue over this now exceedingly quiet scene, and I smelt it where I sat. How secure the robbers had felt themselves, and how reckless of identification! Mid-day, a public road within hearing of a ranch, an escort of a dozen regulars, no masks, and the stroke perpetrated at the top of a descent, contrary to all laws of road agency.

They swarmed into sight from their ramparts. I cannot tell what number, but several I had never seen before and never saw again; and Mr. Adams and yellow and black curly looked so natural that I wondered if Jenks and the Bishop would come climbing down too. But no more old friends turned up that day. Some went to the ambulance swift and silent, while others most needlessly stood guard.

Nothing was in sight but my seated inoffensive form, and the only sound was, somewhere among the rocks, the voice of the incessant negress speeding through her prayers. I saw them at the ambulance, surrounding, passing, lifting, stepping in and out, ferreting, then moving slowly up with their booty round the hill's brow. Then silence; then hoofs; then silence again, except the outpouring negress, scriptural, melodious, symbolic:

“Oh — Lawd!

Sinner is in my way, Daniel.”

All this while I sat on the stone. “They have done us brown,” I said aloud, and hearing my voice waked me from whatever state I had been in. My senses bounded, and I ran to the hurt soldiers. One was very sick. I should not have known what to do for them, but people began to arrive, brought from several quarters by the fusillade — two in a wagon from Cedar Springs, two or three on horses from the herds they were with in the hills, and a very old man from somewhere, who offered no assistance to any one, but immediately seated himself and began explaining what we all should have done. The negress came out of her rocks, exclamatory with pity over the wounded, and, I am bound to say, of more help to them than any of us, kind and motherly in the midst of her ceaseless discourse. Next arrived Major Pidcock in his duster, and took charge of everything.

"Let yer men quit the'r guns, did ye, general?" piped the very old man. "Escort oughtn't never to quit the'r guns. I seen that at Molino del Rey. And ye should have knowed that there stone didn't crawl out in the road like a tortoise to git the sunshine."

"Where were you?" thundered the Major to the mounted escort, who now appeared, half an hour after the event, from our flanks, which they had been protecting at an immense distance. "Don't you know your duty's to be on hand when you hear firing?"

"Law, honey!" said the cook, with a guffaw, "lemme git my han's over my mouf."

"See them walls they fooled yer with!" continued the old man, pointing with his stick. "I could have told yer them wasn't natural. Them doesn't show like country rock;" by which I found that he meant their faces were new-exposed and not weather-beaten.

"No doubt you could have saved us, my friend," said the Major, puffing blandly.

But one cannot readily impress ninety summers. "Yes, I could have told yer that," assented the sage, with senile complacency. "My wife could have told yer that. Any smart girl could have told yer that."

"I shall send a despatch for reinforcements," announced Pidcock. "Tap the telegraph wire," he ordered.

"I have to repawt to the Major," said a soldier, saluting, "dat de line is cut."

At this I was taken with indecent laughter, and turned away, while ninety summers observed, "Of course them boys would cut the wire if they knew their business."

Swearing capably, the Major now accounted clearly to us for the whole occurrence, striding up and down, while we lifted the hurt men into the ranch wagon, and arranged for their care at Cedar Springs. The escort wagon hurried on to Thomas for a doctor. The ambulance was, of course, crippled of half its team, and the dead mules were cleared from their harness and got to the road-side. Having satisfactorily delivered himself of his explanation, the Major now organized a party for following the trail of the robbers, to learn into what region they had betaken themselves. Incredible as it may seem, after my late unenterprising conduct, I asked one of the riders to lend me his horse, which he did, remarking that he should not need it for an hour, and that he was willing to risk my staying absent longer than that.

So we rode away. The trail was clear, and we had but little trouble to follow it. It took us off to the right through a mounded labyrinth of hillocks, puny and gray like ash-heaps, where we rose and

fell in the trough of the sullen landscape. I told Pidcock of my certainty about three of the robbers, but he seemed to care nothing for this, and was something less than civil at what he called my niggerly suggestions.

“When I have ascertained their route,” he said, “it will be time enough to talk of their identity.”

In this way we went for a mile or so, the trail leading us onward, frank and straight, to the top of a somewhat higher hill, where it suddenly expired off the earth. No breath vanishes cleaner from glass, and it brought us to a dead halt. We retraced the tracks to make sure we had not lost them before, but there was no mistake, and again we halted dead at the vanishing-point. Here were signs that something out of the common had happened. Men’s feet and horseshoe prints, aimless and superimposed, marked a trodden frame of ground, inside which was nothing, and beyond which nothing lay but those faint tracks of wandering cattle and horses that scatter everywhere in this country. Not one defined series, not even a single shod horse, had gone over this hill, and we spent some minutes vainly scouring in circles wider and wider. Often I returned to stare at the trodden, imperturbable frame of ground, and caught myself inspecting, first the upper air, and next the earth, and speculating if the hill were hollow; and mystery began to film over the hitherto sharp figures of black curly and yellow, while the lonely

country around grew so unpleasant to my nerves that I was glad when Pidcock decided that he must give up for to-day. We found the little group of people beginning to disperse at the ambulance.

"Fooled yer ag'in, did they?" said the old man. "Played the old blanket trick on yer, I expect. Guess yer gold's got pretty far by now." With this parting, and propped upon his stick, he went as he had come. Not even at any time of his youth, I think, could he have been companionable, and old age had certainly filled him with the impartial malevolence of the devil. I rejoice to say that he presided at none of our further misadventures.

Short twenty-eight thousand dollars and two mules, we set out anew, the Major, the cook, and I, along the Thomas road, with the sun drawing closer down upon the long steel saw that the peaks to our westward made. The site of my shock lay behind me — I knew now well enough that it had been a shock, and that for a long while to come I should be able to feel the earth spatter from Mr. Adams's bullet against my ear and sleeve whenever I might choose to conjure that moment up again — and the present comfort in feeling my distance from that stone in the road increase continually put me in more cheerful spirits. With the quick rolling of the wheels many subjects for talk came into my mind, and had I been seated on the box beside the cook we should have found much in common.

Ever since her real tenderness to those wounded men I had wished to ask the poor old creature how she came in this weary country, so far from the pleasant fields of cotton and home. Her hair was gray, and she had seen much, else she had never been so kind and skilful at bandaging. And I am quite sure that somewhere in the chambers of her incoherent mind and simple heart abided the sweet ancient fear of God and love of her fellow-men — virtues I had met but little in Arizona.



"De hole family, scusin' two," she was saying, "dey bust loose and tuck to de woods." And then she moralized upon the two who stayed behind and were shot. "But de Gennul he 'low dat wuz mighty pore reasonin'."

I should have been glad to exchange views with her, for Major Pidcock was dull company. This prudent officer was not growing distant from his disaster, and as night began to come, and we neared Thomas, I suppose the thought that our ambulance was driving him perhaps to a court-martial was enough to submerge the man in gloom. To me and my news about the robbers he was now a little more considerate, although he still made nothing of the fact that some of them lived in the Gila Valley, and were of the patriarchal tribe of Meakum.

"Scoundrels like that," he muttered, lugubriously, "know every trail in the country, and belong nowhere. Mexico is not a long ride from here. They can get a steamer at Guaymas and take their choice of ports down to Valparaiso. Yes, they'll probably spend that money in South America. Oh, confound that woman!"

For the now entirely cheerful negress was singing:

"Dar's de gal, dar's my Susanna.

How by gum you know?

Know her by de red bandanna,

An' de shoestring hangin' on de flo' —

Dad blam her! —

An' de shoestring hangin' — '

"Goodness grashus! what you gwineter do?"

At this sudden cry and the stopping of the ambulance I thought more people were come for our gold, and my spirit resigned itself. Sit still was all I should do now, and look for the bright day when I should leave Arizona forever. But it was only Mrs. Sproud. I had clean forgotten her, and did not at once take in to what an important turn the affairs of some of us had come. She stepped out of the darkness, and put her hand on the door of the ambulance.

"I suppose you're the Paymaster?" Her voice was soft and easy, but had an ample volume. As Pidcock was replying with some dignity that she was correct, she caught sight of me. "Who is this man?" she interrupted him.

"My clerk," said Pidcock; and this is the promptest thing I can remember of the Major, always excepting his conduct when the firing began on the hill. "You're asking a good many questions, madam," he added.

"I want to know who I'm talking to," said she, quietly. "I think I've seen property of yours this evening."

"You had better get in, madam; better get in."

"This is the Paymaster's team from Fort Grant?" said Mrs. Sproud to the driver.

"Yes, yes, madam. Major Pidcock — I am Major Pidcock, Paymaster to the United States army in the Department of Colorado. I suppose I understand you."

"Seven canvas sacks," said Mrs. Sproud, standing in the road.

"Get in, madam. You can't tell who may be within hearing. You will find it to your advantage to keep nothing — "

Mrs. Sproud laughed luxuriously, and I began to discern why black curly might at times have been loath to face her.

"I merely meant, madam — I desired to make it clear that — a — "

"I think I know what you meant. But I have no call to fear the law. It will save you trouble to believe that before we go any further."

"Certainly, madam. Quite right." The man was sweating. What with court-martial and Mrs. Sproud, his withers were wrung. "You are entirely sure, madam — "

"I am entirely sure I know what I am about. That seems to be more than some do that are interested in this gold — the folks, for instance, that have hid it in my hay-stack."

"Hay-stack! Then they're not gone to Mexico!"

"Mexico, sir? They live right here in this valley. Now I'll get in, and when I ask you, you will please to set me down." She seated herself opposite us and struck a match. "Now we know what we all look like," said she, holding the light up, massive and handsome. "This young man is the clerk, and we needn't mind him. I have done nothing to fear the law, but what I am doing now will make me a traveler again. I have no friends here. I was acquainted with a young man." She spoke in the serenest tone, but let fall the match more quickly than its burning made eloquently needful."

"He was welcome in my home. He let them cook this up in my house and never told me. I live a good ways out on the road, and it was a safe place, but I didn't think why so many met him, and why they sat around my stable. Once in a while this week they've been joking about winning the soldiers' pay — they often win that — but I thought it was just cowboy games, till I heard horses coming quick at sundown this afternoon, and I hid. Will hunted around and said — and said I was on the stage coming from Solomonsville, and so they had half an hour yet. He thought so. And, you see, nobody lives in the cabin but — but me." Mrs. Sproud paused a moment here, and I noticed her breathing hard, almost a gasp.

Then she resumed: "So I heard them talk some; and when they all left, pretty soon, I went to the hay-stack, and it was so. Then the stage came along and I rode to Thomas."

"You left the gold there!" groaned the wretched Major, and leaned out of the ambulance.

"I'm not caring to touch what's none of mine. Wait, sir, please; I get out here. Here are the names I'm sure of. Stop the driver, or I'll jump." She put a paper in the Major's hand. "It is Mrs. Sproud's hay-stack," she added.

"Will you — this will never — can I find you to-morrow?" he said, helplessly, holding the paper out at her.

"I have told you all I know," said Mrs. Sproud, and was gone at once.

Major Pidcock leaned back for some moments as we drove. Then he began folding his paper with care. "I have not done with that person," said he, attempting to restore his crippled importance. "She will find that she must explain herself."

Our wheels whirled in the sand and we came quickly to Thomas, to a crowd of waiting officers and ladies; and each of us had an audience that night — the cook, I feel sure, while I myself was of an importance second only to the Major's. But he was at once closeted with the commanding officer, and I did not learn their counsels, hearing only at breakfast that the first step was taken. The detail sent out had returned from the hay-stack, bringing gold indeed — one-half sackful. The other six were gone, and so was Mrs. Sproud. It was useless to surmise, as we, however, did that whole forenoon, what any of this might mean; but in the afternoon came a sign. A citizen of the Gila Valley had been paying his many debts at the saloon and through the neighborhood in gold.

In one well known for the past two years to be without a penny it was the wrong moment to choose for honest affluence, and this citizen was the first arrest. This further instance of how secure the robbers felt themselves to be outdid anything that had happened yet, and I marvelled until

following events took from me the power of astonishment. The men named on Mrs. Sproud's paper were fewer than I think fired upon us in the attack, but every one of them was here in the valley, going about his business. Most were with the same herd of cattle that I had seen driven by yellow and black curly near the sub-agency, and they two were there. The solvent debtor, I should say, was not arrested this morning. Plans that I, of course, had no part in delayed matters, I suppose for the sake of certainty. Black curly and his friends were watched, and found to be spending no gold yet; and since they did not show sign of leaving the region, but continued with their cattle, I imagine every effort was being made to light upon their hidden treasure. But their time came, and soon after it mine. Stirling, my friend, to whom I had finally gone at Carlos, opened the wire door of his quarters where I sat one morning, and with a heartless smile introduced me to a gentleman from Tucson.

"You'll now have a chance to serve your country," said Stirling.

It was a true fact; I was subpoenaed!

"Certainly not!" I said, with indignation. "I'm going East. I don't live here. You have witnesses enough without me. We all saw the same thing."

"Witnesses never see the same thing," observed the man from Tucson. "It's the government that's after you. But you'll not

have to wait. Our case is first on the list."

"You can take my deposition," I began; but what need to dwell upon this interview? "When I come to visit you again," I said to Stirling, "let me know." And that pink-faced, gray-haired captain still shouted heartlessly.

"You're an egotist," said he. "Think of the scrape poor old Pidcock has got himself into."

"The government needs all the witnesses it can get," said the man from Tucson. "Luke Jenks is smart in some ways."

"Luke Jenks?" I sat up in my canvas extension-chair.

"Territorial Delegate; firm of Parley and Jenks, Tucson. He's in it."

"By heavens!" I cried, in unmixed delight. "But I didn't see him when they were shooting at us."

The man from Tucson stared at me curiously. "He is counsel for the prisoners," he explained.

"The Delegate to Washington defends these thieves who robbed the United States?" I repeated.

"Says he'll get them off. He's going to stay home from Washington and put it through in fine shape."

It was here that my powers of astonishment went into their last decline, and I withheld my opinion upon the character of Mr. Jenks as a public man. I settled comfortably in my canvas chair.

"The prisoners are citizens of small means, I judge," said I. "What fee can they pay for such a service?"

"Ah!" said Stirling,

"That's about it, I guess," said the man from Tucson. "Luke is mighty smart in his law business. Well, gents, good-day to you. I must be getting after the rest of my witnesses."

"Have you seen Mrs. Sproud?" I asked him.

"She's quit the country. We can't trace her. Guess she was scared."

"But that gold!" I exclaimed, when Sterling and I were alone. "What in the world have they done with those six other bags?"

"Ah!" said he, as before. "Do you want to bet on that point? Dollars to doughnuts Uncle Sam never sees a cent of that money again. I'll stake my next quarter's pay — "

"Pooh!" said I. "That's poor odds against doughnuts if Pidcock has the paying of it." And I took my turn at laughing at the humorous Stirling.

"That Mrs. Sproud is a sensible woman to have gone," said he, reflectively. "They would know she had betrayed them, and she wouldn't be safe in the valley. Witnesses who know too much sometimes are found dead in this country — but you'll have government protection."

"Thank you kindly," said I. "That's exactly what I had out there on the hill."

But Stirling took his turn at me again with freshened mirth. Well, I think that we witnesses were worth government protection. At seasons of especial brightness and holiday, such as Christmas and Easter, the theatres of the variety order have a phrase which they sometimes print in capitals upon their bills — Combination Extraordinary; and when you consider Major Pidcock and his pride, and the old plantation cook, and my reserved Eastern self, and our coal-black escort of the hill, more than a dozen, including Sergeant Brown and the private, both now happily recovered of their wounds, you can see what appearance we made descending together from the mean Southern Pacific train at Tucson, under the gaze of what I take to have been the town's whole population, numbering five thousand.

Stirling, who had come to see us through, began at his persiflage immediately, and congratulated me upon the house I should play to, speaking of box-office receipts and a benefit night.

Tucson is more than half a Mexican town, and in its crowd upon the platform I saw the gaudy shawls, the ear-rings, the steeple straw hats, the old shrivelled cigarette-rolling apes, and the dark-eyed girls, and sifted with these the loungers of our own race, boots, overalls, pistols, hotel clerks, express agents, freight hands, waitresses, red-shirts, soldiers from Lowell Barracks, and officers, and in this mass and mess of color and dust and staring, Bishop Meakum, in his yellow duster, by the door of the Hotel San Xavier. But his stare was not, I think now, quite of the same idleness with the rest. He gave me a short nod, yet he was not unfriendly, as I passed by him to register my name. By the counter I found the wet-eyed Mowry standing.

"How's business on the other side of the track?" I said to him.

"Fair to middlin'. Get them mines ye was after at Globe?"

"You've forgotten I told you they're a property I don't care for, Mr. Mowry. I suppose it's interest in this recent gold discovery that brings you to Tucson."

He had no answer for me but a shrewd shirking glance that flattered my sense of acumen, and adding, pleasantly, "So many of your Arizona citizens have forsaken silver for gold just now," I wrote my name in the hotel book, while he looked to remind himself what it was.

"Why, you're not to stay here," said Stirling, coming up. "You're expected at the Barracks."

He presented me at once to a knot of officers, each of whom in turn made me known to some additional by-stander, until it seemed to me that I shook a new hand sixty times in this disordered minute by the hotel book, and out of the sixty caught only one name, which was my own.

These many meetings could not be made perfect without help from the saloon-keeper, who ran his thriving trade conveniently at hand in the office of the San Xavier.



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Our group remained near him, and I silently resolved to sleep here at the hotel, away from the tempting confusion of army hospitality upon this eve of our trial. We were expected, however, to dine at the post, and that I was ready to do. Indeed, I could scarcely have got myself out of it without rudeness, for the ambulance was awaiting us guests at the gate. We went to it along a latticed passage at the edge of a tropical garden, only a few square yards in all, but how pretty! and what an oasis of calm in the midst of this teeming desolation of unrest! It had upon one side the railway station, wooden, sordid, congesting with malodorous packed humanity; on the next the rails themselves and the platform, with steam

and bells and baggage trucks rolling and bumping; the hotel stood on the third, a confusion of tongues and trampings; while a wide space of dust, knee-deep, and littered with manœuvring vehicles, hemmed in this silent garden on the fourth side. A slender slow little fountain dropped inaudibly among some palms, a giant cactus, and the broad-spread shade of trees I did not know. This was the whole garden, and a tame young antelope was its inhabitant. He lay in the unchanging shade, his large eyes fixed remotely upon the turmoil of this world, and a sleepy charm touched my senses as I looked at his domain. Instead of going to dinner, or going anywhere, I should have liked to recline indefinitely beneath those palms and trail my fingers in the cool fountain. Such enlightened languor, however, could by no happy chance be the lot of an important witness in a Western robbery trial, and I was dined and wined with the jovial officers.

With business I was sated. Pidcock and the attorney for the United States — I can remember neither his name nor the proper title of his office, for he was a nobody, and I had forgotten his features each new time that we met — had mapped out the trial to me, preparing and rehearsing me in my testimony until they had pestered me into a hatred of them both. And when word was brought me here, dining at Lowell Barracks, where I had imagined myself safe from justice, that this same attorney was waiting to see me, I rose and I played him a trick.

Possibly I should not have done it but for the saloon-keeper in the afternoon and this sustained dining now; but I sent him word I should be with him directly — and I wandered into Tucson by myself!

Faithful to my last strong impression there, I went straight to the tiny hotel garden, and in that darkness lay down in a delicious and torpid triumph. The attorney was most likely waiting still. No one on earth knew where I was. Pidcock could not trace me now. I could see the stars through the palms and the strange trees, the fountain made a little sound, somewhere now and then I could hear the antelope, and, cloaked in this black serenity, I lay smiling. Once an engine passed heavily, leaving the station utterly quiet again, and the next I knew it was the antelope's rough tongue that waked me, and I found him nibbling and licking my hand. People were sitting in the latticed passage, and from the light in the office came Mr. Mowry, untying a canvas sack that he held. At this sight my truancy to discretion was over, and no head could be more wakeful or clear than mine instantly became.

"How much d'yer want this time, Mr. Jenks?" inquired Mowry.

I could not hear the statesman's reply, but thought, while the sound of clinking came to me, how a common cause will often serve to reconcile the most bitter opponents. I did not dare go nearer to catch all their talk, and I debated a little

upon my security even as it was, until my own name suddenly reached me.

"Him?" said Mowry; "that there tailor-made boy? They've got him sleepin' at the Barracks."

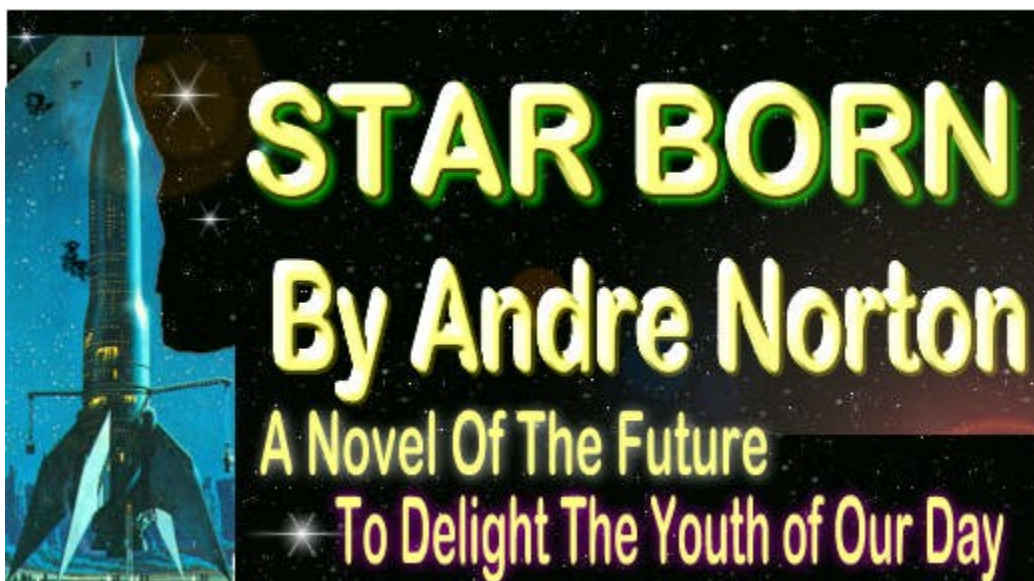
"Nobody but our crowd's boarding here," said some one.

"They think we're laying for their witnesses," said the voice of Jenks. And among the various mingled laughs rose distinct a big one that I knew.

"Oh, ho, ho! Well, yes. Tell you about witnesses. Here's all there is to them: spot cash to their figure, and kissing the Book. You've done no work but what I told you?" he added, sharply.

"We haven't needed to worry about witnesses in any shape, Bishop."

"That's good. That's economy. That little Eastern tourist is harmless."



"Leave him talk, Bishop. Leave 'em all tell their story."

"It's going to cost the whole stake, though," said Jenks.

"That's the price of a deserted Jericho!" remarked old Bishop Meakum.

"I don't try cases for nothing, Bishop. The deal's covered. My clients have publicly made over to me their horses and saddles."

"Oh, ho, ho!" went the Bishop. But this last word about the horses was the only part of the talk I could not put a plain meaning upon.

Mr. Mowry I now saw re-enter the lighted door of the office, with his canvas sack in his hand. "This'll be right here in the safe," said he.

"All right," answered Jenks. "I'll not be likely to call on you any more for a day or so."

"Hello!" said the office clerk, appearing in his shirt-sleeves. "You fellows have made me forget the antelope." He took down a lantern, and I rose to my feet.

"Give us a drink before you feed him," said Jenks. Then I saw the whole of them crowd into the door for their nightcap, and that was all I waited for.

I climbed the garden fence. My thoughts led me at random through quantities of soft dust, and over the rails, I think, several times, until I stood between empty and silent freight trains, and there sat down. Harmless! It seemed to me they would rate me differently in the morning. So for a while my mind was adrift in the turbulent cross-currents of my discovery; but it was with a smooth, innocent surface that I entered the hotel office and enjoyed the look of the clerk when he roused and heard me, who, according to their calculations, should have been in slumber at the Barracks, asking to be shown my room here. I was tempted to inquire if he had fed the antelope — such was the pride of my elation — and I think he must have been running over questions to put me; but the two of us marched up the stairs with a lamp and a key, speaking amiably of the weather for this time of year, and he unlocked my door with a politeness and hoped I would sleep well with a consideration that I have rarely met in the hotel clerk. I did not sleep well. Yet it seemed not to matter. By eight I had breakfast, and found the attorney — Rocklin I shall name him, and that will have to answer — and told him how we had become masters of the situation.

He made me repeat it all over, jotting memoranda this second time; and when my story was done, he sat frowning at his notes, with a cigar between his teeth.

“This ain’t much,” he said. “Luckily I don’t need anything more. I’ve got a dead

open-and-shut case without it.”

“Why don’t you make it deader, then?”
said I. “Don’t you see what it all means?”

“Well, what does it all mean?”

Either the man was still nettled at my treatment of him last evening, or had no liking for amateur opinions and help; otherwise I see no reason for the disparagement with which he regarded me while I interpreted what I had overheard, piece by piece, except the horse and saddle remark.

“Since that don’t seem clear, I’ll explain it to you,” he said, “and then you’ll know it all. Except their horses and saddles, the accused haven’t a red cent to their names — not an honest one, that is. So it looks well for them to be spending all they’ve apparently got in the world to pay counsel fees. Now I have this case worked up,” he pursued, complacently, “so that any such ambiguous stuff as yours is no good to me at all — would be harmful, in fact. It’s not good policy, my friend, to assail the character of opposing counsel. And Bishop Meakum! Are you aware of his power and standing in this section? Do you think you’re going to ring him in?”

“Great goodness!” I cried. “Let me testify, and then let the safe be opened.”

Rocklin looked at me a moment, the cigar wagging between his teeth, and then he lightly tossed his notes in the waste-paper basket.

"Open your safe," said he, "and what then? Up steps old Mowry and says, 'I'll thank you to let my property alone.' Where's your proof that it isn't his property? What word did any of them drop that won't bear other constructions? Mowry's well known to have money, and he has a right to give it to Jenks."

"If the gold could be identified?" I suggested.

"That's been all attended to," he answered, with increasing complacency. "I'm obliged to you for your information, and in a less sure case I might risk using it, but — why, see here; we've got 'em hands down!" And he clapped me on the knee. "If I had met you last evening I was going to tell you our campaign. Pidcock'll come first, of course, and his testimony'll cover pretty much the whole ground. Then, you see, the rest of you I'll use mainly in support. Sergeant Brown — he's very strong, and the black woman, and you — I'll probably call you third or fourth. So you'll be on hand sure now?"

Certainly I had no thought of being anywhere else. The imminence of our trial was now heralded by the cook's coming to Rocklin's office punctual to his direction, and after her Pidcock almost immediately. It was not many minutes before the more

important ones of us had gathered, and we proceeded to court, once again a Combination Extraordinary — a spectacle for Tucson. So much stir and prosperity had not blossomed in the town for many years, its chief source of life being the money that Lowell Barracks brought to it. But now its lodgings were crowded and its saloons and Mexican entertainment waked to activity. From a dozing sunburnt village of adobe walls and almond-trees it was become something like those places built in a single Western day of riot extravagance, where corner lots are clamored for and men pay a whole dollar just to be shaved.

Jenks was before us in the room with his clients. He was practising what I always think of as his celluloid smile, whispering, and all-hail with everybody. One of the prisoners had just such another mustache as his own, too large for his face; and this had led me since to notice a type of too large mustaches through our country in all ranks, but of similar men, who generally have either stolen something or only lacked the opportunity.

Catching sight of me, Jenks came at once, friendly as you please, shaking my passive hand, and laughing that we should meet again under such circumstances.

“When we’re through this nuisance,” said he, “you must take dinner with me. Just now, you understand, it wouldn’t look well to see me hobnobbing with a government witness. But, I’ll ee you again!”

I am confident this man could not see himself as others — some others, at least — saw him. To him his whole performance was natural and professional, and my view that he was more infamous by far than the thieves would have sincerely amazed him. Indeed, for one prisoner I felt very sorry. Young black curly was sitting there, and, in contrast to Mr. Adams, down whose beard the tobacco forever ran, he seemed downcast and unhardened, I thought. He was getting his deserts through base means. It was not for the sake of justice but from private revenge that Mrs. Sproud had moved; and, after all, had the boy injured her so much as this? Yet how could I help him? They were his deserts. My mood was abruptly changed to diversion when I saw among our jury specimens of both types of Meakum, and prominent among the spectator throng their sire, that canny polygamist, surveying the case with the same forceful attention I had noticed first in the House of Representatives, and ever since that day.

But I had a true shock of surprise now. Mrs. Sproud was in court. There could be no mistake. No one seemed to notice her, and I wondered if many in the town knew her face, and with what intent she had returned to this dangerous neighborhood. I was so taken up with watching her and her furtive appearance in the almost concealed position she had chosen that I paid little heed to the government's opening of its case.

She had her eyes upon black curly, but he could not see her. Pidcock was in the midst of his pompous recital when the court took its noon intermission. Then I was drawn to seek out black curly as he was conducted to his dinner.

"Good-day," said he, as I came up beside him.

"I wish I didn't have to go on oath about this," I said.

"Oath away," he answered, doggedly.
"What's that got to do with me?"

"Oh, come!" I exclaimed.

"Come where?" He looked at me defiantly.

"When people don't wish to be trailed," I went on, "do I understand they sometimes spread a blanket and lead their horses on it and take off their shoes? I'm merely asking out of a traveler's curiosity."

"I guess you'll have to ask them that's up on such tricks," he answered, grinning.

I met him in the eyes, and a strong liking for him came over me. "I probably owe you my life," I said, huskily. "I know I do. And I hate — you must consider me a poor sort of bird."

"Blamed if I know what you're drivin' at," said black curly. But he wrinkled his forehead in the pleasant way I remembered. "Yer whiskey was good all

right," he added, and gave me his hand.

"Look here," said I. "She's come back."

This took the boy unguarded, and he swore with surprise. Then his face grew sombre. "Let her," he remarked; and that was all we said.

At the afternoon sitting I began to notice how it was that popular sympathy was not only quite against the United States, but a sentiment amounting to hatred was shown against all soldiers. The voice of respectability seemed entirely silent; a few decent citizens were there, but not enough of them. The mildest opinion was that Uncle Sam could afford to lose money better than poor people, and the strongest was that it was a pity the soldiers had not been killed. This seemed inappropriate in a Territory desiring admission to our Union. I supposed it something local then, but have since observed it to be a prevailing Western antipathy. The unthinking sons of the sage-brush ill tolerate a thing which stands for discipline, good order, and obedience, and the man who lets another command him they despise. I can think of no threat more evil for our democracy, for it is a fine thing diseased and perverted — namely, independence gone drunk.

Pidcock's examination went forward, and the half-sack of gold from the hay-stack brought a great silence in court. The Major's identification of the gold was conducted by Rocklin with stage effect, for

it was an undoubted climax; but I caught a most singular smile on the face of Bishop Meakum, and there sat Mrs. Sproud, still solitary and engulfed in the throng, her face flushed and her eyes blazing. And here ended the first day.

In the morning came the Major's cross-examination, with the room more crowded than before, but I could not find Mrs. Sproud. Rocklin did not believe I had seen her, and I feared something had happened to her. The Bishop had walked to the court with Jenks, talking and laughing upon general subjects, so far as I could hear. The counsel for the prisoners passed lightly over the first part of the evidence, only causing an occasional laugh on the score of the Major's military prowess, until he came to the gold.

"You said this sack was one of yours, Major?" he now inquired.

"It is mine, sir."

A large bundle of sacks was brought. "And how about these? Here are ten, fifteen — about forty. I'll get some more if you say so. Are they all yours?"

"Your question strikes me as idle, sir." The court rapped, and Jenks smiled. "They resemble mine," said Pidcock. "But they are not used."

"No; not used." Jenks held up the original, shaking the gold. "Now I'm going to empty your sack for a moment."

"I object," said Rocklin, springing up.

"Oh, it's all counted," laughed Jenks; and the objection was not sustained. Then Jenks poured the gold into a new sack and shook that aloft. "It makes them look confusingly similar, Major. I'll just put my card in your sack so we can remember which one it is."

"I object," said Rocklin, with anger, but with futility. Jenks now poured the gold back into the first, then into a third, and thus into several, tossing them each time on the table, and the clinking pieces sounded clear in the room. Bishop Meakum was watching the operation like a wolf as if to make sure no gold leaked out. "Now, Major," said Jenks, "is your gold in the original sack, or can you even tell which sack my card is in?"

This was the first time that the room broke out loudly; and Pidcock, when the people were rapped to order, said, "The sack's not the thing."

"Of course not. The gold is our point. And of course you had a private mark on it. Tell the jury, please, what the private mark was."

He had none, of course. He spoke about dates, and new coins, he backed and filled, swelled importantly, and ended like a pricked bladder by recanting his entire identification.

"That is all I have to say for the present," said Jenks.

"Don't complicate the issue by attempting to prove too much, Mr. Rocklin," the judge warned.

Rocklin flushed, and called the next witness, whispering sulkily to me, "What can you expect if the court starts out against you?"

But the court was by no means against him. The judge was merely disgusted over Rocklin's cardinal folly of identifying coin under such loose conditions.

And now came the testimony of Sergeant Brown. He told so clear a story as to chill the enthusiasm of the room. He pointed to the man with the mustache, black curly, and yellow. "I saw them shooting from the right of the road," he said. Jenks tried but little to shake him, and left him unshaken. He was followed by the other wounded soldier, whose story was nearly the same, except that he identified different prisoners.

"Who did you say shot you?" inquired Jenks. "Which of these two?"

"I didn't say because I don't know."

"Don't know a man when he shoots you in broad daylight?"

"Plenty of them was shooting at me," said the soldier in a loud, defiant voice.

Then came my own examination, and Jenks did not trouble me at all, but, when I had likewise identified the men I knew, simply bowed smilingly, and had no questions to ask his friend from the East.

Our third morning began with the negress, who said she was married, told a scattered tale, and soon stated that she was single, explaining later that she had two husbands, and one was dead, while the other had disappeared from her ten years ago. Gradually her alarm subsided and she achieved coherence.

"What did this gentleman do at the occurrence?" inquired Jenks, indicating me.

"Dat gemman? He jes flew, sir, an' I don' blame him fo' bein' no wusser skeer'd dan de hole party. Yesser, we all flew scusin' dey two pore chillun; an' we stayed till de 'currence was ceased."

"But the gentleman says he sat on a stone, and saw those men firing."

"Land! I seed him goin' like he was gwineter Fo't Grant. He run up de hill, an' de Gennul he run down like de day of judgment."

"The General ran?"

"Lawd grashus, honey, yo' could have played checkers on dey coat tails of his."

The court rapped gently.

"But the gold must have been heavy to carry away to the horses. Did not the General exert his influence to rally his men?"

"No, sah. De Gennul went down de hill, an' he took his infloence with him."

"I have no further questions," said Jenks. "When we come to our alibis, gentlemen, I expect to satisfy you that this lady saw more correctly, and when she is unable to recognize my clients it is for a good reason."

"We've not got quite so far yet," Rocklin observed. "We've reached the hay-stack at present."

"Aren't you going to make her describe her own confusion more?" I began, but stopped, for I saw that the next witness was at hand, and that it was Mrs. Sproud.

"How's this?" I whispered to Rocklin. "How did you get her?"

"She volunteered this morning, just before trial. We're in big luck."

The woman was simply dressed in something dark. Her handsome face was pale, but she held a steady eye upon the jury, speaking clearly and with deliberation. Old Meakum, always in court and watchful, was plainly unprepared for this, and among the prisoners, too, I could discern uneasiness.

Whether or no any threat or constraint had kept her invisible during these days, her coming now was a thing for which none of us were ready.

"What do I know?" she repeated after the counsel. "I suppose you have been told what I said I knew."

"We'd like to hear it directly from you, Mrs. Sproud," Rocklin explained.

"Where shall I start?"

"Well, there was a young man who boarded with you, was there not?"

"I object to the witness being led," said Jenks. And Bishop Meakum moved up beside the prisoners' counsel and began talking with him earnestly.

"Nobody is leading me," said Mrs. Sproud, imperiously, and raising her voice a little. She looked about her. "There was a young man who boarded with me. Of course that is so."

Meakum broke off in his confidences with Jenks, and looked sharply at her.

"Do you see your boarder anywhere here?" inquired Rocklin; and from his tone I perceived that he was puzzled by the manner of his witness.

She turned slowly, and slowly scrutinized the prisoners one by one. The head of black curly was bent down, and I saw her

eyes rest upon it while she stood in silence. It was as if he felt the summons of her glance, for he raised his head. His face was scarlet, but her paleness did not change. "He is the one sitting at the end," she said, looking back at the jury. She then told some useless particulars, and brought her narrative to the afternoon when she had heard the galloping. "Then I hid. I hid because this is a rough country."

"When did you recognize that young man's voice?"

"I did not recognize it."

Black curly's feet scraped as he shifted his position.

"Collect yourself, Mrs. Sproud. We'll give you all the time you want. We know ladies are not used to talking in court. Did you not hear this young man talking to his friends?"

"I heard talking," replied the witness, quite collected. "But I could not make out who they were. If I could have been sure it was him and friends, I wouldn't have stayed hid. I'd have had no call to be scared."

Rocklin was dazed, and his next question came in a voice still more changed and irritable.

"Did you see any one that you knew?"

"I saw no one that I knew."

"What did you hear them say?"

"They were all talking at once. I couldn't be sure what they did say."

"Why did you go to the hay-stack?"

"Because they said something about my hay-stack, and I wanted to find out, if I could."

"Did you not write their names on a paper and give it to this gentleman? Remember you are on oath, Mrs. Sproud."

By this time a smile was playing on the features of Jenks, and he and Bishop Meakum talked no longer together, but sat back to watch the woman's extraordinary attempt to undo her work. It was shrewd, very shrewd, in her to volunteer as our witness instead of as theirs. She was ready for the paper question, evidently.

"I wrote — " she began, but Rocklin interrupted.

"On oath, remember!" he repeated, finding himself cross-examining his own witness. "The names you wrote are the names of these prisoners here before the court. They were traced as the direct result of your information. They have been identified by three or four persons. Do you mean to say you did not know who they were?"

"I did not know," said Mrs. Sproud, firmly.

"As for the paper, I acted hasty. I was a woman, alone, and none to consult or advise me. I thought I would get in trouble if I did not tell about such goings on, and I just wrote the names of Will — of the boys that came round there all the time, thinking it was most likely them. I didn't see him, and I didn't make out surely it was his voice. I wasn't sure enough to come out and ask what they were up to. I didn't stop to think of the harm I was doing on guess-work."

For the first time the note of remorse conquered in her voice. I saw how desperation at what she had done when she thought her love was cured was now bracing the woman to this audacity.

"Remember," said Rocklin, "the gold was also found as the direct result of your information. It was you who told Major Pidcock in the ambulance about the seven sacks."

"Wait a minute," she said. "I never said anything about any seven sacks."

This falsehood was a master-stroke, for only half a sack had been found. She had not written this down. There was only the word of Pidcock and me to vouch for it, while against us stood her denial, and the actual quantity of gold.

"I have no further questions," said Rocklin.

"But I have," said Jenks. And then he made the most of Mrs. Sproud, although

many in the room were laughing, and she herself, I think, felt she had done little but sacrifice her own character without repairing the injury she had done black curly. Jenks made her repeat that she was frightened; not calm enough to be sure of voices, especially many speaking together; that she had seen no one throughout. He even attempted to show that the talk about the hay-stack might have been purely about hay, and that the half-sack of gold might have been put there at another time — might belong to some honest man this very moment.

“Did you ever know the young man who boarded with you to do a dishonorable thing?” inquired Jenks. “Did you not have the highest opinion of him?”

She had not expected a question like this. It nearly broke the woman down. She put her hand to her breast, and seemed afraid to trust her voice. “I have the highest opinion of him,” she said, word painfully following word. “He — he used to know that of me.”

“I have finished,” said Jenks.

“Can I go?” asked the witness, and both of the attorneys bowed. She stood one hesitating moment in the witness-stand, and she looked at the jury and the court; then, as if almost in dread, she let her eyes travel to black curly. But his eyes were sullenly averted. Then Mrs. Sproud slowly made her way through the room, with one of the saddest faces I have ever

seen. Then the door closed behind her.

We finished our case with all the prisoners identified, and some of them doubly. The defence was scarcely more than a sham. The flimsy alibis were destroyed even by the incompetent, unready Rocklin, and when the charge came blackness fell upon the citizens of Tucson. The judge's cold statements struck them as partisan, and they murmured and looked darkly at him. But the jury, with its Meakums, wore no expression at all during any of his remarks. Their eyes were upon him, but entirely fishlike. He dismissed the cumbersome futilities one by one. "Now three witnesses have between them recognized all the prisoners but one," he continued. "That one, a reputed pauper, paid several hundred dollars of debts in gold the morning after the robbery. The money is said to be the proceeds of a cattle sale. No cattle have ever been known to belong to this man, and the purchaser had never been known to have any income until this trial began. The prisoner's name was on Mrs. Sproud's paper. The statement of one witness that he sat on a stone and saw three other of the prisoners firing has been contradicted by a woman who described herself as having run away at once; it is supported by two men who are admitted by all to have remained, and in consequence been shot. Their statements have been assailed by no one. Their testimony stands on the record unimpeached. They have identified five prisoners. If you believe them — and remember that not a word they said has

been questioned — " here the judge emphasized more and more clearly. He concluded with the various alternatives of fact according to which the jury must find its several possible verdicts. When he had finished, the room sat sullen and still, and the twelve went out. I am told that they remained ten minutes away. It seemed only one minute to me.

When they had resumed their seats I noticed the same fishlike oracular eye in most of them unchanged. "Not guilty," said the foreman.

"What!" shouted the judge, startled out of all judicial propriety. "None of 'em?"

"Not guilty," monotonously repeated the foreman.

We were silent amid the din of triumph now raised by Tucson. In the laughter, the hand-shaking, the shouting, and the jubilant pistol-shots that some particularly free spirit fired in the old Cathedral Square, we went to our dinner; and not even Stirling could joke. "There's a certain natural justice done here in spite of them," he said. "They are not one cent richer for all their looted twenty-eight thousand. They come out free, but penniless."

"How about Jenks and that jury?" said I. And Stirling shrugged his shoulders.

But we had yet some crowning impudence to learn. Later, in the street, the officers and I met the prisoners, their witnesses,

and their counsel emerging from a photographer's studio. The Territorial Delegate had been taken in a group with his acquitted thieves. The Bishop had declined to be in this souvenir.

"That's a picture I want," said I. "Only I'll be sorry to see your face there," I added to black curly.

"Indeed!" put in Jenks.

"Yes," said I. "You and he do not belong in the same class. By-the-way, Mr. Jenks, I suppose you'll return their horses and saddles now?"

Too many were listening for him to lose his temper, and he did a sharp thing. He took this public opportunity for breaking some news to his clients. "I had hoped to," he said; "that is, as many as were not needed to defray necessary costs. But it's been an expensive suit, and I've found myself obliged to sell them all. It's little enough to pay for clearing your character, boys."

They saw through his perfidy to them, and that he had them checkmated. Any protest from them would be a confession of their theft. Yet it seemed an unsafe piece of villany in Jenks.

"They look disappointed," I remarked. "I shall value the picture very highly."

"If that's Eastern sarcasm," said Jenks, "it's found far beyond me."

"No, Mr. Jenks," I answered. "In your presence sarcasm drops dead. I believe you'll prosper in politics."

But there I was wrong. There is a little natural justice in these events, though I wish there were more. The jury, it is true, soon seemed oddly prosperous, as Stirling wrote me afterwards. They painted their houses; two of them, who had generally walked before, now had wagons; and in so many of their gardens and small ranches did the plants and fruits increase that, as Stirling put it, they had evidently sowed their dollars. But upon Jenks Territorial displeasure did descend. He had stayed away too much from Washington.

A pamphlet appeared with the title, "What Luke Jenks Has Done for Arizona." Inside were twenty blank pages, and he failed of buying enough votes for re-election.

Furthermore, the government retaliated upon this district by abandoning Camp Thomas and Lowell Barracks, those important sources of revenue for the neighborhood. The brief boom did not help Tucson very long, and left it poorer than ever.

At the station I saw Mrs. Sproud and black curly, neither speaking to the other. It was plain that he had utterly done with her, and that she was too proud even to look at him. She went West, and he as far east as Willcox. Neither one have I ever seen again.

But I have the photograph, and I sometimes wonder what has happened to black curly.

Arizona is still a Territory; and when I think of the Gila Valley and of the Boy Orator, I recall Bishop Meakum's remark about our statesmen at Washington: **"You can divide them birds in two lots – those who know better, and those who don't. D'you follow me?"**

THE END

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Epilogue, by Lin Stone.. I grew up in Arizona, moving freely with my father throughout the state, hauling machinery. One time I roaded a Caterpillar some 24 miles without crossing a fence. For weeks at a time I have floated across the desert in a straight line from Buckeye to Yuma and never saw a single human being.

When I followed the roads it was a different matter because my father was so well known, and my resemblance to him so striking that he was the only one that ever questioned, or scoffed at, my lineage. Anywhere I stopped it was usually the same.. "How's Sam doing?" And I would duck my head, even as I took the free pop handed out to me because of whose son they thought I was.

While Owen Wister saw perfidy, stupidity, and complicity every where he looked, I have found only sun-braided honesty. Once a payroll of similar size, but in unmarked bills rode inside a rail car. Somehow the door sprang open and all those bills fluttered out of the car. The railroad picked up a crew of anyone found on the streets of the nearest town, drunks, good men, and bad, and hurried them out into the desert to pick up unmarked bills.

When they could find no more, the money was counted, and not one bill had gone unrecovered. I dare you to try that experiment in old Boston town or any ville in New York.

I began working as a man at the age of 8 and I must have had over 100 men and one woman as an employer.. not one of which ever tried to pay me or any of my confederates less than what we were owed. One would pay out the most outrageous claims that can be imagined, and never wiggled a bit at paying, not one word, sigh, or stirring of the eye escaped him.

I worked for Governor McFarland once and found him to be an honest man, and one from whom one always received the most fascinating of conversations. His wife invented the seat that I believe John Deere still uses.

Owen Wister found the Gila River both sordid, and incompetent. I have seen it raging inside its banks, half a mile across, and I have seen it gorged outside its banks as well. That it is a trickless trickle now I do concur, but that is man's fault, not the Gila's.

The solitary tree that Wister observed was locally called a "mesquite" and far from being useless should be cultivated for its fruit for it seems to have sustained the entire state before Arizona was come to be civilized. I have seen more animal life sustained per square mile in Arizona than I have seen in a square mile in Arkansas. I have seen rice raised commercially in Arizona, and watermelons and other melons. I have baled alfalfa hay in Arizona sweeter than it is found in any other state. I have seen deer so tame they walked up to me and sniffed. I have seen rattlesnakes so thick that it was a common sport to come run over them just to hear the poor things pop. I went out to hunt Gila Monsters one day and came home with a handsome pick of 14. I have seen wild horses still running wild. I have seen the Grand Canyon in all its glory and I have flung down flagstone for walk ways the rich adored. I have seen so many burros captured that it took a crew of 8 three weeks to break them, though two of those weeks were used just to be sure they were truly broken.

I have seen copper cast out of the ground by the ton from a single blast. I went down into one copper mine so deep that some bats had overslept and perished in a mummified existence, there was a river down there and the fish in it were blind. I have seen eels in the early waters come for irrigation, and catfish so large that just one on a pitchfork could hardly be heaved over one's head. I was on hand one day when the canal company sprayed poison on the canal bank and 20 acres that I saw myself with my own two eyes, were covered by gasping, stranded catfish.

In short, the Boy Orator of the Rio Grande may have thought he was lying when he contrived those flowery, empty words of praise, but the state of Arizona has made good the boast that he made and then quadrupled it every year. Arizona is a good place to live, to work, and to fold up one's cards to die. Properly irrigated the state of Arizona could feed the entire United States, and you can [quote me on that.](#)