

"CHISPA."

CHAPTER I. THE MYSTERIOUS NOTE.

In 1865 I was working on the south fork of the north fork of the Yuba, at a point two or three miles below Sierra City. I was at work alone in the ravine making down into the river. Half a dozen other miners had cabins near or on the south side of the river, and mine was at least half a mile further south than any of the others, which carried it well up toward the main ridge range of hills walling in the stream.

One day on a note I saw that there were two or three drops of blood on it. The note alone was sufficient to startle me, but when I saw the blood a chill ran through my veins, as I said: "Here is a note—murdered, perhaps!" My next thought was that some of the boys might be playing a trick on me. Instead of at once opening the note to read it I began looking into all the corners of the room, even stooping and peeped under my bed.

No one was to be seen. My cat, "Chispa," was the only thing in the place.

After speaking a kind word or two to old "Chispa" I opened the note, and as I read to be open my eyes. The little note—written in the faded leaf of an ordinary memorandum book—read as follows:

When I read this note—hardly knew what a very dull pencil—scarcely knew what to think. My brain was in a whirl, and I made no headway in trying to think. As I turned the paper in my fingers I observed that the blood came off from it and stained my hand; I saw, in fact, that it was quite fresh.

This astonished me not a little, "for," thought I, "if he fell into that shaft three days ago, how could he have written this?"

My next thought was this: "If he is in the bottom of the Maldonado shaft—more than a hundred feet below the surface, as he says, how could he have written this?"

Who are you? Who is down there? I asked the man who spoke, stepping close down to the dark mouth of the shaft.

"Jacob Pritchard" was the answer that came up the shaft. The name was so distinctly uttered that all had heard it.

"It beats the devil," said one of the men, breaking a somewhat protracted silence. "That was the name signed to the note, and here is the fellow still in the shaft!"

"Ask him who—send out a letter" said Bill.

"Get me out. I can't tell now," I said in the dark in a vexed and gasping voice.

"It is either the devil again or the biggest liar in the mountains!" said Bill Wallace.

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or hoisting apparatus, the miners walking up and down the poles and carrying the ore on sleds on the heads in "travelling cases." These poles were placed in the shaft in such a position that they formed a zig-zag line, like a worm fence, from top to bottom, there being a little platform on which rested the foot of one ladder and the top of the next below. Thus, in descending the shaft, one passed from platform to platform, and from side to side of the opening until the bottom was reached. When the news of the discovery of silver in Washoe reached Maldonado he abandoned this mine—which was hardly paying expenses at the time—and crossing the Sierra Nevada mountains came to the Comstock lode, and bought that segregated portion of the Ophir mine which was thereafter known as the "Mexican" and which proved so immensely rich. All of his Mexican followers left Sierra county, California, and the gold mine there was completely deserted, the buildings at and above the shaft were crushed in by the heavy falls of snow which occurred in that elevated region, and soon all about the place went to ruin.

Such was the old Maldonado shaft at the time that I found the note upon my cabin floor—nothing was left at the place but a few shavings of the old blacksmith's forge and a section of a shake roof which had fallen across and covered about half of the mouth of the shaft. It was a lonesome, dreary old ruin.

The nearer our little party came to the old shaft the more certain we all felt we were on a fool's errand; for how was a man in the bottom of that shaft to send a note stating the fact to a place full half a mile away? It was nonsense to think of such a thing; yet we were not to be deterred by the fact that there were no signs of any shaft leading to the man—the man calling himself Jacob Pritchard. Several times we halted and laughed at the ridiculousness of our mission.

CHAPTER II. AT THE SHAFT.

Arriving at the top of the hill and at the mouth of the shaft, one of the men said: "Well, here we are! Now to make known our presence to the man in the shaft—to Jacob Pritchard."

"Well, call down to him," said another, laughing; for, now that we stood at the mouth of the shaft, we felt quite silly, and half expected to see some peep out from behind a tree or rock and "raise the laugh" on us.

The man who had first spoken stooped over the shaft and shouted: "Jacob, are you down there?"

Almost instantly there came up from the shaft a faint cry that was half moan, half shout. We all heard it, and were thrilled and startled.

Most of the faces about the shaft suddenly grew pale. We all stood silent for some seconds, when some one said "sure as fate there is a man down there."

"Who are you? Who is down there?" again called our spokesman, stepping close down to the dark mouth of the shaft.

"Jacob Pritchard" was the answer that came up the shaft. The name was so distinctly uttered that all had heard it.

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actions, so that it would not become tangled on the way. It had to be kept around him, and the slack hauled up—but don't pull hard. You understand.

"All right!" cried I. "We know how it is."

They then started up the ladders. They halted to rest at each platform. As they called the shaft in their slow ascent we could see, after a time, that Bill was ahead, keeping the rope properly taut; that Mike was "hoisting" in the rear, while dark lump was moving upward between the two. Gradually they worked their way up, resting and climbing.

All this time we at the top of the shaft were on the tip of our ears, expecting to see the puzzling old man in regard to what manner of man we should shortly see brought up on the "depths."

Finally, as they approached the top we were able to catch occasional glimpses (over Bill's shoulders) of a pale face and a black, bushy beard. Then, when they reached the last ladder, sloping up towards us, there was added to the picture a pair of black and eager looking eyes—hungry-looking is probably the better expression.

We at the top became so much excited that we came near "yanking" the man up to the top of the shaft at a single haul—would have done so, perhaps, but for the warning cries of Bill, whom we were in danger of dislodging from the catch pole on which he had a precarious footing.

The man was at last safely landed at the top of the shaft. He was a stranger to us all. A tall young fellow, apparently about 26 years of age—stood before us. He wore a black felt hat and ordinary miner's garb. The man who had first spoken stooped over the shaft and shouted: "Jacob, are you down there?"

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When I had made these observations I again looked aloft and carefully examined the walls on all sides. They afforded not a climb by means of which I could hope to clink to the platform above. I planted the two pieces of the broken ladder against the wall, climbed to the top, and again looked for clinks in the rock in which I might gain a hold for my fingers and toes. All was solid and smooth.

"If then placed one piece of the ladder against the wall, and carrying the other, climbed up and tried to plant it upon the first section, I could not make it stand, and to have attempted to climb it, even though it stood, would have been folly, as it was quite evident that I was in a hopeless position. The notches in my first section, but they were not deep enough, and I could not make it stand. When I stood my first section against the shaft at a steeper angle I could plant my second in the notches, but then it would not reach higher than within six or eight feet of the platform I wished to gain.

"All this time my candle was stuck into a bit of clay at the bottom of the shaft. It was fast being consumed, which I could not afford, therefore I blew it out and set down in the dark. My feelings may, perhaps, be imagined, but I cannot describe them. I wanted to think—to do some good strong thinking—but my thoughts and my brain seemed to spin around in a circle, and all I did was to repeat over and over again the words: "Lost! lost! lost! Lost was all I could say—I could get my brain to comprehend.

"I lay down and rocked myself to and fro on the ground, not remaining still for a moment, save when I occasionally paused to gaze up at the little square light that marked the top of the shaft. Once in this toasting and the other part of the shaft, during the time my candle was burning, I tried to remember what it was. There were several objects. There were not bits of wood or bark, but something else—just what I could not recollect. This bothered me so much that I determined to light my candle and see what was in the water. I found two dead rabbits and all about them were three or four small striped squirrels, one tolerable large gray squirrel of a burrowing kind, and half a dozen mice.

"All these were more or less decayed, but I considered that it might yet become necessary for me to eat them; therefore I fished them out and placed them in a corner of the dry part of the shaft, where I could find them if I should ever get down to them. The matter that I must eat them. This done I blew out my candle and again lay down to rest and to gaze at the speck of day far above me, and to groan.

"Some one might pass that way and hear me. The moment this thought came to my head I arose, and began shouting the wall and looking up, repeating: "Help! help! help!" but did nothing but shout. Hour after hour and still I could hardly stand. Finally, completely exhausted, I fell asleep.

"When I awoke it was all dark above, and I said it was now dark—no use of shouting. When daylight came again I resumed my shouting, and kept it up until I became very hoarse and weak, then I gave it up as worn out. My next thought was simple—I might say so silly—that you will be inclined to laugh at me when I tell you all."

"This was gasped out a little at a time, and so feebly that we all saw that the young man was in no condition to tell a long story, such as the present case. Bill, who felt proud of his part in the business of the rescue, said he would make nothing out of anything he had said.

"After we had reached my cabin, and after the stranger had partaken of such food as we thought suitable for him in his weak state, we asked him to tell us his story.

"I ought to ask you first," said the young man, "and there are things that puzzle me, and I finally became satisfied that there was something moving about in the shaft. I struck a match, and lighted my bit of candle, when I saw near me a striped squirrel. I was delighted to find that I had some live thing in the shaft with me. I advanced and wrapped it about the body of the squirrel, trying to get it to eat. As I held it in my hands I could feel its heart beating so rapidly that the pulsations could not be counted. 'Here,' thought I, 'are a few mouthfuls of food that may be eaten without loathing.' As I held the squirrel in my hand thinking whether to kill and eat it then, or to wait until it was dead, it died. I then opened to cast my eye upward toward the ladders, when, 'Now,' thought I, 'if this were a carrier pigeon, a sparrow, or a bird of any kind, it might be the means of saving me.' 'But I will tell you all I know about this business.' 'Good! Let us have it,' said all hands.

CHAPTER III. THE STRANGER'S STORY.

"Well, said the young man, 'to begin: I had been mining about Downville—up the river along Salmon Ravine and off that for some months, making little more than grub. I had often heard of the shaft abandoned by Maldonado at the time of the Washoe silver excitement, and thought that how so much gold had been found, some must have been left in the shaft. I got a description of the shaft from a man who had the slightest idea of the use I intended making of the information he was giving me. Three days ago I stole out of Downville and came up here, determined to descend the vein and examine the shaft myself.

"I was provided with a candle and matches, and when I found the shaft, after a long search, I unhappily entered it and began to descend by means of the notched poles. I never thought it possible that any accident could happen to me.

"All went well till I was on the last ladder of the pole. I was about the middle of the pole when it broke in the center and I fell a distance of about ten feet to the bottom of the shaft. I was not at all hurt. The upper part of the ladder fell upon my legs, but it did not hurt me. I fell at once that I was completely trapped. The pole had become quite rotten, besides the middle notch had by accident been cut a little too deep.

"In falling I was completely extinguished, but I had a good supply of matches and soon lighted it again. Holding the candle aloft I found my dismay that to the first platform and to the foot of the nearest ladder the distance was nearly twenty feet. To this height on all sides I was shut in by a smooth and solid wall of rock.

"I next looked about the bottom of the shaft, and saw about eight feet in width by fourteen in length—it having been excavated in this shape in order to give room for planting the ladder at a proper angle. Only half the bottom was dry ground. The east side of the shaft, into which the vein dipped, had been sunk about three feet lower than the west side, and contained over two feet of water.

GREELY ON TILDEN.

HIS BLASTING LETTER ON ELECTION METHODS.

It is notorious that in the election of 1868 great frauds were perpetrated upon the ballot box in New York. The actual republican majority in the state was overcome by a fraudulent majority in New York city. How it was prepared and managed is shown by the following copy of Mr. Tilden's famous circular:

(Private and strictly Confidential.) Rooms of DEMOCRATIC STATE COMMITTEE, October 27, 1868.

My Dear Sir—Please at once to communicate with some reliable person, in three or four principal towns in each city of your county and see that in each city you are kept advised of the result of the election, and repeat over and over again the words: "Lost! lost! lost! Lost was all I could say—I could get my brain to comprehend.

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"The temperature of the Hoosac tunnel was about the same all the year round, the thermometer standing generally at sixty degrees. The air is pure except when there are great winds, and yet would wrongly win, will in no way doubt about the tunnel's being able to thoroughly ventilate itself. When the smoke was at work, there was so much smoke from the lamps of the miners, the fire of the blacksmiths and the trains that were constantly at work, that the miner's eyes and lungs were often seriously affected.

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Fairfield County Items.

WILTON. Eddie, a little son of Theodore Fitch fell from a hay on Monday, the 24th ult., and dislocated his shoulder.

RIDGEFIELD. In the Gazette of the 24th, we gave account of the arrest of "Jerry" Bennett, his wife, and two of their younger sons, charged with complicity in various burglaries and thefts.

On that night a horse was stolen from Mr. Enoch Bouten's pasture, just over the line in South Salem; and the young men are supposed to have done it. A reward of \$500 is offered by the town of Ridgefield for their arrest.

WESTON. Our place is full of strangers from the city, just now, all evidently enjoying the salubrious air and the often wild romantic scenery hereabouts.

During one of the many severe thunderstorms some weeks ago, the house of Mr. Wm. Brown was struck. Both Mr. and Mrs. Brown were stunned by the shock; but they are now happily safe, recovering.

The rain descended in torrents, Sunday, keeping all the people indoors. No service in the church.

Mr. Chapman, of Rahway, N. J., late of the Weston Military Institute, was not only approved at Princeton by the examination committee, but entered the Sophomore class of that venerable old college unaccompanied by one other student.

Mr. Hendricks, who is sorry to say, met with a painful accident in the axe factory, which may result in the loss of his eye.

Boys and girls during these vacation times instead of carrying their books carry their baskets for berrying purposes. With this splendid rain and a little warm sunshine afterwards, this delicious fruit promises to yield an abundant crop.

STAMFORD. John Lynch, a freeman on the steambark Osseo, was shot at his home in Stamford Monday evening by a pistol which was supposed to be empty.

GREENWICH. The selectmen have selected Judge M. L. Mason as collector of the historical interest and forward to the State Historian, recently appointed by the Governor.

The Haynes and Wheeler club propose to erect a monument to the memory of 1,000 persons. That sounds like business.

A man who has been three times governor of a great state—elected each time over an eminent and popular citizen of the state—can hardly be called a nobody.

On Wednesday, Edward Haight, a carpenter employed on Judge Brown's new building at Norwich, fell from the roof of the building, and though he was almost buried under the debris he escaped without serious injury.

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WESTPORT.

Last Sunday was the second series of rainy, unpleasant days in our history.

Dr. R. C. M. Page in making his summer recruiting trip will take Saratoga after finishing the White Sulphur Springs.

Mr. E. Lee, Esq., is at Saratoga drinking Colman's Food, from the spring.

Rev. A. N. Lewis, chaplain of the Second Regiment, C. N. G., is preparing the knapsack he will take to Philadelphia with him in company with members of other Connecticut regiments about to visit the Centennial Exhibition.

Considerable excitement was caused the other day by a Green Farms wag remarking that William M. Tweed was boarding at a farm house in his neighborhood.

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BRIDGEPORT.

P. T. Barnum has gone to Halifax for a week or two.

A Bridgeport woman on Monday applied to the police to prevent her thirty-two year old son from getting married.

William Lochner, a Bridgeport insurance agent and newswriter has been missing since Monday and it is reported that he has embezzled funds which he held in trust, forged checks, borrowed money on worthless checks and engaged in various other forms of swindling.

The invitation committee on the dedication of the Bridgeport Soldiers' monument will extend invitations to Governor Ingersoll and staff, all the ex-governors of the state, Colonel Hoyt and all the Fourth regiment, the mayors of all the cities of the state, all the societies and organizations of the city, the common council and selectmen, the monument committee, all the clergymen of the city and representatives of the press.

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The Quickest, Surest & Cheapest Remedies.

Physicians recommend, and Farmers declare that no such relief can be had before being used.

Words are cheap, but the proprietors of these articles will guarantee what they say, and will not be satisfied until they have cured you.

The Centaur Liniment will cure Rheumatism, Neuralgia, Lumbago, Sciatica, Obed Brains, Bone Nipples, Frost Bites, Chills, Swellings, Sprains, and any ordinary ailment.

We make no pretense that this article will cure Cancer, restore lost bones, or give health to a whiskey soaked carcass.

It will extract the poison from festering sores, and heal burns or scalds without a scar.

Weak Back, Caked Breasts, Earache, Toothache, Head and Cerebral Bruises readily yield to its treatment.

My wife has had rheumatism for five years—no relief from any other medicine.

She is now completely cured by the use of Centaur Liniment. I feel that I wish to recommend your wonderful medicine to all our friends.

James Hard, of Zanesville, O., says: "The Centaur Liniment cured my Rheumatism."

Alfred D. Knapp, writes: "Send me one dozen bottles by express. The Liniment has saved my leg. I want to distribute it."

The sale of this Liniment is increasing rapidly.

The Yellow Centaur Liniment is for the tongue, skin, flesh, and muscles of HORSES, MULES AND ANIMALS.

We have never received a case of Spavin, Swelling, Ringbone, Wind-gall, Scratches or Poll-evil, which this Liniment would not speedily benefit.

It will cure all cases of Rheumatism, and we never saw but a few cases which it would not cure.

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