

**THE GHOST OF A GALLOW.**

BY ALFRED STODDART.

It was an extremely awkward situation. Even I, who am somewhat slow to think as a rule, realized that instantly. At my feet in the dusty roadway lay a revolver still hot and smoking from its discharge, the report of which had just startled the quiet of that country lane, while not forty feet away from me there lay in the road the body of a man who had fallen from a dog-cart to the ground, apparently stone dead. And the worst of it was that the man who lay there in the road was my bitterest enemy.

The horse stopped and swerved with terror at the discharge of the pistol and this action threw the man, dead or wounded, from the cart. The groom who was sitting back to back with his master jumped from the vehicle and ran toward the prostrate figure, while the horse, left entirely to his own devices, came toward and went past me in a mad gallop.

As a drowning man thinks, so did I, in that brief period. When the groom reached the body of his master he saw in an instant that the man was dead. Then he looked at me. I was still reviewing the situation. But there wasn't much time to spare.

It was not I who fired the fatal shot. The road at this point was lined on one side with a high edge and I knew that the murderer had fired from this ambush and dexterously thrown the revolver to where it lay just at my feet. But I was quick enough to realize that no jury in the world would ever believe this unless proof of the real murderer could be produced.

Instantly I knew that my only hope lay in his capture, and I immediately dashed through the hedge in search of him, while the groom, thinking no doubt that I was attempting to make my escape, came in hot pursuit of me.

Inside of the hedge there was no sign of any living being. The fair green fields stretched away to the hillside, beyond which the white wall of a farm house were just visible, as peacefully as if there could be no such thing as the tragedy which had just taken place upon the other side of the hedge. I looked up and down the long hedge-row in vain. There was not the slightest clue to the murderer to be seen.

However, I determined that the man might possibly make for the railroad station, from whence I had just come, for I knew that there was a train to the city due in a few minutes. Could the ruffian catch it? And could I overtake him before he did so? If not I reflected I might easily telegraph to the next station and have him apprehended.

I was running all the time as hard as I could inside the hedge and toward the railway station. The groom had given up pursuit of me, doubtless thinking it his duty to return to his master's body. It wanted six minutes before the train was due, as I saw by a hasty glance at my watch, but I did not know how far the station was from where the murder occurred.

I never ran so hard in my life before, but I felt that my life depended on the chance of securing the murderer, and consequently the effort cost me no strain. My mind began to tell on me, however, at the end of the first quarter-mile and I was just wondering vaguely how long I could keep it up when I came upon the empty dog-cart with the runaway horse quietly cropping grass by the roadside. Here was luck indeed. I jumped into the cart as speedily as my exhausted strength would let me and gathering up the reins I struck the whip and we were off as fast as the animal could round towards the station.

I estimated that there was still about two minutes before the train was due and I felt sure that the station could not be more than a third of a mile distant. Suddenly I heard the whistle of the locomotive and with it came an inspiration.

The murderer might never be found. At events all I could not lay my hands on him just then. Why not take the train and make good my own escape while the opportunity presented itself. It seemed a terrible thing to thus flee from justice because of a crime which I had not committed, but I could not for my life see any other course open. So I urged the animal to still greater speed and pulling up at a bend in the road before I reached the station, I jumped down and ran, just in time to scramble upon the train as it was moving off.

It was a curious freak of chance, if indeed, it was chance alone, which had brought me down to Hopeville that morning and thrust me into the unenviable position of a suspected murderer. I had received a telegram from Randolph Cutting, the man whom I had just seen murdered, asking me to come down immediately to Hopeville, and in obedience to this summons I had taken an early morning train down from New York. Hopeville is an exceedingly unpretentious little New Jersey village, if indeed a country store and two small houses beside the station could be so described. When I stepped out of the train I looked about in vain for Randolph Cutting's carriage. As it was not to be seen and as anything in the shape of a hired conveyance was an utter impossibility at Hopeville, I set out at a brisk walk in the direction of Randolph Cutting's place, which I knew from a former visit was

about a mile and a half from the station. Randolph Cutting and I were second cousins, and the very slight degree of affection which always existed between us was not increased materially at the death of an uncle of ours, who left his money to me and his will was so involved that there was a lawsuit between Cutting and myself. As it happened, by the terms of the will, most of my uncle's property was left to me, and Cutting tried to have the will broken upon certain technical grounds which are not essential to this story. The courts upheld me, however, and declared the will perfectly valid. As a consequence Randolph Cutting and myself had not spoken for five years, and I, of course, had not been near his home until that eventful day, when I hurried down there in response to his telegram. True, I did think that it was a curious thing for Cutting to do—to telegraph for me to come down to Hopeville, but on second thought I concluded that some business of importance in connection with certain interests which were still mutual required that he should see me, and that perhaps he was unable from illness or some other cause to leave his home.

This brief explanation of the cause of my visit to Hopeville was only a small part of the thoughts which crowded my brain when I was safely seated in the train and whirling towards Jersey City. As I have said, Randolph Cutting and I were bitter enemies, and the evidence which pointed to my having committed the crime seemed so blackly conclusive that I could almost feel the rope tighten about my neck. When the train stopped at the next station I trembled in every limb, fully expecting to see some one come into the car to arrest me. Nothing of the sort happened, however, and I passed several more stations in safety. However I did not allow myself much hope, for I felt sure I would be apprehended at Jersey City. After some thought I concluded that it would be the best plan to go right in rather than get off at any of the out-of-town stations, as there would be much less risk of being noticed in the crowd which would get off the train there.

When the train pulled into the Jersey City depot I made my way with all possible haste toward the waiting room, and greatly to my surprise I was not molested. Suddenly I heard the trainman call out a train for Philadelphia, and acting upon impulse I hastily secured a ticket and was soon comfortably ensconced in a parlor car on the way to the Quaker City.

I can never describe that night of horror which I spent in Philadelphia. Some idea of my feelings may be imagined when I saw in an evening paper a despatch telling of the murder of Randolph Cutting, a well-known New Yorker, near his country place at Hopeville, N. J. The account in the papers said that detectives from New York were at work upon the case, and that though they refused to give out any of the facts, they were in possession of a clue which they felt sure would enable them to capture the murderer within a few hours.

I sought a quiet hotel upon a side street registering under an assumed name and then endeavored to compose myself to await results. I hardly think I slept a wink that night, but tossed feverishly upon the bed, wondering whether I had not acted very foolishly in thus running away when I was perfectly innocent. Undoubtedly by so doing I had strengthened the chain of evidence against me, but under the circumstances I did not see what else I could do. There was still a chance for me, I thought. Cutting's groom was no doubt a new one, as his face was not familiar to me, and he probably did not know who I was. No one else in Hopeville knew me. I had not mentioned my intention of going there to anyone in New York. My only hope lay in keeping perfectly secluded until the thing had blown over, and this I thought I could do as well in my hotel in Philadelphia as anywhere else. Then when I would arrive at this point in my reasoning the thought of that clue that the detectives were working on would come to me and I would break into a cold perspiration from nervousness and anxiety. How I ever got through the night I cannot tell. As soon as I could get into my clothes in the morning I procured a morning paper. There I found a fuller and more thrilling account of the murder, most of which I skimmed through hurriedly until I reached the following words:

"Detectives Warden and Seabury, of the Pinkerton force, reached Hopeville shortly after noon, having been telegraphed for by Mr. Cutting's family. They at once set to work upon a clue furnished them by Davis, the groom, who was with Mr. Cutting when the fatal shot was fired. Davis was sitting with his back to Mr. Cutting, but happening to look toward the side of the road he saw a man, whom he recognized as a discharged servant of his employer's, level a pistol at Mr. Cutting's head and fire. Mr. Davis fell to the ground and Davis jumped to his master's assistance, only to find him instantly killed. The horse had taken fright and run away, when Davis happening to look up saw a figure in the roadway. Instinctively he ran toward him, but the man darted behind the hedge and Davis lost sight of him. He was unable, however, to identify the murderer fully when he was arrested by the detectives late last night. The man whose name is James Simpson, was found in an empty hayshed, not two miles from the scene of the murder. When confronted with his crime he

became panic-stricken and made a full confession."

And that was the nearest I ever came to being hanged.

**A GIRL TO THE RESCUE.**

The little West Texas town was sweltering under the heat of a mid-summer sun, but it was nearly train time, and most of the inhabitants had come to the station to watch the train come in. This was a never failing source of delight, and even the people of the surrounding country often hurried through with their work so they might have the pleasure of hanging around and watching the few passengers that got off, and peeping into the windows at those who were foolish enough to go on.

"Yes sir, it's my brother an' his wife that I'm lookin' for," said an old man in the little assemblage. "He lives in New York, an' he's got plenty of money. He's coming out here to buy a ranch, an' I reckon he'll stay in this country, if he can find a place to suit him. His health been kinder breakin' down in the city."

A few minutes later the old man was giving enthusiastic greetings to a tall well-dressed man and a quiet lady, and was helping them and their luggage into a spring wagon that stood near-by.

The ranch was two miles from the town but the pleasant road was at its best and smoothest, and the distance was soon traversed. The tired travellers found themselves approaching a farmhouse with wide halls and verandas, and with great barns, and lots in every direction, and with cattle feeding in all the fields, as far as the eye could look. And there was kindly greeting from the farmer's daughter, a blue-eyed girl, about fifteen years old, who ran down to the gate with a smile spreading over her freckled face.

"That's Beth," said the Texan, with a look of pride at his girl.

Afterwards, when they were resting, and the dinner was in course of preparation, the lady sat on the verandah and watched the girl as she went about the place. A merry whistle floated up from the lat where she stood at the fence, fondling the pony that was reaching over lay his head on her shoulder. The chickens followed her about in troops, and there was a cow that could hardly wait till she came near enough to have her hand kicked by the long rasping tongue.

"Beth seems to be a favorite with all the animals," Mrs. Neal said with a smile, "and yet it seems a pity that she should grow up to be a tomboy like this instead of being in the house doing a girl's work."

The remark was made to Mr. Neal himself, for the father was busy looking after the horses. He did not answer just then; he was watching a race between Beth and the dog, for both were coming to the house, and they must needs race as they did every day. Here they came, across the lawn and up the steps, and when Beth sunk down on the top step to rest, her aunt looked with open disapproval at her flushed face and her tumbled hair. There was no doubt about it, Beth was a regular tomboy, and Mrs. Neal did not approve of tomboys.

"I think you have made a great mistake in keeping Beth on the ranch," she told her brother-in-law that afternoon. "She should have been sent to boarding-school after her mother's death, and kept there until she finished."

"Wall, I don't know," answered the father, with a sigh. "I reckon it would 'a' been better—for her—but I couldn't bear to let her go. It'll come to that some day I s'pose; but I'm putting it off as long as I can. You can see for yourself how everything about the place loves her. She can whistle for that pony in the dead of night, an' it'll come to her, an' they ain't a fence on the place that'll keep 'em from comin'. An' what's more, there ain't nobody else that can ketch that horse. Why, the very chickens love her, an' I believe she's got every blessed one of 'em named; an' its knows its name."

The evening passed on and night set in; the moonless night of the Texas prairies, where everything seems so shadowy and unsubstantial, and where one cannot be sure whether he is walking on solid ground or on the brink of a fathomless gulf.

"How I wish she might have liked me," Beth said to herself, as she leaned over her low window and looked into the darkness. "I suppose it's because I'm not like other girls. She's always known nice girls, of course, I'm not nice. I whistle and ride bareback, and run races with Nero. But then I could sit up in a chair and look prim, not if it were to save me. I tried it once, over in town, when I was visiting at Sheriff Martin's, and how did that turn out?"

She did not answer her own question, but I know that the experiment had not been successful in the least. Beth had been trying to "be ladylike," as she told her father afterwards, when the Sheriff said something that astonished her and she whistled before she thought; and when he and his son both laughed, she ran out and sprang upon her pony, and was at home again before she had time to think.

She left the window, now, with something shining in her eyes, if only there had been anyone to see and it had not been so dark. She had looked forward for a long time to the coming of this aunt, and had expected much from her companionship; and now the aunt did not like her!

Beth went to her bed, but she could not sleep. Invisible fingers pulled her eyelids open, and twitched at her fingers,

and pinched her arms. And something in her impatient young nature made her sit up with a jerk, finally, and feel about in the dark for her clothes.

"I'll go sit in the hammock for a while, and maybe I'll get sleepy," she said, and in a few moments she was out at the window, and had stolen along the veranda, and was quietly swaying back and forth in the hammock.

The moon was about to rise, away beyond the low line of the prairie. The first faint whiteness from it was dawning along the horizon, and in that direction there was an unsubstantial light over everything. Beth sat and watched it dreamily. She had seen it many times before, and it always made her think of ghost stories, which had been interesting to her from the time she had heard the first one, and which she was almost sorry she could not believe in.

Now there, for instance, one could almost be sure that there were half a dozen moving figures away yonder, just this side of where the moon was going to rise. She swung lightly in the hammock, watching the wraiths across the prairie. It must be little floating clouds of mist. She began to weave all kind of quaint fancies about them. Suppose they were knights in armor, riding up here to lay siege to this enchanted castle. Suppose—

And then all at once the knights paused a little, as though they were consulting where the moat would be most shallow and where the wall would be weakest; and then she saw them coming softly again, and all at once she heard the sounds of horses' hoofs.

"They were real people, after all! What could they want, at that time of night? And what could be the reason that Nero was having nothing to say about their coming?—he that never allowed anyone to approach the house unchallenged."

A moment later the men dismounted, and while someone held the horses, the others were coming—were stealing softly up towards the house.

It was some instinct in Beth that made her slip from the hammock and creep along the veranda to the end, and there step down to the ground, where she crouched and waited. Something was wrong; men did not come up to a Texas house in such a style as that. She remembered with agony that every door and window in the house was wide open, and that there was nothing to bar their entrance; nobody in that country thought of shutting up the house in the summer weather. And the "help all slept in the houses at the other end of the lot, too far away to be of any assistance."

There was a sound of stealthy feet along the veranda. Beth, peeping out from the shadow of the vines, saw six men creep silently into the house, and the first one held a dark lantern in one hand. The next moment there was a flare of light, a scream, a scuffle, oaths, and a minute of wild turmoil. Then she rose slowly, and looked in through the vines. Mrs. Neal was bound fast to the bed upon which she was lying, and Mr. Neal and her father had been thrown side by side upon the floor, where they lay helpless, tied with ropes.

"An' now you kin show us where the money's hid," suggested one of the masked men, playfully touching up Mr. Neal with his foot.

Beth waited to hear no more. Swiftly and silently she crept around the end of the house, and down through the yard keeping in the shadow of the shrubbery. Away at the lower corner of the yard she stumbled against something that startled her, and leaning down to touch it she found Nero lying there, his body not yet stiff. Only a few hours ago he had raced up the walk with her, poor fellow. Well, there is no time for sorrow now. She climbed the fence into the orchard and crept around the lane that went out from the farm in the other direction from that in which the robbers had approached.

"It's ever so much farther to town," she said to herself; "but it's the only way we can get out. And now if Ladybird will only come to my call."

And then she whistled; a low soft call that might have been mistaken for the cry of a bird. Instantly there was a rush of feet, and here Ladybird came, sweeping over the ground with her pretty head up, and when she came to the fence she rose and vaulted over it, light as a feather, and stood still to rub her nose against the hand heid out to pet her.

There was a sound of excited voices at the house—her flight was about to be discovered, she thought; but Beth did not hesitate for one moment. With her hands on the pony's back she sprang to her seat, and with a word to her pet and a hand on the silky neck she was off like the wind. A shot rung out from the verandah, and ball sung past her, but she did not stay for that. Let them shoot as they pleased, they could not follow, for their horses were away at the other side of the house.

Suppose they should divine what she intended to do, and should try to stop her at the arroyo! But Beth was thinking fast. Out of the main arroyo led a smaller one. She had found it once, a few months ago, and had hidden there and surprised her father when he was riding by, not knowing that anyone was near him. She could take that end of the gorge tonight, and Ladybird would pick her way through and come up on the bank a quarter of a mile from the main road.

All this time the pony's speed had never slackened, but just before reaching the great arroyo, along which the road skirt-

ed, she checked her for an instant, and listened, with parted lips, and with her heart beating so that she could hardly hear. Yes, there they came. She heard the sound of hoofbeats, though it was evident that the riders were running through the thick grass beside the road, having left the main path.

A few steps further and Ladybird went down into the deep arroyo. The sides were so steep that an inexperienced rider would have gone over her head, but Beth did not fall. Down the dry bank of the gulch went Ladybird, as though she was going to meet the robbers, who were coming so near; and then all at once she turned sharp to the right, up the smaller arroyo, and the robbers were left behind. Their heavy horses would never undertake that perilous journey. A rush along the bottom of the gulch, a scramble up the steep side farther on, and then Beth and Ladybird were away like the wind again.

Sheriff Martin had just brought a prisoner into town, and was opening his gate to pass into his own home, when the sound of running attracted his attention and brought his hand to his pistol. Before he could speak however, the pony had dashed up, and Beth had slipped down beside him.

"Well, if it ain't my little Beth," he cried, in the moment when she gasped and could not speak. But then she found her tongue.

"Our house is full of robbers," she cried. "They got in and have tied papa and uncle and aunt, and are trying to make them tell where the money is."

The Sheriff's deputies had but that moment separated from him. Without a word to Beth, he left her standing in the road and ran to the corner, blowing a whistle as she went. For a moment there was great confusion; a servant came running with the horse from which the Sheriff had just dismounted; and half a dozen men were there before Beth could think. In another minute, it seemed, they were all mounted, and she was beside them on Ladybird, and they were sweeping over the prairie towards her home.

But the robbers had worked hard. The escape of the girl had discomfited them, though they argued that she was only a girl, and had probably run away instead of going for help. At any rate it would be a long time before any help could come, and they would have time to do what they wished.

Their first effort was to make Mr. Neal tell where his money had been hidden. With this end in view they had threatened him with death if he did not tell, but he only looked at them and kept silence. Then they had tried his wife; and if she had known she would have told; but as she assured them, over and over again, that she knew nothing about the money, and that Mr. Neal had but little money with him anyway, so far as she knew, they were forced to believe that she was ignorant. As for the weather-beaten old farmer, Beth's father, he smiled at them, and said banteringly:

"An' ye'd like to find it, would ye? Well jest go to work an' look fur it. They ain't no law preventin' ye, as I can see."

But after awhile the search was over, and nothing had come of it, and the robbers gathered about their prostrate victims and looked down upon them with evil eyes shining through the black cloths with which they were masked.

"An' now we'll begin on you," the leader said, to Mr. Neal; "where we ought to 'a' begun at first. You'll tell where that money is, an' tell it quick, do you understand? or else we'll be compelled to string you up here in the back room. It'll be easier on you if you tell it first. Which do you say—yes or no?"

"You'll never hear it from me," said Mr. Neal, firmly, and a voice at his side echoed:

"Nor from me, you can just depend on that."

Immediately they began their ghastly preparations. One of the men threw a rope over a joist, while the others pulled the helpless form up from the floor and dragged it into the back room. Mrs. Neal began to scream, and a ruffian threw a pillow over her head and extinguished the sound. They were all pre-occupied with the business in hand, and were making a good deal of noise about it; and so they did not hear the sounds from without until there was a sudden rush, and every man among them found himself looking into the muzzle of a six-shooter.

"Well, Ike, you're mine at last," said Sheriff Martin, as he watched his men tie the last prisoner. "Been leading me a pretty lively chase, haven't you? And how does it strike you for the reward to be taken in by a little girl like that?"

The next day Mrs. Neal made open confession.

"I made such a mistake," she said. "I thought Beth was a mere hoyden, and that there was no depth to her character. But what a girl she is! Brother Nathan, I shall send back East for a lovely woman I know, who needs a home, and Beth shall have as fine an education as money will afford. Just think of that brave little girl, and that long, lonely ride. What a woman she will make."

**CAMPING OUT IN WINTER.**

**The Rare Pleasure of Tenting in the Ice and Snow.**

The early morning of Thursday, the last day of January, was clear and still. The heavy snowstorm of the day before had ceased during the night, leaving a new layer, a foot in depth, upon that which already lay deep over mountain and lake, and piling itself high upon every branch and twig of the dense forest about us, writes C. Grant La Farge, in the Atlantic. I had awakened at 3, still conscious of the effects of yesterday's long tramp of eight hours following fresh caribou tracks through heavy timber and in deep, soft snow, only to find that the waning day bade us strike out for camp for the further route of our game was still to be disentangled from a labyrinth of tracks, made where they had stopped to feed. We had eaten our lunch as we marched, delay being a thing to avoid and fire out of the question on so fresh a trail, and when we reached camp again, just as darkness closed in, we were a tired and hungry pair. So it was with difficulty now that I summoned up resolution to perform the duty of which the biting cold upon my face and the snapping of the log walls of our camp apprised me, and resisted the insidious argument that I really was not awake. To leave the snug shelter of warm blankets in order to rake together a few almost extinct embers, nurse them into a glow and pile the stove full of wood is not an alluring task at such a time, but campfire etiquette, sometimes relaxed in the milder autumn season, must be rigidly adhered to, even indoors, in these long, rigid winter nights. Therefore my companion and I had made the usual agreement that he who awoke should forthwith replenish the fire, and as his deep breathing was now proof that nothing was to be expected of him I conquered my slothful disinclination and a roaring blaze at last rewarded my efforts. I opened the door upon such a night as only the northern winter can show.

Silence, absolute and supreme; the rich purple-black of the sky revealing its immeasurable depth, in which hung, clear and round and at many distances, the myriad stars which filled it; in the north the great pale arc of the aurora reflected faintly on the white snow lying over the open space of the river in front of us. But the keen air allowed little time for more than a swift glance, then a match lighted showed the mercury at 18 degrees below zero—not extreme, but cold enough to make blankets desirable; so I got back into them without further delay and fell asleep.

**A Home Kindergarten.**

Every house that has one or more little children should own, if possible, one of the low tables and several of the small, low chairs that are used in the kindergarten. If there is a regular nursery the tables may be kept in one corner of the living room, as they provide a most convenient place for the work and games of children, a place to rest their books when reading, and because they are their own special property give great satisfaction in many ways. Another piece of furniture that helps the children to keep an orderly nursery is a window seat—that is, a large, long box with a hinged cover, where their toys may be placed when they are through using them. In one nursery, where there are three children, each one has her own special treasure chest placed under a window and her own low shelf for books.

**Lilies of Brilliance.**

Have you seen the descriptions of the new Duchesse d'Orleans' diamond crown? writes Cousin Madge. It is high, and is entirely made of magnificent brilliants. In the centre rises the Bourbon lily, three of the leaves bent down and one erect, this last consisting of an immense diamond. Smaller lilies form the rest of the regal crown.

Her bridal dress must have been superb. It was cloth of silver, with the Bourbon lily glittering all over it in raised gold. She is tall, dark and handsome, and, I believe, just 20.

**Rain in the Desert.**

A rainstorm in the Colorado desert is a stranger thing than many of the curious tales which for ages gave Herodotus a unique reputation among historians for mendacity. During a rainstorm in the Colorado desert not a single drop of water touches the earth. The rain can be seen falling from the clouds high above the desert, but when the water reaches the ground, it is so hot, dry air beneath the clouds it is entirely absorbed before falling half the distance to the ground.

**Exploring Australia.**

In June last an expedition started with the object of exploring central Australia, says the Detroit News. It is not generally known that there is an unexplored region in the island continent six times the size of England. The great difficulty of pushing into his terra incognita has always been its waterless character. The new expedition, under the command of Mr. L. A. Wells, is provided with camels and equipped with all necessities.

**Height at Which Meteors Burn.**

It is supposed that meteors begin to burn when they are within about 125 miles of the earth, and that combustion is completed and they disappear at from 35 to 50 miles above the earth. When we see a falling star, therefore, we may consider that we have watched it through a flight of about 100 miles before it finally burns out and disappears from view.

**Vesuvius in an Active State Again.**

Vesuvius is officially reported to be in an unusually active condition; lava issues copiously from the largest crater of the volcano, filling completely the Atrio del Cavallo, and running some hundreds of meters down the north-west side of the mountain, seriously threatening the observatory.

**An Ancient Hog.**

The fossil remains of a hog have been recently discovered in the "bad lands" by an expedition led by Professor J. E. Todd, State Geologist of South Dakota, and are said to prove that the animal must have been as large as a medium-sized elephant.

**His Profession.**

"Does the gentleman you just saluted as 'professor' occupy a chair in one of our colleges?"

"No; he's a chiropodist."

**HER RECORD.**

He—Miss Flipp says that she had nearly a hundred proposals at the seashore last summer.

She—That is true.

He—She must be very popular.

She—Oh, I don't know. You see Mr. Softly proposed to her every day for three months.

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