

LITERATURE, &c.

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From Hogg's Instructor.

LIMNINGS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

ROBIN RAKE'S LUCK IN CALIFORNIA.

ROBIN was a brother of the ancient and respectable fraternity of hatters in the High Street of St. Mungo. A politician of the ardent radical school—a propensity which, indulged in, operated much to his own down-keeping in worldly prosperity; for no man, solely dependent on his own exertions can thrive in trade and direct the national affairs at the same time. Robin deplored his own want of prosperity, and felt jealous of the better success of the neighboring shopkeepers. He laid the blame of it on direct taxation, long parliaments, and new poor laws, and sighed in his inner soul for the free soil of the New World, where every man is equal—saving the negro—where the fourpenny loaf doesn't pay a penny to Government, and no taxgatherer charges for the use of the Sun—where no brother who has a sinecure situation grumbles at the brother who has—and where the rich don't govern the poor but the poor the rich, and the humblest beggar may rule the land. Robin yearned for free citizenship in this glorious community, but doubts and difficulties long hemmed in the way, and made it formidable. He wanted a short and easy road to wealth, and though the New World did seem that road, still toil, and hardship and danger beset it, must be undergone. Unhappy Robin Rake! Can no good genius of earth's dark realms visit thee in thy slumber, and transport thee to the caves of which in childhood thou hast read and gloated over with moistened eye and lips, where the gold lies in heaps, and the diamond and sapphire are confined in caskets fashioned ages gone. Or can no beneficent elf visit thy slumbering fancies, and tell thee where St. Mungo's monks of old hid their treasure chests, where with spade and pickaxe, by the pale moonlight, it may be unearthed beneath old cathedral walls? A bright brave genius at last came; not a frisky fairy, whose authority at best might be worth but small credit, but the genius of ink. In the 'Star' Robin read of California one morning—of the golden strands of El Dorado, where wealth might be gathered by the bucketful, and fortunes won by a few turns of the spade. Other Stars confirmed the marvel, and less questionable authorities than even 'Stars' corroborated it. What wonder then if the shutters of Robert Rake, hatter, remained unremoved one morning, and the tenant was doubled over the bulwarks of the 'Armada,' past the tail of the bank, mortal sick?

A few months' passage passed on, and the many midnight dreams and daylight reveries of gold untold and untellable were now realized; for now Robin stood on the shores of California—stood in the auriferous valley of the Sacramento, with a dozen more countrymen gaping and gazing right and left, turning up the clods with the tip of his shoes, half contemplating a 'rich complexion' in the air.

'I say Robin what's to be done next?' enquired very naturally Tom Brodie, a countryman and a covey who had accompanied him, as the boat left them and returned to the ship.

'Get a spade, a tin dish, and small sieve, and march up the river to the first alluvial deposit,' quoting in an article from the 'Star,' which he kept in his pocket as a guide.

Ah, man, I feel a kind o' d'walm come over my heart. Here's the boat awa, and we're solitary in a strange land. Rax us the bottle o' speerits, syne let's tak a smoke and talk over some plan. Hech, man, that's het, and no'er a mouthfu' of water at han,' replied Tom, setting down the bottle, and extracting from his pocket a small blackened pipe with a stem of three inches in length. The two worthies had entered into solemn covenant on the passage to make a joint enterprise, and share the profits at the termination.

'Now Tom, so sune's you're done, we'll saddle our baggage and tramp up the valley,' said Robin, impatient of delay, already seeing the golden sands sparkle in the sunlight at foot.

Reader, if you are an angler, you can remember the eager delight with which you hurried on to a famed stream—with what expectation, hope, and fear your heart leaped and trembled as you neared its banks, and how little you could brook impediment or delay, and you can understand how Robin felt at this crisis. His senses had been steeped in a golden dream for four months. He had rolled in it, wallowed in it, pocketed by lumps, shovelled it into bags, carried it in boxes, swam in it, and waded in it, and he could not now tarry on the verge of the reality. Therefore urged he the more lethargic Brodie on to the modern Pactolus.

'Guess you're going to absquatulate for the diggins, strangers,' said a hard, hoarse voice, issuing apparently from some other cavity than human throat, close beside them.

Turning round, they saw, standing leaning one hand on the muzzle of a gun, a yellow, tall Yankee, lank haired and cadaverous of aspect, dressed in a light suit and capacious straw hat. 'Precious sight o' luck goin' on at them diggins, I calculate,' pursued the stranger, still addressing them.

'That's good news, anyhow,' replied Tom Brodie; 'but could ye tell us, sir, whereway we're likely to fa' in wi'?'

'Come from the old country. I should say, seekin' a location in the free and enlightened republic?' Robin nodded assent. 'You and

I'll trade, strangers. My name's Zech. Chatel—have fixins up along at Smith's settlement—fine location for thino that, I dew believe. Nineteen men and a boy from the old country left a week ago with fifty thousand dollars a piece, all gathered at them there diggins in less time than it would take you to hant a 'coon. Stranger's, that's your ground. May I be everlastingly whopped by my own niggers if it is'nt.'

'Will you direct us to the spot, sir?' said Tom. 'We may bless ourselves for our good fortune in fa'in' in with this gentleman, otherwise we might hae wandered long in the search.'

'Keep right along the hill side till it streaks off to the right, then follow the river for ten miles about, and you'll drop on Smith's settlement. Inquire for Zech Chatle's store. You and I'll trade for a gold catcher or gold scraper, as best suits. I've the right thing for the job. I should say. Good day, strangers. We'll meet at the settlements.' The Yankee hurried down to the beach; where a few other adventurers had collected their baggage, and sat brooding over it.

A weary and toilsome journey, through a rugged and unbroken tract of hill country, had our adventurers. Daylight closed upon them as they reached the spot where the hills daubed away to the right, and the shining river began to spread out like a silver sheet before them. Beneath the shade of a clump of trees, they erected a sort of temporary tent, kindled a fire, and gathered themselves up to rest. Next day the journey was resumed, and towards noon they came in eight half-a-dozen log-houses situated on the bank of the stream, over the door of one of which was painted 'Chatle's Store,' in large unsteady letters.

'Knew we'd meet strangers,' said the owner, putting his head out at the door. 'Ben't this an obsequerous fine settlement?—should say it was, reither. You didn't see a party of your countrymen goin' slick up to the diggins?—They're aforehand an hour or two. Don't they know the ground?—I should think they're up to a wrinkle or two. Now, let's trade.'

'Show us some o' the needfu' implements, then, Mr Chatle, will ye?' said Rake.

'There, strangers, there's a gold scraper, warranted to collect a thousand dollars a day, and no mistake. Here's a gold catcher, I'd recommend; or if you'd trade in a plain spade I'm your man—washers, cleaners, and blowers to suit. See this here article was left by a man who retired from business after gatherin' a fortin. It's good as new and you'll have it for half price!' He singled out a half-worn deformed shovel, with a long handle, from a lot of similar articles. 'Ain't it a beauty now?' pursued he, turning it round and round before their eyes.

'What'll you tak' for it?' 'Why, the last man had it for four hunder dollars; it's yourn for two and fifty, more or less I wont take—that's a fact anyhow.'

The adventurers gazed in the highest possible pitch of astonishment at the trader; mumbled to themselves inarticulate fragments of speech. The price was a real one it proved, however, and Jonathan would neither come nor go on it. Robin had only some fifty sovereigns in his pocket; Tom rather less. Both felt, however little the sum, it was a bird in hand, and better than an apocryphal one in the river; but both knew that a spade must be had, and some kind of sieve; and for these two articles at last agreed to pay down two hundred and fifty dollars, and give their note of hand for one hundred and fifty more due eight days after date.

With rather a dismal notion of the free and enlightened country, Robin and his friend departed for the 'diggins.' The first bend in the River they came to, a party of half a dozen men were visible, some busy shovelling earth on the bank, others standing washing the clay with eager earnest countenances. Robin rushed forward to look at a lot one fellow was blowing. Could it be possible? There was gold glittering—bright gold—in little scales the size of a silver penny, lying in dozens; there was the reality—the substance—the dream fulfilled. He could have danced, leapt, and sung in ecstasy of gladness. Oh, reader, when your first salmon came panting up the bank—when your first bird dropped on the heather—when your first book issued from the publisher—when your first love laid her head on your shoulders and whispered a fond reply, your delight was infinitely less than Robin's at this moment.

'Tare an' agest went ye stand out of my way, omadhaun?' Div ye want to steal wid yer green eyes,' said the voice of the owner, kicking violently out with his heels, as he hugged the dish to his breast.

'Save us a,' said another voice, 'if that bea Robin Rake I'm a sinner.'

Rob turned, and observed, in shirt sleeves and a pair of soiled deskins, an attenuated mud-begrimed figure, whilom that of a Paisley manufacturer of questionable repute.

'I ne'er expected to see you here,' observed Rob. 'I reken this is better work than buying second-hand yarn frae weavers, and breaking the prices o' labor.'

'Ay, here's your ground, Rob; a free country, nae politics, and plenty o' siller. You'll meet wi' a few queer companions about—no sae honest as you or me. Tak care o' them is my advice.'

'Weel that's queer,' said Rob, beginning to shovel away with all his might, not a straw caring for who he saw in his thorn excitement.

By the time night drew on, some half ounce of gold—real actual metal—rewarded the labors of Rob and his associate. It whetted only their first craving and was but a paltry begin-

ning. However it was a beginning, and satisfaction found a home in that reflection. In course of inquiry, they learned that ten or twenty miles further up the river, the precious ore was found in much larger quantities, though often inferior in quality; and the result was that next morning they were again on the road.

Day after day passed on as Rob journeyed and toiled, sometimes with success and sometimes lacking it, but with renewed vigor of purpose, returning, like the gambler to the scene of his unhallowed pursuit, with fevered brain and throbbing pulse. Day-dawn found him by the banks, a scorching miridian sun looking down upon him, and sunset lent its last ray to some few particles of treasure he pored over. One morning passing along a camp where he had seen a couple of laborers, some two days preceding, a flock of buzzards rose from the spot, flapping their wings in defiance at him. He glanced at the spot where they had crowded most, and there he shuddered as he saw, lying scalped, the corpses of two men, robbed first by Indians, then murdered lest detection should ensue. His provisions, of which he had taken a store, began to grow scarce e'er the first week closed. Another journey down to the settlement was necessary, to buy flour and gunpowder, and to liquidate the debt which they were now in a position to do.

Zech welcomed him into his den with something of the satisfaction a large spider may be supposed to do a lusty fly entering his web. 'Wall stranger, hsa good luck snickered right out on you at them diggins?'

Rob spoke of his hopes, rather than his realities by way of reply.

'I guess you're come to settle that small bill o' yourn?'

Our adventurer had come for that object, and after a deal of higgling and trading, got it settled at an enormous disadvantage—his gold dust being valued at one-half its actual worth. Half a bag of flour, some dried fish, and a flask of powder cost him one hundred dollars more, partly paid in specie and partly in another bill.

Another week had passed. With lack of sleep, perpetual anxiety, wearisome days of toil, bad food, unclean clothing, Rob had become an attenuated, walking hollow eyed mummy of a man. But he had fallen in with a rich reward. In a bend in the river the sand literally glowed with gold. Scarce a day's labor of the two was exhausted for less than fifty or sixty dollars' worth of grains. But new purchases required to be made at the store, and half his gains were again swept away by the remorseless Zech.

We need not trace how he took a fever, and how he slowly recovered, and like a living skeleton resumed his search—how, with striving and hoarding and toiling, bags of precious dust at length began to accumulate in possession of the two adventurers. There were buried in the earth at a convenient spot. For danger was ever abroad. It was no unusual thing to see a mangled corpse floating down the river, and stories of fearful bloodshed and rapine were rife. Rob had noticed, with some uneasiness and suspicion, that his conditor, Tom, evinced great love for the society of certain prowling characters haunting the river occasionally in companies. Odd members of them sometimes came too, and had long interviews with Tom, who, after such events was always silent and irritable, and avoided explanation with his confederate. Robin, we say, felt a little uneasy and anxious—got suspicious by degrees of his companion, but dared not openly avow his sentiment, having no sufficient reason for his distrust. Through accident he learned that the parties whose society Tom seemed so much to court were members of the Mormon fellowship, a colony of which had been established some fifty miles distant. What the tendencies of his initiation into that brotherhood naturally should have been we cannot aver; but their actual manifestation herein was found, that one afternoon, when Robin returned from a visit to the store, Tom was gone, the spade was gone and the gathered gold gone.

Unhappy Robin! Begirt with sorrow, indignation, and dismay, he sank down on the earth, and, in a death-like stupor, lay with fixed eyes gazing at vacancy. Slowly, very slowly after hours were gone, the sense of his wrong and misery flowed back like a tide on his mind. A hot tear or two burned down on his cheek. They brought relief, and bitter passion followed them. Whither was his late companion gone—where should he hunt him down and wrench the treasure from his hands—how, like a sleuth-hound, follow on his track by night and by day, till, with a yell of exultation, he should grapple him by the throat and force back the plunder. A calm, settled purpose of revenge succeeded the first flashings of rage. He resumed his labor, making shift with what implements remained, and journeyed farther up the stream. He lived much now on roots, wild fruit, and such game as he shot or snared; had a haggard worn, gasty look. At night he camped with wandering gipsies or adventurers of the same cast as himself; runaway seamen and deserters from the army, bigwigs of all kin and climate were his bedfellows, and scenes of drunken debauchery, when good luck smiled on any of them, frequently occurred. Robin, however, hoarded carefully what he acquired—sought by all means to increase his store. Gradually as the passion prevailed, he became less scrupulous as to the means; but when was ever avarice characterised otherwise? On one occasion, during a night's drinking, one man dropped dead of apoplexy. Robin carried him out of the tent into the open air; he saw however

that recovery was vain. As he unbuttoned the poor fellow's clothes, he remembered that that day the dead man had been fortunate in collecting several pieces of heavy metal. He had no need for them now, and no one a better right to them than Robin. Our pen shrinks to write the shameful fact—he searched the clothes of the corpse, yet warm, pocketed the coveted treasure, then threw the body in a corner, where the vulture and carrion crow, ere morning would be busy at work.

Once again he saw his late confederate. In the rocky glen of a tributary of the Sacramento, he stumbled upon a party of the Mormon persuasion, and Tom amongst them.—Fired with revenge and hate, he sprang into the midst of company, grasped Brodie by the throat, and charged him with his crime. The brethren rescued him, however, and put themselves betwixt the two.

'Give me back my own!' screamed Bob, villain, dog, thief!

'Stand aside,' said a grave, sleek-haired brother. 'Listen to reason and truth.'

'Let me at him, will ye—the robber, the scoundrel! I'll tear his heart out!'

'Friend, hearken,' pursued the brother.—'Whatever thou hadst came from the Lord. Our well beloved brother took it to build the temple of the Lord and his prophet, Joe Smith. It was not thine he took but His and the owner has his own. Therefore go in peace lest a worse fate befall thee.'

The meek logician pointed to a market in the hands of one of the party with a look of peculiar significance, and Robin was fain to take the hint and depart, still burning with revenge. That day with blood thirsty purpose he crawled again back to the spot. With his finger on the trigger of his gun, he watched beneath some bushes for an opportunity to complete a full purpose, but Providence mercifully allowed him none.

The rainy season at last drew on. Numbers began to hurry down from the upper valley to the missions and settlements on the coast for shelter, some carrying with them the proceeds of their labor, bent on returning homewards, but most poor and wretched as when the pursuit was first entered on. Success had smiled on Robin for the preceding month.—The amount of dust he had collected could not at a rough estimate, be valued at less than twenty thousand dollars. Of the means by which some of it had been obtained we refrain from speaking. He was amongst the last to leave the ground, and on arrival at the location found every available corner for lodging secured. His old friend Zech, was the only man who could get him a corner, and he 'warn't inclined to come down under the figure of a hundred dollars a week. For this sum Robin got use of a shed, barely sufficient at home for a coal-cellar or a dog house, where with the cold and privation he was exposed to ere the first ship appeared to take him home, he was ill of fever and ague.

Fearful reports got abroad of bands of marauding Indians committed robbery, depredation and murder among the whites. Day after day the anxious, unhappy adventurers heard fresh stories of atrocity and rapine. They shuddered at the idea of a descent upon the settlement, and prayed for some ship's arrival. Robin was too ill to care much about such reports. He lay in a scanty-covered bed of straw, shivering and moaning by night and by day,—racked with pain and tormented with thirst. He had hid his hard worn treasures beneath the fire place, and often turned a sorrowing eye to it in moments of respite. At last, to others, to him, a blessed report came. A ship was seen in the distance coming thither—doubtless with a new crowd of adventurers. Another day and they and their gold should be on board. Another day! That night in the midst of a fitful, uneasy slumber, Robin, by the glimmer of a night extinct fire in his den, saw half a dozen half clad, swarthy figures surrounding him, and a voice from one of them said, in a whisper, 'the paleface sleeps. Shall the Eagle-wing search his dwelling?'

The paleface indicated by a vigorous movement in his bed, that he did not sleep, and in a lusty tone, inquired 'What the sorrow they wanted there?'

A tall, ill favored lank figure, with a pimpled nose seemed to be their leader, said with a solemn gesture, and in a voice the tone of which seemed not unfamiliar to Rob, 'Will the white man carry away his red brother's gold? Hugh!'

'Ye incarnate fiends ye, wad ye rob me?' screamed Rob. 'Help—help—murder!' He leaped out of bed, and seized a lumb of wood lying at the fire, hurling it at one of the Indians' heads. It missed him and rattled against the wall. In another moment he was pinioned by two pair of strong arms to the ground and his voice smothered.

The leader stood imperturbably looking on. He folded his arms and nodded his head. 'Our brother must not return to his wigwam and squaws across the great salt lake. He will journey with the Chippewa towards the sun. Our widows are lonely and need braves. Op-wo-wee is a great chief.'

Another murky figure replied after a pause to this speech: 'Op-wo-wee is a great chief, and his words are wise. But the Cannig Beaver may show the Bounding Elk how to swim. The council fires of the Chippewa burn beyond the mountains. The paleface may leave a trail. His scalp can smoke in the roof of Op-wo-wee.'

'Cunning Beaver has spoken,' muttered the other voices. 'It is good.'

A flourish of tomahawks above the head of the unfortunate Robin roused that individual to desperation. He roared out 'Mercy, savages'