

IN THE WOODPATH.

As I trudged along the road with my knapsack on my shoulder—a knapsack that had been a soldier's during the time of war, and which now held all my worldly goods—I was making up my mind what I should do when I got to the great city for which I was bound.

I had left home to seek my fortune—the home where I had no nearer kin than a cranky old second cousin, who, as he loved nobody, could not be expected to make an exception in his favor—and his wife, who thought herself the only worthy person in the world, and the only one likely to go to heaven when she was forced to leave the world.

I had arisen at dawn, put on my jacket and knickerbockers, long woolen stockings, thick shoes and a Tam O'Shanter cap; and in my knapsack were a few undergarments, a half-dozen handkerchiefs and a few childish keepsakes. My worldly wealth was five dollars in small change; but the world was "my oyster," which I intended to open with anything that came handy, and I felt happy to be free from the thralldom of doing chores for Cousin Hezekiah and his wife Ann.

I could read, write and cipher; I could play the flute by ear and had learned to dance without the aid of a master. I intended to get a good education somehow; and I was only eighteen, which is a hopeful and happy age when one is healthy and strong as I was; and I had no such word as "fail" in my lexicon, I am sure, as I turned from the sunny road into a little woodpath that ran in the right direction and saw a stout, well-dressed gentleman on his knees at the foot of a great oak tree, covering a hole that he had just dug with a knife.

My cousin's wife often went into the woods to get plants for her window-boxes, and I fancied this gentleman might have been doing the same thing, and paid little attention to him; when suddenly he sprang to his feet, with the knife in his hand, his face furious, his eyes gleaming.

"You young spy," said he, "what are you watching me for?"

"I'm not watching you," said I. "What have you been doing that you're afraid folks should see?"

Suddenly his face changed; he assumed a smile that was more disagreeable than his scowl.

"You are a boy of spirit," said he. "I like you. I only wanted to frighten you—there's something for you to remember me by."

He offered me a silver half-dollar.

"Keep your money for beggars," said I. "I'll remember you easy enough without it," and off I marched.

When I got to the turn of the road I looked back—he was pressing the earth down over the hole he had dug, with his feet, and in a moment he walked away and went up the steps that led to a house built on some high ground—a handsome house—a gentleman's residence I supposed, but I noticed that there was a crape on the door and an undertaker's wagon before it. I walked on, a little saddened and a good deal upset. All the world had seemed so bright to me just now; but I had been very angry with the man who had attacked me, and the black wagon, the floating crape, the signs of sorrow in the midst of the blooming garden chilled me.

The sky, which had been blue, was beginning to be cloudy also; the clouds thickened. When I reached the adjacent town a slow drizzle had begun, and in it I entered a poor little tavern, the only sort where I dare seek lodging with my limited means, and made my bargain for the night.

Supper, however, restored me to my usual spirits, and I sat listening to the older men, who were drinking at the bar, until late in the evening. They spoke several times of the death of some old man in the neighborhood, who they called Rich Tyler, and wondered who would get the money. Though I asked no questions, I fancied that they spoke of the person who had owned the house on the hill, at the door of which I had seen the preparations for the funeral.

The steward was talked of as an artful man, and one that no one liked; and I gathered that he had estranged the old gentleman's relations from him for purposes of his own.

In the morning I left the tavern and proceeded on my way, and finally reached the town which was my destination; and, in my anxiety about practical matters, almost forgot that little incident of my journey with which this story begins.

I got something to do before I had been in the city a week. It was not work that paid well, but it kept me from starving. Later I found a place in a hardware store; not that I knew anything of the business, but that a hardware salesman must have strong arms in order to handle the stock, and mine were very strong. I slept in my master's garret on an old cot, amongst boxes of screws and papers of stacks, piles of washboards and barrels of stove-lifters. I ate in master's kitchen, and was snubbed by the servant, who had a cousin who wanted all the odd pieces of pie and legs of cold chicken for himself; and as my master was one of the early-closing people, I got leave to go to night-school.

The night-school was in a crowded ward and teemed with boys of all ages, from the little bare-tottered children of eight to men of any age—licensed vendors some of them, with all the rough ways of their sort. Though there were many who, like me, honestly wished to learn something, there were others who came for fun—to have a jolly time and create confusion.

The principal was a young man of thirty, who had not a kindly feeling in his heart, I believe, and who was cruel to boys and assistants alike. The boys often deserved it. Our teacher was a young lady—a pretty girl of about eighteen, with a very mild and ladylike manner. I found out afterward that Mr. Jobson had desired her place for a bold, insolent young woman with whom he had a flirtation.

Stella Lee was a well-educated girl, anxious to teach her scholars, but her class—the noisiest in the school—numbered at least ninety. The boys were large, and many of them bent on doing their very worst. Mr. Jobson, who had a policeman at the door to defend him, punished offenders by the simple process of knocking them down and kicking them afterward. I have since understood that corporal punishment

is not allowed in the public schools, but probably this law did not extend to night-schools. If it did, he defied it. Many of the boys were large enough to thresh him, but were afraid of arrest if they did so. Jobson was a man who had received his appointment through political influence.

Everything has altered for the better in the twenty years that have intervened between those days and these, and the public schools are well managed and well governed, and their teachers gentlemen and ladies well qualified for their duties; but then there was much that was rotten in Denmark.

Jobson, promoted from a tavern where it had been his task to hustle drunkards with empty pockets into the streets, retained the manners suitable to that position, but rather unsuitable for the principal of a school of any sort.

In the day school under his supervision, he maintained a reign of terror, his only way of exacting respect. The boys spoke of him with awe in consequence. But I always hated brutes. When he spoke rudely to pretty, gentle Miss Lee, I fancy that he sometimes saw my face change, and I knew by his glance that he would have endeavored to knock me down also, had I given him the faintest excuse for doing so. However, I knew my own temper. If he had touched me, I should have proven to him the strength of muscles belonging originally to a country boy, and now exercised daily in the duties of a hardware salesman. I was at the age when men make their triumphs in fistfights. And Jobson was experienced in such matters. He was, I think, a little doubtful of flooring me. Miss Lee, however, was, as most women would be, impressed by the breadth of Jobson's shoulders and the size of his limbs. Once when he had said something offensive to her—I think he called her an idiot—she had noticed that I resented it, and asked me to wait a few moments after school.

"I wanted to speak to you, Harris," said she, "and to warn you. I saw that you knew that Mr. Jobson was rude today. I know it very well, but I try to despise him and not to care. I need to earn the money which teaching night school will add to my salary; for my mother and I have been unexpectedly cast on our own resources. I beg you not to glance at Mr. Jobson again as you do for feeling as you did; I knew I had a friend who understood what I endured. But he is a savage. He would attack you very furiously if you angered him—and I do not want to see you hurt."

I could not help smiling.

"He could not hurt me, Miss Lee," said I. "You think that, because he is older and larger than I—I know better. I think he does."

She shook her head.

"If you took my part it would do me harm," she said. "That will be sufficient argument, I know."

"Yes, ma'am," I said. "I will never glance at him again in school."

I did not. But shortly after this, Mr. Jobson's manner changed. He became civil to Miss Lee; he was even gallant in his way. He paid her coarse compliments, and made offerings of fruit and candy. Once he brought her a glass of champagne. I could see that these attentions gave her no pleasure, and they made me furious. I scarcely knew it at the time, but I was in love with my beautiful teacher.

She was younger than I. I knew she was my superior, and had had advantages that I had not; but I intended to make myself worthy of her. She spoke to me very pleasantly, and it seemed to me that if I could only get a chance to visit her now and then in her own home I might keep my footing as a friend until I was justified in telling her all my feelings. You may see that I had advanced rapidly since I left my cousin's house. Then I was a mere boy; now I felt like a man.

I worked hard at my studies and at my business. I had conceived one or two good ideas, and had contrived a little mechanical toy which attracted attention to the window. I felt that my master was very good to me when he praised it, and in my innocence felt proud that he should patent it. He raised my wages, and promised to advance me. It never occurred to me until long after that he made a little fortune by my invention, and gave me no public credit for it. Increased wages and a liberal Christmas-box fully contented me, but before the Christmas was over something happened.

Mr. Jobson had been more gallant to Miss Lee than I cared to see him for some time, and fell into the way of lingering in her class-room. It was at the end of a long corridor, and when the boys were gone, as lonely a place as any in the building. With my feelings it was unendurable to know that he detained her there, as I felt, against her will; and one night I slipped behind the crowd of boys as they arose to leave the room and hid in the wardrobe closet. Miss Lee left the room a few moments and then returned for her hat and cloak. She was putting them on in haste when Mr. Jobson entered and shut the door behind him.

"I want you to take a glass of wine with me, Miss Lee," he said. "I have some famous sherry here. Do you good before your cold walk."

"Thank you, Mr. Jobson," said Miss Lee, coldly. "I do not care for wine, and I must get home as soon as possible. Mother is not very well, and will be anxious if I am late."

"You are so stiff and offish, Miss Lee," said Jobson. "Not to brag, you know there're very few assistant-teachers would try to bluff a principal like me. The girls usually like me, too. I suppose your back is up because I wanted Tiny Hull instead of you. Well, I'll tell you why: Tiny is jolly; doesn't mind a joke; gives a fellow a kiss. You're as prim as a pike-staff; but, look here, you're as pretty as a picture, and cut her out all hollow in that respect. Just be friendly and we'll get on lovely."

"I am sure I am friendly," said Miss Lee. "Will you kindly open the door? I must go home, Mr. Jobson."

"Must you?" said Jobson. "Very well, say good-bye."

He put his arms about her waist, she pushed him away; he caught her again and kissed her; the next moment he lay upon

the floor, experiencing the punishment of his life. The door was closed, the windows shut—his cries brought no aid. I gave him no mercy, and left him at last lying panting and almost senseless upon the boards. Meanwhile Miss Lee had leaned against the wall, trembling with terror.

"I will see you safe home, if you please?" I said, as I resumed my coat. "The rascal will come to himself shortly; I have not killed him."

I walked beside my little teacher for awhile in silence, then she turned so faint that I was obliged to offer her my arm.

The delicious sensation her delicate hand gave me, I can never describe. At her door I said "Good-bye."

"You will never be allowed to enter that school-house again," she said, "but you must come to see me sometimes. Come on Sunday and take tea with mother and me—do not speak of any trouble at school—there will be more I fear."

"Oh, he'll not dare to publish this affair," said I.

However, she was right. I went to the school-door the next evening—Mr. Jobson and a policeman forced me.

"Harris, you are expelled," said Jobson, whose eyes were black and blue and whose mouth was swollen.

"And if you come here again I'll run you in," said the policeman.

I had sense enough not to resist the strong hand of the law, and after that studied at home. But I thought only of Sunday evening, and when it came I made as careful a toilet as possible and presented myself at Miss Lee's door.

Mrs. Lee was a courtly old lady, with very affable manners. She spoke of me as "one of the young gentlemen," and she gave me a little hint of a loss of fortune which compelled them to reside in such poor rooms and hoped I would pardon deficiencies. There were none as far as I knew, but if the feast had been of the poorest I should have rejoiced in it, for I sat at Stella Lee's right hand. I became a friend from that hour. But the end of my championship of my teacher had not yet come. Jobson's revenge was slow but sure. He had his tools in the school.

One Sunday I found the little home darkened by what was to them a tragic event. Humiliating charges had been made against Miss Lee, and she had been dismissed from her place in day-school as well as from the temporary night-school position.

"We have nothing," she said, at a moment when her mother was absent from the room; "and after such experience I cannot hope to teach again." Then it was that I went upon my knees before her.

"You have me," said I. "I ask no better than to devote my life to your service. I am not highly educated, and I am poor; but I mean to improve, and I am already able to keep the wolf from the door. If you can only try to love me enough to be my wife, all things will be possible to me."

Stella smiled through her tears.

"I shan't have to try," she said.

And so we were engaged, and shortly married; and we were very happy. However, we had very little to live on; and when, in the course of a year, a very small son lay in his cradle, I began to know what care was, and to fall into debt for sheer necessities, and to lie awake at night wondering when, in the slow progress of events, I should have peace once more.

"The doctor has sent his bill again," said my mother-in-law one night, as she held the baby on her knee. "How hard it is to be poor! And do you know, I never dreamed of such a thing four years ago. Then we were living with my brother at his country seat. My brother was an eccentric old bachelor, so very wealthy through oil speculations that he was spoken of as 'Rich Tyler.'"

"Rich Tyler," I repeated.

"Yes, my dear," said my mother-in-law; "I was his only sister. But I married against his counsel, and he made a will in favor of a steward, who did his best to estrange him from every one else. The will had been made when my husband died; but after I was a widow my brother sent for us to come to him, and was perfectly reconciled to me. He then made a will in my favor, he told me; the property to be first mine and then Stella's; with a good legacy to the steward, to be sure. I know the will was made; but when my brother died suddenly, it was not to be found, and as the first will was still in existence, no one could swear that my brother had not altered his mind and reinstated his favorite. We might have gone to law, but that seemed hopeless to me; so John James has the fortune, and we, as you know, are penniless." And the old lady sighed.

Then suddenly there rushed into my mind a picture of the woodpath, of the man who knelt at the foot of the great oak, and who called me a spy and threatened me on the day of Rich Tyler's funeral. I saw him again treading down the earth at the foot of the tree, and climbing the steps to the grounds above. Again the gloomy picture of the handsome house, with crape floating from its door, arose. Again I trudged through the mist and dampness to the old tavern, and heard the men talking of the steward who won his master from all his friends. John James? Yes, he spoke of him and of the dead man as Rich Tyler. How strange it all was! Was the man I saw John James? And what was it that he hid under the oak tree on the day of his master's funeral? I determined to know.

The next day I asked for a holiday, and got it; and, without telling my wife or her mother where I was going, I stepped into the cars and alighted at the station nearest the place of my adventure. The wood path was unchanged, and the vicinity of the steps in the green bank marked the particular oak of which I was in search. I had put a little trowel in my pocket, but the grass had grown and moss had gathered about the roots of the tree, so that no one could have guessed that any one had ever disturbed the earth near them; and, indeed, John James—if it were he—might long ago have taken away his hidden treasure. However, I dug in this direction and in that, finding nothing for a long while; obliged to pause and lie upon the ground to hide my work whenever feet approached.

Once they came down the steps of the old Tyler mansion, and, looking up, I saw the man whom I supposed to be John James—he man who had called me a spy—descending them. He was now very handsomely dressed, and wore a heavy watch-

chain and a diamond pin. I covered the loose earth with my person and pulled my hat over my eyes as he came near. I muttered something unintelligible.

"Some drunken rascal," he said to himself and walked on.

When he was out of sight, I set to work again, and this time I found the outline of a hand with pointing finger, cut into the bark of the tree; and, digging below this, soon came upon a tin box, such as lawyers use, long, narrow and well padlocked. Upon it was marked the name—

S. P. TYLER.

Carrying this with me, I made the best of my way to the office of a celebrated lawyer, told my story, mentioned my suspicions, and in his presence opened the box. It contained, as I had all along believed, the last will and testament of Rich Tyler, stolen, there could be no doubt, by his steward, John James. Whether the man was superstitious and dared not destroy the will, or had some intention of making restitution on his own death-bed, no one can know. The figure cut in the bark seemed to indicate the latter fact. But at all events, Mrs. Lee declared that she would take no steps to punish the man. The lawyer would declare the discovery of the latest will, which, as the witnesses were all living, could not be disputed.

The legacy his master intended for John James would be his, and no more need be thought of him.

It was condoning a felony, the lawyer declared, but it was none of his affair.

And so one day my mother-in-law took possession of her estate. I left the hardware shop to become her steward, and we all live happily together in the old Tyler mansion, and shall, I hope, for many, many years.—N. Y. Ledger.

TRUE STORIES OF THE PRESENT.

Adventures More Remarkable Than Those Found in Story Books.

Following the mountains and rarely descending into the valleys or lowlands, the fells onca, or South American lion, journeys in the search of food up through Mexico, and often into Texas, whence the antelope, his favorite prey, has fled from his rapacity. While lacking the bushy mane and tufted tail of his African brother, he is still a magnificent creature, with his powerful body, majestic head and lordly rear. He is not to be confounded with the puma, which is of slender build, whose cowardly nature has in it nothing of the lion's boldness and courage.

A party of Nimrods, while camping on the Rio Grande, had the good fortune to witness a battle between two splendid specimens of the fells onca, and which they declare to have been the grandest sight in the way of gladiatorial contests they ever saw. The hunters were following the trail of a band of antelopes, and had entered a narrow gorge with extremely steep sides, when they saw just ahead of them the antelopes huddled together in a most unusual way. While they advanced on them they heard a resounding roar from the other end of the gorge, and in another instant beheld a large male lion come bounding toward the frightened antelopes. He paused deliberately, as if to select his prey, and then with unerring aim sprang upon a fine buck in the middle of the flock, bearing the poor creature to the earth. The rest of the herd turned with one accord and swept past the hunters, who were too much taken by surprise to stay them by a single shot.

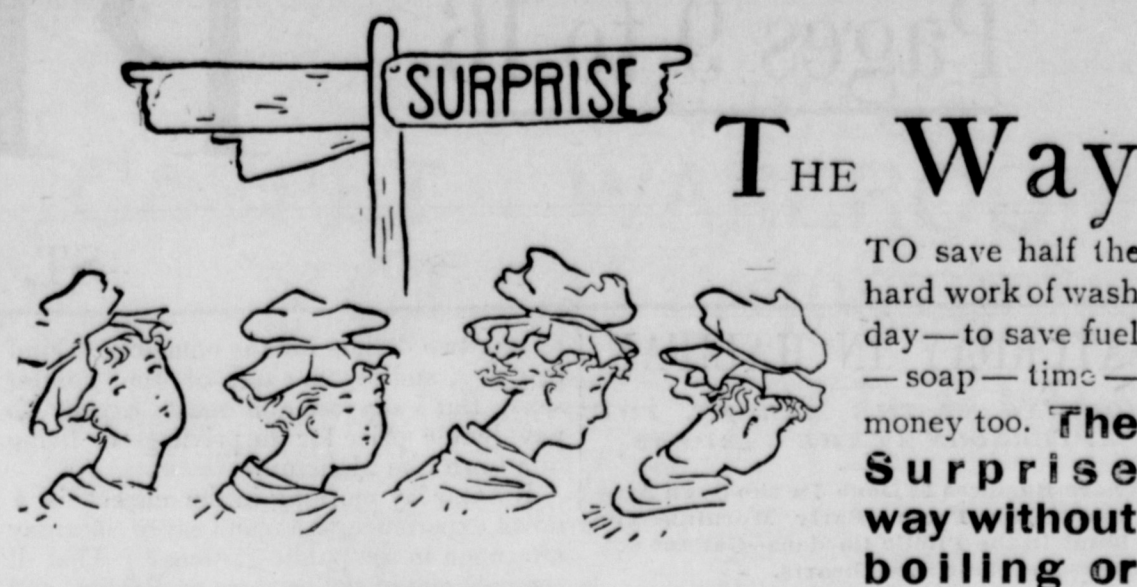
The lion had evidently killed his victim with almost his first stroke, for, rising, he stood over it roaring, as if to call his mate to share the feast, and in a few minutes an answer did come from a butting crag, which rose on one side of the gorge. The Nimrods, looking up, saw outlined against the sky a second lion, a male, with a smaller body than the first and more black mixed in the tawny yellow of his skin. But if smaller than the other he had evidently no fear of the larger animal, and roaring his defiance turned from his lofty post of observation, and with tremendous leaps made his way down the rocky sides of the canon.

The first comer, seeing that instead of his mate an uninvited guest had come to wrest his prey from him, awaited his appearance with answering cries of defiance and challenge, walking round and round the dead antelope with a tread of majesty and impatience. The second lion paused on a rock rising some twenty feet from the bottom of the gorge, and, gathering himself up, sprang down almost upon the other, which recoiled for one second and then flung himself upon his foe. Over and over the two rolled, filling the ravine with the thunder of their roars and fighting like demons with gaping mouths and battling paws. Then, as if with one accord, they would draw apart, panting and exhausted, but alert for the slightest movement on the other's part, and then rush back to the fray, screaming with renewed fury.

The scene presently had another spectator, which, spied by one of the hunters, was pointed out to the others. This was a lioness, which appeared on the top of one of the crags lining the side of the canon, and walking up and down encouraged the combatants with furious cries, but made no attempt to descend and take part in the battle. The hunters, fascinated by the splendid sight of two fearless, kingly beasts engaged in mortal combat, were also indisposed to interfere, and watched it first from behind rocks and bushes, but finding themselves unnoticed gradually drew nearer, although still content to remain at some distance from the rolling, plunging creatures.

The second lion was evidently getting the best of the larger, which continued, however, to fight with undiminished fury, though his shoulder, torn to shreds, was bleeding so that the ground for yards about was crimson with the life fluid. He succeeded, in spite of his growing weakness, in laying hold of his antagonist's throat, and could he have fought off death a little longer, would undoubtedly have avenged himself, but the other, with a sudden exertion, flung the dying lion off, and with one last feeble effort to stagger to his feet the big lion fell back dead.

His conqueror placed both fore feet on the head of his foe and roared aloud his triumph. The lioness at this came leaping down into the gorge, and though the lion turned upon her as if she was a stranger, her fawning attitude soon convinced him that she came with no hostile intent, and the two then proceeded to inspect the dead gladiator, after which they began to devour



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the antelope. The hunters at this point concluded that this was their opportunity for bagging their lordly game, and, firing together, advanced on the pair. The lioness, unhurt, sprang up the side of the gorge, and leaping with tremendous bounds from one rock to another soon disappeared.

The lion, however, was wounded in the forehead, though but slightly, and at first showed fight; but as he saw the number of his assailants sprang toward Major Dunbar, who happened to be nearest him, and upsetting that gentleman by the suddenness and force of the blow, leaped from his prostrate body to the top of a boulder near by. A second volley from the party appeared to miss him altogether, and turning he fled up the incline and disappeared in the same direction the lioness had taken, though the hunters fired at him at every glimpse they caught of his body.

The dead lion was a tremendous fellow, measuring nine feet from the tip of his black nose to the end of his long, cat-like tail. He was a mass of wounds, and his skin so badly torn that it was not worth preserving. His victim, the antelope, was found to have its back broken, probably by the lion as it hurled itself upon it. It is thought by the hunters that the lioness was the mate of the larger lion and brought on the scene by his cries when he killed the antelope, but that she, after the manner of others of her sex, had thought it best to curry the favor of the conqueror with an eye to sharing the bone of contention.

Angry Father—"How was it, young man, that I saw you kissing my daughter in the hall last night?" Young man—"I suppose, sir, because you happened to be around just at the right time."

"Say, Rathus, what's this I hear about your wantin' t' be nominated for the Legislature? What yer goin' t' do if ye git thar?" "Git' pointed on one dem 'wite-washin' c'mittes."

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