

# AT ALFORD'S CABIN.

Alford's Cabin was the name of a stage-coach eating station, half-way between two thriving Rocky Mountain mining towns. It was kept by Mrs. Nancy Alford, a small, cheery and exceedingly active woman, who claimed for herself the distinction of having crossed the plains with an ox team in '59; and the further honor of having been the first white woman to enter Fairplay Gulch, in which her cabin stood.

Her husband's grave, over which the snows of three winters had drifted, was under a clump of stunted and gloomy pines up the rocky slope of the mountain.

There was two little grassless and sunken graves beside that of Aunt Nancy's husband. In one of them her little girl of five years had been laid, and in the other her boy of six.

"I ain't never been back to the States since I come out here, and I never expect to go now; all I care for in this world is up there," Aunt Nancy would say, with a wave of her hand toward the pines under which were the three graves.

The cabin was a long and narrow one-story structure of three rooms. Its exterior was dreary, and without a suggestion of the brightness and comfort within save for the turkey-red calico curtains with white lace borders, and the flowering plants at the four front windows.

The immediate surroundings of the cabin were dreary and cheerless; nothing could be done to make them less so in that rocky and barren region with its early and late snows.

But within, things were very different. "Aunt Nancy Alford's cabin," "Aunt Nancy's grub" and Aunt Nancy herself, were topics on which the stage-drivers discoursed until Aunt Nancy's fame had spread far and wide.

She was a short, slender and wiry little woman, about fifty years old. She always wore a plainly made starched calico gown, with a white apron tied around her waist, the strings in a neat bow in front.

A snowy-white handkerchief was always pinned around her throat, and no one ever saw her when her dark-brown hair, but little touched with gray, was not brushed to a satiny smoothness.

One day in the early spring, Jack Hughes, one of the stage-drivers, brought Aunt Nancy a letter from the nearest post-office, eight miles distant. Letters came rarely to Aunt Nancy, and they always filled her with pleasurable excitement.

This was in a large brown envelope, and Aunt Nancy drew out a photograph with the letter.

She glanced at it eagerly, and saw the face of a young and delicate girl of perhaps fifteen years.

"Who in the land can she be?" said Aunt Nancy. She unfolded the letter, glanced at the signature and read it aloud, "Your affectionate niece, Marcia Merrick."

"I declare I'd most forgot I had such a niece," said Aunt Nancy. "But, of course, she's my sister Lucy's girl. Lucy's name is Merrick. I ain't heard from her for two years. It's time some of 'em was writin'."

She sat down and read the letter slowly, her eyes filling with tears as she read. She wiped them on a corner of her apron when she had finished the letter, and said to Kate Dooley, her "help":

"It's from my sister's girl. My sister's dead, and so is her husband. Their girl, Marcia, seems to be all alone in the world, and not very strong. She wants to come out and stay with me awhile, and try this mountain climate for her health."

"Well, she can come. I'll make her more than welcome. It's many a year since I see any of my own folks, and it'll do me good to see somebody right from New Hampshire, with the Doolittle blood in her veins. I was a Doolittle, Kate."

The read the letter again. It was well-written, and stated briefly in addition to the news which Aunt Nancy had already communicated to Kate, that the writer was nearly sixteen years old, and that she would have her own living to make, for her parents had left her little more than enough money to take her to Colorado.

If her aunt was willing to receive her, she would come with some friends who were going as far as Denver in a few weeks; and if the climate proved helpful, she would look around for some way of supporting herself as soon as she had grown a little stronger.

"We'll talk about her supporting herself when there's occasion for her to do it," said Aunt Nancy, as she folded her letter and restored it to its envelope.

She took up the photograph and looked at it long and lovingly.

"She's a Doolittle, out and out," she said. "She has the regular Doolittle nose, and her grandfather's chin right over again. She's downright purty; she looks like her ma, and Lucy was the best-lookin' one of our family. But she wouldn't write a word about her brother! I wonder how that is? Lucy had two children."

The next stage-coach going toward the east from Aunt Nancy's cabin carried a letter from Aunt Nancy to her niece.

Three weeks later the stage-coach came whirling up to Aunt Nancy's door, and Jack Hughes called out, when he saw Aunt Nancy at the open door:

"Light load today, Aunt Nancy. Only one passenger, and I guess she's the one you're looking for."

A young girl, her plain black dress and hat covered with dust, stepped to the ground. Aunt Nancy embraced her warmly.

"You're Sister Lucy's Marcia," she exclaimed excitedly. "I know without asking. You're a regular Doolittle, and you don't know how glad I am to see you!"

"You don't really look right strong," Aunt Nancy said, while Marcia was eating the elaborate dinner prepared expressly for her. "But, la! my dear, you'll look like another girl after a summer up here in this mountain air. I've got a nice, gentle saddle-horse that you can ride 'round the canons on, and I'll take you over to the hot springs for a month, later in the summer. Oh, you'll have roses enough in your cheeks, and be so plump you won't know yourself in three months!"

Then she suddenly asked in a softer tone, "Where is your brother David, Marcia?"

Marcia's smile gave place to a pained and troubled look.

"I don't know, aunt," she said.

"Don't know? Why, how is that?" "It is more than a year since we have heard anything from David," said Marcia. Then she added, "That is one reason why I wanted to come west, Aunt Nancy, besides what the doctor told me about my health. I think David is out here. I did not write anything about it, for I thought I would rather tell you all about it myself. I thought you might understand the story better, and feel more kindly toward him if I told it to you."

It was a brief and sorrowful little story of a boy's waywardness that she told, not an uncommon story of a naturally well-disposed boy being led into wrong-doing by evil companions, and finally running away after bringing disgrace upon his home.

"All we have known for nearly two years is that he is in the West. We heard once of his being in this State. If I could only find him! I am sure he could yet be saved. He is so young, not yet twenty." "I'll help you find him," said Aunt Nancy, earnestly. "We'll begin at once. I know all the stage-drivers around here, and people in nearly all the mountain towns. If he's anywhere in this part of the State, we'll find him, dear! Merrick ain't a common name."

The mountain summer soon came on, in all its soft and tender beauty. Marcia lived out of doors much of the time. She rode on horseback down into the grassy gulches, or far up to the mountain summits, where the snow lay in little patches throughout all the summer days. Soon the color came to her cheeks, her thin shape grew rounder and fuller.

The night of the nineteenth of August was one long remembered by the dwellers on that mountain side, and by those in the gulch below. They referred to it long afterward as "the time of the big storm."

"I never see such a storm as this in all the years I've lived in the mountain," said Aunt Nancy, as the night came on with a terrible roaring of the wind through the canons.

Few travellers spent the night at her cabin, and there was no one there that night but Aunt Nancy, Marcia and Kate Dooley.

At nine o'clock the wind abated its fury. At ten it had died away so that no sound was heard but the pouring of the rain. Marcia and Kate Dooley went to bed.

It was eleven o'clock when Aunt Nancy, rising to go to bed, stopped suddenly, threw up her head and listened intently.

The rain was falling softly now, and high above its gentle sound she heard a voice shriek out as if in mortal terror. Then she heard men's voices shouting wildly.

"What in the name of wonder is going on up there on Taylor Mountain at this time of the night?" she asked of herself, as she hurried to a door and looked out into the darkness.

She heard the cry repeated, and they seemed nearer now. She had heard cries at midnight before in that wild and lawless region, and she knew what too often they foretold.

"Dear, dear!" she said, with more irritation than fear in her voice, "I wonder when this country's ever going to get civilized, so folks'll live as if they was Christians! There's mischief going on up there! I saw them Taylor Mountain boys whispering together and looking savage when they were down here to dinner today. I've a notion to—who's that?"

The rear door of the room had opened suddenly, and been closed in eager haste.

Aunt Nancy turned quickly. Before her, his back to the door, his hands spread out upon it as if he would hold it against all resistance, stood a hatless and coatless young man, his clothes drenched and tattered, his face ashen pale, his eyes wild and staring, while his slender form quivered with fear.

"Oh, please come in and shut that door!" he cried, stretching out one hand imploringly. "They're after me—those men are! Can't you hide me? I haven't done what they say I have. Hide me! Hide me!"

Aunt Nancy slowly closed the door, but seemed to hesitate.

"Ma'am," said the young man, "I've been wild for a long time, but I am innocent of this wrong, and if you'll help save me I will live a right life from this moment. I'll go back home tomorrow—back to New Hampshire!"

"New Hampshire?" Aunt Nancy caught eagerly at the words.

She closed the door, walked across the room until she stood within a foot of the trembling fugitive, and looked up into his face, her own heart beating wildly.

"Are you from New Hampshire?" she asked, slowly.

"Yes, yes—oh, are they coming?" "From what town?" she asked, eagerly. "The town of Rockingham."

"Now tell me your name, quick!" "David—David Merrick!"

She took his wet cheeks between her hands, and drew his face down to hers, while she kissed him soothingly.

"I thought so—I thought so," she said, with her arms around his neck. "You've the Doolittle eyes, David. Don't be afraid."

The door of Marcia's room had opened suddenly, and she stood there with a shawl thrown lightly around her. The next instant she cried out:

"Oh, it's David—my brother David!" The tramp of feet was heard outside. The look of amazement on the boy's face gave place to one of terror, and Aunt Nancy said quickly:

"Go in there with your sister, David!" A moment later six or seven rough-looking men filed into the cabin. Aunt Nancy knew them every one. She met them standing with her back to the door of the room David and his sister had entered.

"He come in here, didn't he, Aunt Nancy?" said Joe Haskin, the leader of the crowd. "We seen him, and we want him. Now, didn't he come in here?"

Aunt Nancy replied fearlessly: "I don't tell lies, and I won't tell one now. He did come in here, Joe Haskin. He's in here now, and what's more, he's going to stay in here!"

"Do you know what him and another feller done?"

"I neither know nor care," replied Aunt Nancy, boldly, "but I know this—you men

aint his judges. Vengeance don't belong to you—it belongs to Him!"

She pointed upward as she spoke, and then she added, "You can't lay your hands on that boy tonight. He's in this room behind me, and you are six or eight men to one woman, but there's not one of you that'll lay your hands on me to move me from this door."

"You wouldn't, Joe Haskin, when you remember how I walked three miles in the worst snowstorm we had last winter to nurse you back to life and strength, when you was at death's door with pneumonia."

"You wouldn't, Hi Sanders, when I had you brought right here and took care of you myself when you had that broken leg last fall."

"You wouldn't lay hands on the woman who closed your wife's eyes in death less than a year ago, Tom Leeson. Every man of you has set at my table again and again, with or without money—it made no difference."

"Touch me? Why, I don't believe I, myself, could keep you from using that rope you've got outside, on the man who'd lay rough hands on Aunt Nancy Alford."

"No, you couldn't," said Joe Haskin. "You're right—we'd make mince-meat of him! And if you're goin' to stand 'fore that door and—"

"I am," interrupted Aunt Nancy, "and there ain't no other way into the room." She waved her hand lightly toward the open door. "Good night!" she said.

They went out into the darkness. Before noon the next day Joe Haskin rode up to Aunt Nancy's cabin. She went to the door, and he did not dismount.

"Well," he said, "if things don't turn out queer sometimes! We got after the wrong fellow, sure enough, last night. You see there's been a gang of cut-throats and horse-thieves lurkin' about on Taylor Mountain. The boys got tired of 'em an' last night they took after a couple of the sneaks."

"It seems that this young fellow told the truth when he said he didn't belong to 'em. He was wandering along on his way to Eagle Cliff, and took refuge from the storm with some of the gang."

"The guilty ones was caught this morning down in Deer Gulch, and they'd the grace to say that the young fellow with 'em didn't belong to their gang. If you've got him in your cabin yet, you sort of 'poloize' to 'im for the little inconvenience we put 'im' to last night, an' say that we'll do anything we can for him, now he's out of 'bad company.'"

He was done with bad company from that day forth. The promise he had made in his terror he kept faithfully, although he did not have to go back to New Hampshire to keep it.

Invading lines of railroad have driven the lumbering old stage-coaches and their jolly drivers to other parts of the mountains, and there is now a little brown railroad station on the spot where the cabin of Aunt Nancy once stood.

It is a dinner station, famous all along the line; and if you were to travel that way, you would be likely to be met at the door by a tidy and talkative old lady, who would be no other than Aunt Nancy herself, while David and Marcia Merrick in homes of their own, may be found in the prosperous little town but a few miles distant.—J. L. Harbour, in *Youth's Companion*.

**The Actions of Wounded Animals.** The writer once shot an antelope so as to carry away the projecting upper part of one of the lumbar vertebrae, the bullet merely grazing the body of the bone. He dropped instantly, his struggles being similar to those of an animal with a broken back.

Feeling perfectly sure of his game, the writer waited for his horse to be brought up, the antelope being quite a distance away; meanwhile the game was slowly dragging himself off. Before we were fairly aware of it, he was running quite steadily. A quarter of a mile away, a fortunate shot through the entire length of the body, as he ran, gave opportunity to learn what injury the first bullet had caused.

A bullet-wound in the heart must, as a rule, be immediately fatal. In surgical literature are given a few instances, however, in which recovery has followed such an injury, the diagnosis being confirmed by autopsy when the patient finally died, perhaps from some totally different cause; but a relatively small lesion in the cardiac walls by no means causes the instantaneous death depicted by the novelist as the result of such a wound. A grizzly bear has been known to travel one hundred feet and kill his pursuer after a ball from a rifle of heavy calibre had passed through his ventricles.

The writer once shot a Canada goose, flying some eighty yards high before a strong wind. It showed no signs of injury for several seconds, but then began to drop slowly from the flock. Suddenly its wings contracted, and it fell dead at four hundred yards distance. It had been struck with one "BB" shot, which had penetrated the left ventricle, which was found within; yet the goose had flown, with a favoring wind, nearly a quarter of a mile.—*Scribner's Magazine*.

**Barber Shop Bay Rum.** If all the bay rum used in the barber shops in this country was genuine it would require about fifty times the amount of land now devoted to the culture of the bay tree to supply the demand, says a New York importer of bay rum. About 50 per cent. of the fluid used in the barber shops is genuine and pure. Bay rum, you know, is, in its perfect state, very strong, and will stand any amount of "rectifying" as we call it. One gallon of pure bay rum will make ten gallons of barber shop bay rum. Sometimes they add nineteen gallons of water, and make enough stuff to stand a bay rum label for a year. Yet some barbers have the impudence to charge extra for it. In most shops in New York known as "ten-cent shops" they charge five cents extra for bay rum. What they sell you for bay rum costs them about eight cents a gallon. You get a tablespoonful of it used on your face.

Sometimes the adulterated fluid is colored with chemicals to make it look attractive, and there is nothing more dangerous or conducive to skin disease than such combinations. A great deal of so-called bay rum sold as the pure article is manufactured, and was never distilled from the bay leaf or any other leaf. The United States uses less genuine bay rum than any pean country.—*Globe-Democrat*.

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## THE CHARGE AT BALAKLAVA.

A Private's Experiences as a Member of the Light Brigade.

On October 25, 1854, I was a trooper in the 13th Light Dragoons (now the 13th Hussars), and was in the foremost squadron that led the attack on the Russian guns on that never-to-be-forgotten morning. I was riding close to Captain Nolan when he was mortally wounded by one of the first shots from the enemy's guns. The gallant captain stuck to his saddle, and his horse galloped shoulder to shoulder with us down the valley. The next discharge from the Russian cannon tore wide gaps through our ranks, and many a trooper fell to rise no more. Owing to the dense smoke from the enemy's guns, I lost sight of Captain Nolan, and did not afterwards see him alive.

We still kept on down the valley at a gallop, and a cross-fire from a Russian battery on our right opened a deadly fusillade upon us with canister and grape, causing great havoc among our horses and men, and mowing them down in heaps.

I myself was struck down and rendered insensible. When I recovered consciousness, the smoke was so thick that I was not able to see where I was, nor had I the faintest idea what had become of the brigade. When at last I made out my position, I found I was among numbers of dead and wounded comrades. The scene I shall never forget. Scores of troopers and their horses were lying dead and dying all around me, and many men severely wounded and unable to extricate themselves from their dead horses. Luckily for me, my horse was shot through the head, and, falling forward, pitched me clear. My own wound was not a very severe one, and I soon recovered sufficiently to endeavor return to the British lines.

Just as I made a start, I looked around and spied two companies of Russian Rifles doubling out from the right rear of the position where their guns were stationed, and, as they dropped on one knee to fire a volley up the valley, I laid down close to my dead horse, having its body between me and the firers. I was not a moment too soon, as I had scarcely sheltered myself before the bullets came whizzing around me, and literally riddled the dead body of my horse and its saddle. After the volley I ventured to look over my dead horse, thinking to see the enemy reloading to fire again; but, to my surprise, I saw them mustering together quickly, and running to the rear of their guns. On turning round I saw a body of horsemen charging down the valley on my right front, and thought they were a body of Cossacks coming down to cut off our retreat; but I quickly discovered that I was mistaken, and that the horsemen were two squadrons of French Dragoons charging down to silence a masked Russian battery that was firing on our left flank, whose guns were covered by a regiment of Polish Lancers. This battery gave the gallant Frenchmen a warm reception by means of canister and grape, by which a number of saddles were emptied. By riding swiftly on, despite their losses, they charged right up into, and their way through, the Polish regiment, and wheeling round to their right flank, rode off and made good their retreat.

In the *melee* I saw a chance of capturing one of the stray horses of the French dragoon regiment whose rider had been killed, but, before I could effect my purpose, the animal bolted, and I was obliged to get along on foot.

During the short time in which the French Dragoons and Polish Lancers were fighting I managed to get some distance up the valley towards our lines, and when near No. 3 redoubt I saw two men supporting a wounded officer of the 17th lancers. One of the men was a trooper belonging to my own regiment, and the other was one of the 17th lancers. The officer was faint and exhausted from loss of blood, and was feebly asking for water. Neither of the men who were helping him had their water bottles with them, and mine had been shot through in the cross-fire when the Russians first opened fire upon us at the commencement of our deadly ride.

I saw no chance of getting water other than by searching among the dead bodies on the battlefield. I accordingly retraced my steps, and was soon fortunate enough to find a calabash, half full of water, strapped to a dead trooper's saddle. I snatched up this calabash, and, as I made my way back, pulled out the stopper and had a good drink, as I was frightfully parched myself. I had to get along as sharply as I could, for the enemy were again on the move; but I succeeded in reaching the wounded officer without any mishap, and gave him the water, which he gratefully acknowledged, and, turning to us, said, "Men, leave me here and seek your own safety." But we would not leave him, and the other two troopers carried him off the field while I limped along by his side, ready to render any assistance I could, should the necessity arise.

As we were moving painfully along I saw a trooper of another regiment, who I had been severely wounded, and another endeavouring to get him off the field, but they were getting along very slowly. I went to their assistance, leaving the two men with the wounded officer, whom they eventually succeeded in carrying safely from under fire. I afterwards heard that this officer died the next morning, after having had one of his legs amputated. My comrade and myself managed to get the wounded trooper safely into our lines. I then went in search of my regiment, and at last found what was left of it—only about half remained. We went into action that morning 112 strong, and came out with only 61. Of horses we lost 84, and had besides several wounded, some of which eventually recovered, while others had to be destroyed. As a matter of fact, out of the 112 horses of my regiment which took part in the charge, only one, named *Butcher* (so called from the number and severity of its wounds), was brought back to England. This horse was presented to her majesty the queen when the 13th Hussars embarked for India in 1874, and was kept at Hampton Court until its death about ten years ago.—*Private James Lamb, late 13th Hussars, in the Strand Magazine*.

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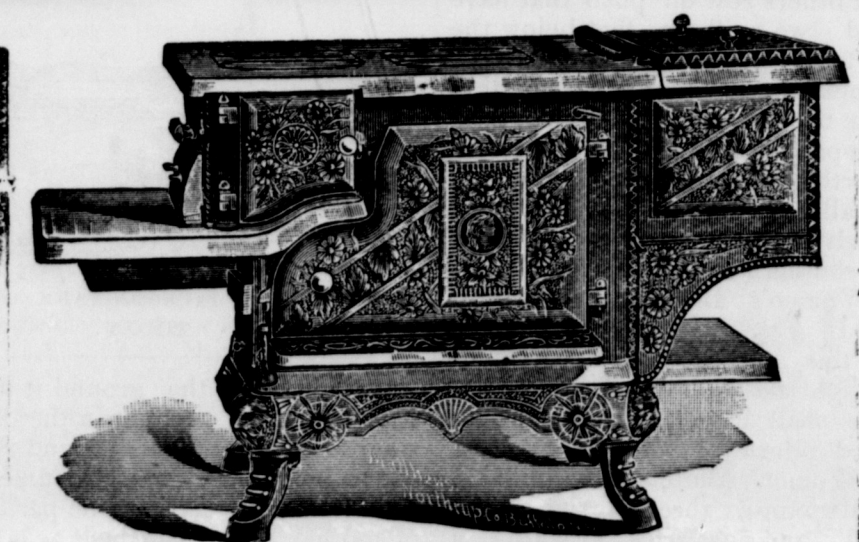
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