## EL DEMONIO PASS.

One morning not long ago, on my way to St. Louis, I stepped on board a Mississippi steamer at Memphis, and almost the first man I met on the promenade deck was my old chum, Harry Wood.

Our surprise was mutual, as we had last parted in Melbourne, Australia, ten years before, and I supposed Harry to be still at the antipodes. He had saved my life once agitated girl to a seat on a fallen tree. on the Bendigo diggings; but that is neither here nor there.

"Good heavens! Will, is this you?" "Bless my soul, Harry! Where did you

come from ?" And then we almost hugged each other, much to the disgust of a cynical newsboy, who, nevertheless, did not fail to profit by

our jubilant mood. We were soon ensconced in a quiet corner, and my friend was telling his story. It turned out that he had invested his "dust" in the manogany trade in British Honduras, had spent nine years in the business, made a snug little pile and had but lately returned to his native land.

I omit his interesting account of the details of mahogany cutting, and come at once to a particular one of his many adven-

"I had been about eight years in Honduras, when, one day, while on a rather exa lonely hacienda which I had never before as carelessly as I could and told my tended tree-hunting tramp, I came across

"The day was hot, and I rode up, dismounted, and knocked at the door of the house. It was opened, not by the all-prevading muchacho, but, much to my surprise, by a beautiful girl of nineteen, whom I knew at first glance to be an American.

"I was so completely taken aback by by this astonishing apparition that for som? time I could only stare in stupid wonder; but at last I managed to stammer,

"'Do you speak English, Senorita?" "The girl smiled as she replied, in a voice sweet as her tace:

"'Oh, yes. My parents and I came from the United States. "Then I told her who I was, and asked

her for a drink of water. "'Come in and sit down, sir,' she said, 'and I will bring some fresh from the

"'Oh, no,' I protested; 'just tell me where the spring is, and I will bring the

"Without further remark she handed me a wooden bucket and pointed to the hillside, where I found a tiny stream trickling into a rocky basin.

"I might have quenched my thirst then and there, but my curiosity was excited, and I carried the full pail back to the nishing complete cover for any number of house. The young lady gave me a glass, and after I had twice emptied it she "The pas politely asked me to 'come in and rest.'

"Now, I wasn't a bit tired, but my thirty-six years had not taken all the romance out of me, and I gladly accepted the invitation. On entering the front room, a further surprise awaited me in the shape of a refined looking and very handsome woman, apparently not much older than myself, who sat in a genuine Boston rocker engaged in sewing.

"The lady rose on seeing me, and my conductoress said: "Mamma, this is Mr. Wood, of the

Valley Camp, I presume? "I bowed an affirmative.

"Mr. Wood, this is my mother, Mrs.

Fair. My own name is Mary.'
"Mary Fair! What a find in this wilderness! I thought to myself as I went through the customary greeting. "I should say so, indeed!" I interjected,

"but go on Harry."

"Well, old man, I stayed two hours at the hacienda, and in that time learned something of the history of my fair countrywomen. I won't go into this, except to say that Mrs. Fair was a native of Baltimore, had come out to Honduras with her husband and child some years before, and had now been for ten months a widow.

"She was merely staying at the hacienda, meantime, with no companion but her daughter, in order to keep formal possession of it in the hope, so far baffied, that the surviving partner of the late Mr. Fair might make a fair settlement of the com-

"So much I heard before I lett, but afterward I got well posted in the whole business, and was lucky enough to secure for the widow quite a considerable sum of money out of the wreck of her fortunes. flit restlessly about; whether disturbed by Of course, in giving the requisite information, it was necessary to call upon my clients occasionally, and I somehow seemed to get so dull of apprehension that these

render; and by the time everything was ed like lightning, and the deadly noose fell arranged we had become such excellent harmlessly upon my back. friends that it was with real sorrow I heard Mrs. Fair at last fix upon a certain date hitch around the saddle-bow, and, spurring for her return to the states. Before this my horse, drew it away from its owner, of time came, however, a rather startling ad- whom, try as I might, I could not catch a

"In carrying on my own business I was there, take the first passing boat for the my carbine ready. port and get back on the third day.

"About nine o'clock in the morning on one of my return trips, I had ridden over half the distance between the river and my camp, when some way beyond on the forest | hand was thrust out, the bit seized and an trail I saw a white woman walking swiftly attempt made to lead the animal around the toward me. This was an unusual sight curve; but he jerked back in terror and that I drew rein in astonishment; but the pulled a hideous looking sambo into full next moment something familiar in the figure caused me to dash forward and I with a bullet through his brain, and I slid

but her sweet face bore an expression of lofty resolve which, in my eyes, only height-

from home! Your mother-' warn yon.'

... 10 warn me, Miss Fair, and of what?, selves. I asked. 'Is it possible you have walked all this distance merely to do me a service?' tion was wholly fixed on the danger in

"'There were no other way of reaching front, and I had totally forgotten the lasso you, she said simply. I had no time to find a trusty messenger; and if you were not intercepted this side of El Demonia

Pass, your life would be lost.'

I had no time to incident, when I heard a pebble grate on the trail behind me. I sprang to my feet in time to see a machete blade flash through the air. The least fraction of a

"Yes, yes,' she hurriedly answered,' and -you must not think me unwomanly—I my mother thought that one of us should down upon the skull of the swarthy brute, come to meet you; and you know I could who sank lifeless to the ground. not let her take such a journey when-when I am so young and strong.'

"Bless your noble heart! Tell me all about it, Miss Fair," said I, leading the

"Well,' she began, 'just before dark last evening, I went to the spring for water as usual I had filled the pail and was turning away, when I thought I heard some one on the other side of that little mesquite grove-you know where it ismention your name. This quite startled me; and, hardly knowing why, I crept silently to the edge of the bushes and, peeping cautiously through, saw that four wicked-looking sambos had camped down there for the night. The men were talking very low in Spanish patois, but I heard and understood every word, and could hardly keep from screaming, when I heard them arrange all the details of a plot to waylay, murder and rob you in El Demonio Pass. They said that you would have to go through there some time this forenoon and would have a great deal of money with you. I was terribly frightened, but I managed to get away without being seen, and then walked back to the house mother. We were not at all afraid of the men for ourselves, as they knew we had no money to steal; but, of course, they would have killed us it they had known their plot was discovered. Mother said we must warn you at all hazards; so I got up long before daylight this morning, when the sambos were fast asleep. Mother kissed me good-bye, and here I am.

"God bless your brave soul! How can I ever repay you?' I exclaimed. But do you know, Miss Fair, how the ruffians are

"Only with machetes, I think. least I did not see any guns, though they may have pistols,' she answered. " 'Not very likely. These fellows gene-

rally gamble away everything except their machetes, I said. "Yes' rejoined Miss Fair, 'but they are four to one, and expect to rush upon you with those horrible knives and kill you

before you have a chance to shoot.' "Now El Demonio (or the Devil's) Pass is a deep gap in the Negra hills, and is so narrow that in many places a mounted man cannot turn about in it. No better spot for an ambuscade can be imagined, as it walls are very steep and grown over almost everywhere by a dense mass of rhexia thorns, dwarf palms and stunted mango trees, fur-

"The pass was about two miles beyond the place where Miss Fair met me, and there was no way of avoiding it without making a detour of ten miles that distance. However, I did not wish to shirk the passage, as I was heavily armed with a sixteen shooter rifle carbine, slung to the saddle. and a pair of navy revolvers in the holsters, thus giving me command of twenty-eight shots—enough, I thought, to rout a whole army of half-breeds-and I felt very little dread of a scrimmage.

"With much coaxing, I persuaded Miss Fair to mount my horse, while I walked by her side, and we went slowly on.

"Before making the last sharp turn, which would have brought us within sight of the gap, a hundred yards or so ahead, I resumed the saddle, handed one of the revolvers to my companion, and asked her to remain where she was until I returned.

"Oh, Mr. Wood, let me go with you!" she cried. 'Perhaps when these bad men see that there are two of us they will run

""Two of us," indeed! I laughed. 'No, no; you might get hurt, and then how

could I face your mother?' "But I'm not a bit atraid now, and you know two pairs of eyes are better than one, and we can watch both sides of the pass at once,' pleaded my heroine.

You must not think of such a thing, Miss Fair,' I said earnestly. "Good-bye don't fear for me; I shall soon be back.' "The now trembling girl gave me her hand and I rode forward with my carbine

lying across the pommel of the saddle.

"There was no sign of lite to be seen as I entered the defile, but presently a purple macaw, perched on the top of a wild tam-arind, uttered its harsh cry and began to me or something else I did not know.

visits had to be made with increasing I was passing through a rather open part frequency.

I was passing through a rather open part of the gap, I heard a slight noise overhead, "There was, too, some other little ser-vice always cropping up that I was able to fly out from an overhanging rock. I stoop-

"Then I gave the rawhide line a half

"About twenty yards in front of me a obliged to go now and then to Balize City, great bowlder had tallen into the path, so and on these occasions I generally brought | nearly blocking it that there was barely back with me a large sum of money to pay room left for a horse to squeeze past. I my workmen. I used to ride down to made up my mind that from behind this Balize River, leave my horse at a hacienda | the decisive attack would come, and I held

"My horse went quietly along until his nose projected beyond the rock, but then he suddenly recoiled with a loud snort of alarm. The crisis had come! A black view. The next instant the miscreant tell found the pedestrienne to be Mary Fair.
"On coming close I saw that she was very pale and almost sinking with fatigue,"

off over the crupper, making the horse, completely filling the passage, a bulwark between the assailants and myself.

"I hoped that the tellows would come out of cover now and thus give me an easy vicened its charm. Springing from my horse, I seized her hand and exclaimed:

tory; but they were too cunning for this, and for a minute, perhaps, no move was " 'Merciful heaven! Miss Fair, what is | made on either side. The poor horse, unwrong? You here, on foot, and ten miles able to advance or retreat, stood trembling with fear. His quivering ears told me "My mother is quiet well. Mr. Wood,' that the rascals were still in their hiding PROGRESS readers in she replied, flushing a rosy red; 'but you place; and kneeling down on the hard path are in great danger, and-and I came to I looked steadily ahead, hoping to get a shot past his legs in case they showed them-

"But they had a safe game. My atten-

been split, but now I caught the descending blow upon my carbine barrel, and almost in the same motion brought the latter home. Mrs. Fair met us long before we

"Naturally, I stood for an instant gazing upon my work The whole episode had not occupied one-quarter of a minute. But that was enough! The two remaining villains, apparently having waited for this diversion, had crept under the belly of the horse, and, as I turned in my tracks, both together threw themselves upon me, not

having time nor room to strike effectively. "They were big, heavy ruffians, and the assault was so sudden that I was borne down at once, and lay, in a moment, helpless, with their cruel eyes glaring into mine. But yet, lying flat upon my back, I held with a death-clutch to the carbine, and all their efforts could not tear it away. The revolver, which I had put in my belt, was beneath me, and the scoundrels were so hard put to it to hold me down that neither of them dared let go to use his

"They raved and cursed, pulled and tugged like madmen; but still I held on. Then a new idea struck them. Both knelt with all their loathsome weight upon my body, and one of them, releasing the hold of his right hand, drew a knife.

"I felt then that the end had come, and I tell you, Will, that I hated awfully to die. In less time than the eye can wink, my whole life seemed to pass before me, and the instantaneous retrospection ended by an agonizing thought of the poor girl waiting for me in the gloomy forest, her heroic efforts on my behalt all in vain.

"I shut my eyes as the murderous wretch fixed his gaze upon my bare troat and raised his knite on high. But the blow did not fall; for, before the armed hand had time to descend, a blinding sheet of flame shot athwart my closed lids, a sharp report rang out, and the would-be assassin fell across my breast, his black heart pierced by a bullet from the pistol of

"His accomplice uttered a frightful vell, let go the carbine and made a dash up the hillside for cover. Too late. He had not climbed twenty feet when I threw the carrion off, jumped up and leveled my rifle. The tellow had already concealed himself behind a low bush, but I saw it shake, and on the crack of my gun he rolled down the declivity, stone dead.

"Then I turned to my preserver, who had sunk half fainting upon the ground. It was not a time for nice formalities of speech, and as I raised her tenderly, I

"The noble girl, deeply moved as my-

self, and equally oblivious of etiquette, "Why, Harry, when I heard your first shot, I followed you at once, and had just

hidden myself behind that little bush there, when the two men sprang upon you. They were too busy to notice me, and I pointed the pistol straight at the breast of the one with the knite, and pulled the trigger. That is all. How glad mother will be now that my poor father taught me how to

"We said a great deal more, you may be sure, Will, but it would not interest | making everything in its vicinity freshen inyou; and as Miss Fair was shuddering with | to smiles .- Irving.

"My life lost! Is the danger then so second's delay and my head would have horror over her own brave deed, I lifted her once more to the saddle, and we set out on our eight mile walk to her mother's

> "Shortly after this event I wound up my business and returned to the States, where I hope to spend the remainder of my life. for in all my wanderings I have found no country quite so good as our own."

"And what became of your fair friends, Harry; do you ever hear from them now?" "Yes, often," he replied. "The last

time I did so, they were well and happy. But let us go into the cabin, old fellow. It's getting rather hot on deck." Harry led the way to a small music-room off the ladies' saloon, but seeing that it was already occupied by two singularly

beautiful women. I was about to a retreat,

when he laughingly pulled me in, and

"Ladies, this is my old comrade, Mr. T .---, of whom you have heard me speak so often. Will, this is my respected mother-in-law, and this," (putting his arm around the younger lady) is my wife Mary
—a young woman formerly addicted to

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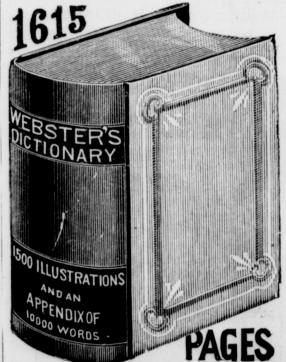
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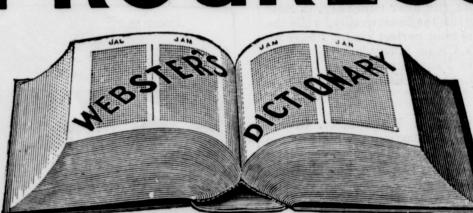
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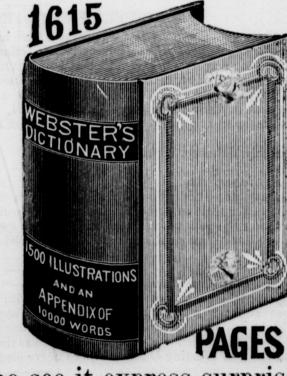
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