

## GABE HARRIS.

The wooden tanks on all the leases in the Hartford oil region had been full for many days, and every time a well flowed "oil a head" the petroleum was wasted. It ran over the tank's brim, saturated the dry leaves and formed pools on the hill sides in the depressions behind the trees and stumps.

The spring had been early; by the last week of April the snow was all gone from the recesses of the deep forest. There had been but little rain, and the warm sun had dried the rotting timber in the woods. The leaves strewn the ground were crisp and combustible as paper. They were scattered hither and thither by the frequent breezes blowing strong from the Great Lakes, and they found lodgement only where they fell into loose petroleum and became soaked. Never were there conditions more favorable for a terribly disastrous forest fire.

Everybody was careful of fire. Men, who, in sullen silence, or with angry denunciation of the Pipe Line Company, watched their oil run to waste, forbore smoking in the woods for fear a spark from a pipe would light the conflagration they all dreaded. Drilling was stopped; fires were drawn from the boilers at pumping wells.

The producers had held mass meetings and denounced the action of the company; they had even attempted violence. To all complaints the company seemed indifferent; to protect their property they had called upon the sheriff of the county and his posse, which consisted mainly of men in their employ.

From all the meetings Gabe Harris had been absent. In the attack upon the pump station he had taken no part; but every day he had gone to the office of the "Lines" and asked to have his oil "run." Having made the request and received an answer, he handed the superintendent an estimate amount of petroleum that had run to waste on his lease the previous day. The reply he received was the same that all applicants were met with.

"We have no room, but are increasing our tankage daily, and hope to relieve you soon. However, if you wish to sell your oil for immediate shipment, we will run it at once."

"Immediate shipment" oil brought twenty cents a barrel less than the market price for crude petroleum, and many of the producers, pressed by their creditors or life, were forced to accept the company's terms. But Gabe thought his credit was nearly exhausted, would not thus yield to monopoly. Rather than sell his oil for immediate shipment he would let his creditors have his property, and support his family by working on the streets of Hartford. His home he could retain, for the little portable house with its furniture was paid for, and he would not have to pay ground rent, as on the leases the surface of the ground had no value, save where the derricks and their engine houses and tanks were located.

Perhaps he would not have been so courageous had his wife not been of the opinion that his course was right. Her nature, though affectionate and gentle, was independent and self-reliant. Poverty had no terrors for her. She had endured it, had suffered many privations in practicing a rigid economy in order to save the wages Gabe had earned as a driller, so that some day they might have a lease of their own. They had secured one; on it had put down three wells, and were meeting with regularity and promptness the notes given for machinery and tanks, when the "shut down" came, and their oil joined that of other producers on the hill-side—forever lost. She was glad Gabe had not become violent and made threats as his neighbors had done, because she thought much talk a display of weakness, and she would have regretted her marriage had she at last found herself the wife of a weak man. She knew she could rely upon his silent determination to win in his conflict with the Lines without an appeal to dynamite, which remedy for their abuses was daily threatened by the producers.

Meantime Gabe formed a plan. He resolved to run his oil himself, first gauging his tanks in the presence of witnesses to ascertain the amount they contained; then he would turn the stopcock, and set a donkey engine to work pumping the petroleum into the main line. When his tanks were empty, he would demand of the "Lines" a storage certificate for the amount of the oil run.

On a clear, warm morning in May he kissed his wife good-bye for the day, and set out on horseback for Hartford to make a final demand on the company to run his oil.

His lease was at the head of the Kendall Creek Valley. From the door of his house he could see the Tuna, into which the rapid Kendall Creek emptied. Scattered through the valley were several villages, the nearest to his home being Kendall. On the bank of the creek were a great number of iron storage tanks, each one painted red, and having on one side the name of its owner and its capacity stated in white letters. Gabe had often looked at them, and thought, as many another passer-by had done, what a big fire they would make if the petroleum in one of them should be ignited! But that day as he rode toward them his thoughts were far from the subject of a conflagration in them. Suddenly his reverie was rudely interrupted. The sound of an explosion startled him, and looking up he saw a large, flat object flying in the air. Recognizing it as the roof of an iron tank, he gave rein to his horse and dashed toward the column of smoke and flame intertwined that he saw rising near the town of Kendall.

The petroleum in an iron tank was burning, and he knew with what danger the fire threatened Kendall. The tank was one of a group on the bank of the creek, and if it should overflow or another tank be ignited and burst with an explosion of gas, the burning fluid would surely be borne on the stream among the houses that further down lined its banks. From these houses the town lay in the direction the wind was blowing, and the wooden canvas-lined dwellings were as combustible as tinder. If a fire should break out among the houses on the creek, the town would soon be in ashes and many families homeless.

All of this Gabe comprehended in a moment, and he rode right into the village, shouting to the women whom he saw standing in their doorways and gazing curiously at the blazing petroleum. "Bring all the shovels and picks you can find."

Looking back over his shoulder he saw fire running up the side of the hill, the blazing leaves blown by the wind apparently in a hot race to spread the conflagration, to carry destruction far and wide. At a glance he saw the direction of the fire was toward his own home and lease—toward his wife and children, whom he had left but a half hour before.

At the telegraph station of the "Lines," he drew rein and yelled to the operator: "Tell Hartford we want men with picks and shovels, and we want them quick. Wire the railroad company for a special train."

The operator, who had already reported an iron tank on fire, promptly sent Gabe's message. Before it reached Hartford, Gabe was on his way at full speed of his horse. He rode to within a hundred yards of the burning tank and hitched his horse to a tree on the windward side of the fire. Then snatching a shovel from one woman and a pickaxe from another, he ran to a bend of the creek and began the construction of a dam.

Two old men and some boys came to help him, while the women brought picks and shovels and laid them on the bank of the creek in readiness for use by the husbands and brothers, who, to a man, were attending a mass meeting of the producers in Hartford.

The blazing oil heated the tank, the flames roaring and struggling to maintain a perpendicular against the wind, growing in force and blowing steadily.

Gabe was working with wonderful energy making a sluice for the escape of the water, at the same time directing his assistants how to build a dam, which was to be constructed of stones laid one on the other and banked with dirt. The old men, whose strength was unequal to the efforts they put forth in the excitement, leaned on their shovels presently, and took an observation on the progress of the fire, and reckoned on the probability of the small force being able to complete the dam before the overflow would come.

"Why, Gabe, how can you work so hard in this heat with your coat on?" one of them remarked querulously, as he wiped his brow with a soiled handkerchief.

"Didn't think of that," said Gabe, and in a moment he was at work again without coat or vest to impede him. "Does go easier," he said cheerily, as he strengthened the side of the sluice with a large stone. "Now, if you old fellows ain't played out you can shovel some dirt behind that rock."

"I ain't played out," one of the old men said, "but I'm thinkin' you'd better git fast as your horse can carry you, or you won't save much from that little house of yours up to Summit."

One of the boys stopped in his digging, his breath growing short, and looked at the conflagration sweeping up the mountain side. "Gabe, hadn't I better ride up and tell your wife the fire's comin'?" he said.

"No; you stay here and dig. Mrs. Harris knows as much about the fire comin' her way as we do. She's got eyes."

Yet, with all his cheerful manner and the courage in his voice, Gabe did not dare to look up from his work, for fear the sight of the tempest of flames that was rushing to the destruction of his home would overcome his resolution to save Kendall its possibility.

"But don't you think you'd better go, Gabe?" the old man queried. Charity begins to home, you know."

"Stop pesterin' me and work, or get out of the road!"

The old man, offended, shoved in a desultory way.

"Spoonfuls don't count; 'tain't the little grains of sand we want here, but shovelfuls," and suiting action to word, Gabe dumped a pile of sand against the stone he had just put in place. The old man, feeling that he was useless, threw down his shovel and walked away; the other one joined him, and together they went to chatter with the women who were standing in the highway, alternately gazing at the fire and noting the progress of the dam.

"Is the dam done?" asked one woman eagerly of the old men.

"Done? It will never be done, for the overflow will come first."

"Better get out your things," said the other old man.

This suggestion stamped the women. They scattered, each to her home, the children crying after their mothers, who were hastening to save keepsakes and small valuables. Here and there a frantic woman carried a baby, but was heedless of its cries.

Meanwhile Gabe was cheering the boys, some of whom were beginning to flag—one, then another of them, pausing to draw a shirt sleeve over his perspiring forehead.

"Here, Dick, you carry stones awhile. You help him, Bill. And you two fellows there with picks, take shovels. We'll beat that fire, or we ain't men."

Thus encouraged, the boys worked with increased vigor, and Gabe saw with glowing hope that the dam was assuming proportions which would offer effective resistance to considerable of a "boil over," as the overflow was sometimes called.

Once again the boy who had wanted to ride to Gabe's home with news of the approaching fire returned to the subject.

"Tain't too late yet, Gabe. Hadn't I better go?"

"You can go if you want to, Dick, but only to my house. We need all hands here."

The boy shamefully renewed his exertions, and the others, in dogged imitation of Gabe's unflinching zeal, worked with their heads down, bestowing all their attention to obeying his orders.

There was silence among them except when Gabe spoke; but amid the roaring of the fire in the tank they could hear the shrill voices of the women screaming to each other, and presently there came to their ears the welcome screech of one of the little narrow-gauge engines. Buoyed by a repetition of the whistle, the little band seemed to redouble their efforts. Soon again the locomotive shrieked, nearer to them, and there was silence until the rumble of the train was heard. Then the boys looked up; but Gabe did not pause in the particular task he was engaged upon—packing the sand between some stones. The train ran up to a point opposite the tanks, and before it was at a standstill men carrying picks and shovels had leaped from the platforms and were running to the dam, shouting to the workers to make way for new men.

Then Gabe paused. He looked up the valley, but could not see his home for the dense smoke that was blowing over the summit. He was jostled aside by the new comers who came to the work like a company charging a battery. Gabe felt that he would not be needed now. He could no longer restrain his heart. It called on him louder, more urgently than it had done when there was time for him to get to his house before the conflagration had reached it, and he obeyed.

In the tumult he was not missed, and no one heard the clatter of his horse's hoofs over the stony road. Bending low over the pommel of his saddle he dashed into the smoke. He could not see, but he trusted his horse, now mad with fright. Presently, he said: "Thank God!"

The lessening of the heat on his cheek, then a breath of cool air, told him that which he had not observed—the wind had veered and had carried the fire off in another direction, west of his house, and it was safe. He knew, too, from faith in his wife, that she had conducted the children to a place of safety. Soon he was out of the blinding smoke, and the horse slackened the pace of his own accord. Then he dismounted and climbed the side of the mountain where he soon found his family on a point of rocks.

"I saw it all," said his wife; "but I did not know it was you working there all the time till I saw the horse start up the valley. Then I knew." And she kissed him.

"But the overflow! Did it come?"

"Yer. Just after I lost sight of you in the smoke."

"And the dam?"

"It held. See, Kendall is safe; and there would not have been time to save it after the train came."

And in the look of pride and love she gave him Gabe found his reward.

A DEAD LETTER OFFICE.

Cousin Ruth was playing waltzes for the young people. Near her stood John Graham, one of her old beaux. He had lately come home after an absence of twenty years.

John was looking at Ruth with apparent concern, counting the lines that began to mark her pale face and noting the streaks of gray that ran through her hair.

Had been so dark and thick the last time he had seen it! Then he gazed thoughtfully at the merry young dancers, and at last, feeling that he ought to say something, asked:

"Who is that graceful, yellow-haired girl?"

"That is Grace Deering, Cousin Tom's daughter," Ruth replied. Her hearer exclaimed wonderingly:

"Tom Deering's daughter! I remember him so well!" After a pause he added: "I thought you and he would have been married long ago."

Cousin Ruth smiled, shook her head, and played on without speaking.

"The last time I saw you," said John, musingly, "you were waltzing with Tom himself—do you remember it?"

Did she recall it? Twenty years had passed since Young Jack Graham had bidden her a cold and brief farewell, and she, amazed and awe-struck by his manner, had merely said, "Good-bye," and let him go. Yet the memory of that night had never left her.

"I wonder why Ruth is playing that old-fashioned waltz," said the elders of the party to each other, and John Graham listened spell-bound to the well remembered strain.

"Ah," he said suddenly, "the tune" recalls the past. I sent you a bunch of violets that very night, and hoped that you would wear them. O Ruth, what a heartless flirt you were!"

Old as John had grown, his eyes wore a familiar expression as they met hers.

As soon as the young people had tired of dancing, Cousin Ruth went up to her room and locked herself in, giving way to strange emotion. From the lowest depths of her trunk she took an old brass-bound box that had not been disturbed for twenty years. Unlocking it, she hastily raised the lid. Instead of the fresh, sweet violets she had left in it, there were a few crisp, shapeless and withered petals, beneath which for the first time she discovered a bit of paper, on which were written these words:

"Once for all, Ruth, is it yes or no? If yes, wear these violets at the ball tonight. I go away tomorrow; and it is no, I shall not return."

For a few moments Ruth stood motionless. Clasp the little missive she went down stairs. One of her nephews passing her in the hallway, thought how pretty she must have been when she was a girl. Her face was aglow with an unusual beauty. She went into the sitting-room, where John Graham sat alone. He was gazing moodily into the embers of the fire. Ruth approached, and, putting the piece of yellow paper gently into his hand, said calmly:

"I never saw it until this instant."

He looked at her in mute astonishment as she was about to turn away.

"Would you have worn my flowers had you found the note?" he asked hurriedly.

"Ah, Ruth, is it now too late?"

The merry and laughing voices in the adjoining room where all the young people were so happy and joyous drowned her blushing answer to all but John Graham; he alone heard it and was very happy.—Short Stories.

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## A Call for Mr. Henry.

At a political meeting the speakers and audience were very much disturbed by a man who constantly called out, "Mr. Henry, Henry, Henry! I call for Mr. Henry!"

After several interruptions of this kind at each speech, a young man ascended the platform, and was soon airing his eloquence in magniloquent style, striking out powerfully in his gestures, when the old cry was heard for Mr. Henry.

Putting his hand to his mouth like a speaking trumpet, the man was bawling at the top of his voice, "Mr. Henry, Henry, Henry, Henry!" I call for Mr. Henry!"

The chairman now rose and remarked that it would oblige the audience if the gentleman would refrain from any further calling for Mr. Henry, as that gentleman was then speaking.

"Is that Mr. Henry?" said the disturber of the meeting. "Thunder! that can't be Mr. Henry?" Why, that's the little chap that told me to holler."

**Murder in America.**  
Mr. Andrew W. White, United States Minister to Brussels, has been lecturing on the subject of murder in the United States. He says the number of deaths by murder in America are more than double the average of the most criminal country in Europe, and year after year that number increases. Even Italy and Corsica, where crimes of violence are frequent, are below the United States in the proportion of murders occurred in the United States during 1890, and in 1891 the number increased to 6,000. The greater number of men who committed these crimes are still at large, and statistics show that only one murderer in fifty suffers capital punishment.

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Another says:—"Nothing makes one's dinner pass off more pleasantly than to have nice little dishes which are easily digested. Eagar's Wine of Rennet has enabled my cook to put three extra dishes on the table with which I puzzle my friends."

Another says:—"I am a hearty eater, but as my work is mostly mental, and as I find it impossible to take muscular exercise, I naturally suffer distress after a heavy dinner; but since Mrs. — has been giving me a dish made from your Wine of Rennet over which she puts sometimes one, sometimes another sauce, I do not suffer at all, and I am almost inclined to give your Rennet the credit for it, and I must say for it that it is simply GORGEOUS as a dessert!"

Another says:—"I have used your Wine of Rennet for my children and find it to be the only preparation which will keep them in health. I have also sent it to friends in Baltimore, and they say that it enables their children to digest their food, and save them from those summer stomach troubles so prevalent and fatal in that climate."

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