

The Wolf

An unshaven face appeared at the hedge opening. The eyes were small and shifty, the hair short and coarse. The owner of the face was lying on the grass in the shadows. He had been asleep and an unusual sound awakened him.

He was ragged and coarse and unkempt. His face was pale—save where the stubby beard covered it—and his talor seemed unwholesome.

He was just out of prison. He had been there nearly five years, and his crime was burglary. They had given him a little money when he left the prison, but that was soon gone. It was the drink that took most of it. Now he was a vagabond, a tramp and he would soon drift back into crime. There seemed to be nothing else left for him. Garbed as he was, the prison seal upon him, he had no right to expect decent employment.

He had been out of prison two weeks and in that time had made no effort to secure work. He loitered along the highway, getting food where he could and sleeping "neath the sky."

It was the laughter of a child that awakened him. At first, being confused with sleep, he didn't know what it was. Then he heard it again and except to the hedge opening and peeped through. He saw a beautifully kept lawn with thick hedges bordering it and at one side a summer home with a wide porch. There were vines and roses about the porch and the place had an air of wealth and refinement.

Close to the hedge, some twenty feet away from the opening, a boy was playing. He was a handsome little fellow of barely five years, prettily dressed and with an intelligent face.

The skulker in the hedge watched him with lowering look. The child represented the class with which he was at war. The laws were made by this prattler's father and his kind too oppress unfortunates. If he, the vagabond, had a child, would he be like this prattler youngster?

The man made a queer noise in his throat. It was meant for a laugh. He hadn't laughed in so long a time that the effort almost hurt him. His child would be in rags, his playground an alley where he would pick up his first lessons in the school of crime. Why should this be so? It was unjust. Why should half the world toil and suffer that the other half might live in ease and comfort?

"The boy had a wooden Noah's ark on wheels and he was marshaling the animals on the sod before him. It was their unsteadiness on the insecure footing that made him laugh. With much care he arranged them in line, but the unwieldy elephant toppled over and dragged the others with him. And the boy laughed again.

A sudden desire for companionship seized the man—even the companionship of a child. He crawled through the opening and seated himself on the grass.

"Hello, son," he said.

The boy looked up.

"Hello," he answered. The child showed no surprise and no dread. The big brown eyes regarded him for an instant and then turned back to the cargo of the ark.

The man was pleased at this. Shabby and uncouth as he was he had not alarmed the child.

"Big family you got there, son," he said.

"Very naughty family," the boy returned. "Dey don't ston' up nice. Dey stumple over 'em time Sec'."

And the line toppled and wavered and went down.

"That was the elephant's fault," said the vagabond. "His tusks booted that brown one there in front of him."

The boy picked up the fallen animal.

"At's a wolf," he said. "It's nose is broken des a little." He looked at the block in his hand with a commiserating air. Then he stared up at the vagabond. "Ooo looks somedn' like a wolf," he said.

The vagabond slowly smiled and his strong teeth shone.

"That's what I am," he answered. He liked the title. "I'm a wolf all right."

But neither his tone nor his fierce face frightened the lad.

"Oo is much the big to put in my ark," he laughed. "Dere is only dees room for little wolfy. Go deesid' see Cap'n Noah nowhere, does oo?"

The vagabond looked about the grass, crawling on hands and knees, but the missing block could not be found.

"Maybe Noah got drowned," he suggested.

"No," said the boy. "I fink dat naughty tiker eated him. See how fat he is."

He laughed as he held up the striped block and the man laughed, too.

The boy began to reload the boat.

"Poor Cap'n Noah, he's gone," he said in a pathetic tone, "an' Sheem is gone, and somebody has broke off de wabbit's ears, an' I tant find de tam-mel no more. Pity dey ain't it?"

"Very bad," said the vagabond. "I'm sorry I can't make myself look like a camel, too."

"Go lan't kuffin like a camel," said the boy emphatically. "Oo is des a wolf. Tam-mels has bumps on dere necks an' wolve have sharp teeth. Will oo play horse?"

The vagabond nodded and the boy

proceeded to lead the man just as about his shoulders.

"Bring a wolve," he said. "I can't be expected to play horse as it should be played."

"Wolve?" cried the boy as he caught up the cord. "How be a doed horse an' lack a wolve?"

Much to his surprise the man found himself doing what he was told to do. For five years he had been doing what he was told to do, but always unwillingly. This was different. He caught up the tongue of the wagon and started toward the house, the boy dancing about behind him with many "wolves" and "dit-ahs." Leaping and prancing—to the intense delight of the driver—the vagabond had almost reached the porch, when a tall man suddenly appeared on the upper step.

The vagabond stopped and stared. The man was looking down at him and his gray eyes seemed very keen and bright.

The vagabond knew him—did he know the vagabond? They had held the same relative positions before—the gray eyed man and the unhappy criminal. Then the gray eyes had searched his face as they were searching it now. For this was the judge and this the burglar.

The vagabond drew a quick breath. He was growing restive under that keen gaze.

"There, Davie," said the gray eyed man, "take your playthings into the house. Mamma wants you."

The boy came close to the vagabond as he drew away the cord. He patting him lightly on the arm.

"He ain't really a horse, daddy," said the child. "He's a wolve."

The vagabond, still held by that earnest gaze, slowly nodded, as if to confirm the child's words.

"Run in, laddie," said the tall man, and the child, with the ark in his arms, laughingly obeyed. "Sit here, Rodney."

The vagabond stared at the tall man. How he had hated him! How he had longed to throttle him when he pronounced that five-year sentence! And this judge, with his smooth cheeks and his fine airs, was another representative of the class with which he, the vagabond, had been eternally at odds. He hesitated, then took the proffered chair.

"You know me, then?" he muttered.

"Yes, Rodney. I remember some faces. What are you doing?"

"Guess you can tell by lookin' at me," retorted the vagabond. His tone was harsh, his manner sullen. "I'm what the boy called me—a wolve. I prowled along the roadway, an' I eat the bones that are thrown to me." The tall man shook his head.

"Is that the best you can do, Rodney?"

"It's the best I can do, shall I get back to the old life. That'll be pretty soon now."

Again the tall man shook his head.

"I heard good reports from you," he said. "They told me you could be trusted."

The sullen eyes were raised.

"Who takes any interest in a wolve like me?"

"More people than you imagine, no doubt. One of them was a good woman who saw you and talked with you in prison. She left a little money with me to give to you. She told me to say that she hoped it would help to start you on the right path—on the right path, Rodney."

"Few paths are open to me," growled the vagabond.

But he was affected for all his assumed hardness.

"I meant to send this money to you in time, Rodney, but they let you out sooner than I expected. I will find the good woman's letter presently. It is fortunate that your steps were turned this way."

His words were kind, his voice gentle.

The vagabond looked up. His mouth twitched, his gaze drooped. These were the first kind words he had heard since he passed through the prison gates. And they came from the man who had burned him with that five-year sentence.

"If you'll let me have what you say is intended for me, I'll go," he hoarsely muttered.

"Not yet, Rodney. You are in no hurry. Have you any trade?"

"I know somethin' about lookin' after 'em. But what's the use? If I got a job I'd lose it again soon as they found out I was a jailbird. An' somebody's sure to come along an' know me."

The judge drew a quick breath.

"It's a small world, Rodney," he said, "and the people who know things to our discredit seem to be great travelers. Do you understand anything about gardening?"

"When I was a boy I was two years at a reform farm an' they did gardenin' there."

The tall man leaned forward.

"How would you like to stay here and look after this place?" he asked.

The vagabond stared.

"Do you mean it?" he hoarsely demanded.

"Yes."

"But you know me?"

"Yes."

"You know my record?"

"Yes."

"Then how—how can you trust me?"

The judge slowly smiled.

"I knew there is something good in you," he slowly said. "There's something good in the worst of men. But the good in you is nearer the surface. A better judge than I am found it out. I mean the child." He paused and smiled. "When I saw you romping with Davie I realized that here was a man who was worth whatever help I could give him. When I saw that the boy had so fear of you, that he liked

you and treated you as a companion, I felt that I could trust you—trust you and help you."

The vagabond sat and twirled his battered hat. His eyes were hidden. It was some little time before he looked up. The judge was standing with his hand outstretched.

The vagabond hesitated. He looked about him as if he thought of running away. Then he took a step forward and clasped his grimy hand about the firm white one.

"God bless you!" he murmured.

A childish laugh rang out from the hallway.

"Here I am, Mister Wolf," cried the boy. "Tan oo see me?"

So the vagabond, decently clad and cleanly shaved, found employment. The work was not difficult and he did it well. He was the boy's faithful guardian. The judge trusted him implicitly and he never was tempted to take advantage of his many opportunities. Gradually he lost the prison air. His face brightened. His eyes were no longer shifty.

Then one morning he called his employer away from the porch.

"Judge," he said, when they were at a little distance from the house, "I'm in trouble."

The keen eyes watched him closely.

"Well, Rodney?"

"I've been found out!"

"Yes."

"An' old pal saw me here."

"Well?"

"He thinks I'm lying low for a purpose."

There was no use talking him it wasn't his. He wouldn't believe me. He knew me before, you see. He was a good pal. He pulled me out of the water once."

"Go on, Rodney."

"He thinks I'm layin' low here so as to get a chance to loot the house, an' he wants a share in it."

"I see."

The man hesitated.

"It's bad enough to have some fellow you don't care for come up an' say you're a jailbird, but it's harder to have a pal find you."

"I can understand that."

The man drew a quick breath.

"Judge," he said, "look me in the eyes an' say, Rodney, I trust you."

The judge did not smile and the look from his gray eyes was steady.

"Rodney," he said, "I trust you."

Then the man abruptly turned away.

That night the judge was suddenly awakened. He listened intently. He heard muffled voices from below the window. He sprang from the bed. Before he could reach the window a pistol shot rang out and this was followed by the sound of running feet.

The judge leaped across the sill and peered into the darkness.

"Are you there, Rodney?"

"Yes, judge."

"What was it?"

"A drunken prowler fired his pistol to frighten me."

"You are all right?"

"Yes, judge. Good night."

The next morning early the judge looked about for Rodney. He found him in the barn bandaging his arm.

"What's this, Rodney?"

"Just a flesh wound, sir. The bullet raked my arm. Jim came here expectin' my help. He couldn't understand why I stopped him. When I held him back he got ugly—he has a very quick temper—an' the gun went off."

"We must have that arm properly dressed," said the judge quickly. "Is it painful?"

"Not nearly so painful as the thought of havin' an' old pal shoot me." He looked up quickly. "There's one thing that's sure, judge. I can't stay here."

The judge nodded.

"Yes, Rodney. You're quite right. And I've found a place to send you. It's out in Nevada, where I have a brother. I've written him all about you. Past records don't count among the miners. They're all on an equal footing there. Brother Tom will give you a welcome and find you work."

The man nodded.

"Thank you, judge. That's the place for me."

The judge slowly smiled.

"I have said that they were all on a common footing there, Rodney, but there is one thing you mustn't fail to bear in mind."

"And what's that, judge?"

"You mustn't forget that you are a man, now, and not a wolve."—W. R. Rouse in Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Church Built from One Tree.

A congregation at Santa Rosa, Cal., rejoices in the fact that it worships in a church which has been built from a single redwood tree. The main building of the church is eighty feet long by forty feet wide, and, in addition, there are an audience room large enough to seat four hundred persons, another room seating ninety, a pastor's study, and the usual out-offices. Every bit of the church, even to the shingles on the roof, was made from the wood of a single tree, and yet when the edifice was completed, there was an abundant store of timber left over. It has been estimated by scientific men that this giant redwood tree was no less than two thousand years old.

Radio-Telegraphy and Balloons.

The German military authorities are experimenting with the application of wireless telegraphy to balloons carrying self-registering apparatus. One object is to make the balloons descend at any desired moment. This is effected by placing in the balloon a receiver of electric waves connected with mechanism controlling a valve. When wireless messages are received the valve opens, and the balloon descends.

A sparkproof smokestack has been invented which promises relief to the forest fire fighters if it should be adopted by railroads traversing forest regions.

After being tested for some time on a Kentucky railroad, says the Technical World, it was demonstrated that not a spark escaped from the stack. So well does the Forestry Department at Washington think of this ingenious invention that it has asked the New York State Public Service Commission to compel all railroads in the State to equip their locomotives with the new stack.

The principle which led to the invention of the sparkproof stack is that all solids emerging from a locomotive smokestack, influenced by the pressure of the exhaust, hug close to the edge of the pipe and only the smoke comes up through the center. In this new stack a simple trap catches the sparks and trappers at the edge of the circle and sends them falling down shafts arranged on either side of the stack to the roadway below.

How to Shoot with a Revolver.

To begin shooting along the barrel of a six-shooter, as in target gallery practice, is a handicap to the man who wants to learn the art at its best. The hand and eye, of course, work together with all weapons and in all combats; but there is a difference between the revolver and the rifle. The best form of aim is not the use of the six-shooter means. You point your hat or your foot instinct. You cannot help pointing your finger directly and straight at any object, no matter how hard you try. Yet surely you do not sight down your finger. In the best work with the six-shooter you point with the barrel just as you point with your finger, or really, you point with your wrist and forearm, and the six-shooter is the finger at your wrist, the lengthening of your arm. That is the theory and creed of the six-shooter's outfit.

Speak Kindly.

A man was once saved by a very poor boy from drowning. After his restoration he said to him:

"What can I do for you, my boy?"

"Speak a kind word to me some time," replied the boy, the tears gushing from his eyes. "I ain't got a mother like some of these."

A kind word! Think of it. This man had it in his power to give the boy money, clothes, playthings, but the little fellow craved nothing so much as a kind word now and then. If the man had ever so little heart, the boy must certainly have said the wish granted. A kind word! You have many such spoken to you daily, and you do not think much of their value; but that poor boy in the village, at whom everybody laughs, would think that he had found a treasure if some one spoke a kind word to him.

A Lightless Light-house.

On a sunken reef 200 feet distant from Stornoway Light-house is a remarkable beacon which warns mariners with the help of a light which is only apparent. The beacon is a cone of cast-iron plates, superimposed with a lantern containing a gas light prism. The prism derives its light from refracting rays emitted from the light-house, and the optical distance is marvelous. Maritime authorities suppose that there is a light-house on the beacon itself and many seamen will not believe otherwise. But the object of the beacon is attained when the navigator near the reefed light which indicates the perilous rock below. This beacon has been in use more than half a century, and since it was first in position others have been placed in other neighborhoods to make clear points of danger.—Technical World.

Why Foam is White.

"How white the foam is," said the pretty girl, in a voice modulated by the subtle stroke drawn across her red mouth. "Yet the sea is green. Why, then, isn't the foam green?"

But the young sophomores laughed in derision of such ignorance.

"Oo, you are ignorant!" he said. "Beer is brown, but its foam is white, too. Shake up black ink and you get white foam. Shake up red ink and the result is the same."

"A body that reflects all the light it receives without absorbing any is always white. All bodies powdered into tiny diamond form, so that they throw back the light from nearly facets, absorb none of it and are white by consequence. Powdered black marble, for instance, is white. And foam is water powdered into these small diamonds, and hence is white, too."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

How He Found Them Out.

A shopkeeper, the head of a large firm, one evening, after business hours, caused his saleswomen to be assembled before him.

"There are among you," he said to them, "several individuals whom I know to be guilty of theft from our establishment. I have the names of every one of the culprits, but I neither wish to mention their names nor to hand them over to the police. Mean while my firm cannot continue to employ thieves, and I ask those among you whom it may concern not to enter my premises any more after this night. If you dare, after this, to put in an appearance, I shall hand you over once over to a detective, who will be in the house."

Upon this the girls were allowed to go home. Next morning six of them did not come.



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