BLUFF.

…river!
…r!
…ows shiver
…ad wild
…silence
…ished islands,
…and the sand bars
…ight wave with gold.

…ss river!
…d river!
…remember ever
…and skies so blue
…summer day that shone here,
When we were all alone here,
And the blue eyes were too wise
To speak the love they knew?

O quiet, impassive river!
O still, unanswering river!
The quivering willows quiver
As midnight winds moan and rave.
From the past a voice is calling,
From heaven a star is falling,
And dew wells in the bluebells
Above her hillside grave.

—Washington Post.

A LITTLE MAVERICK.

All that hot August day there had been a cloud of dust in the east like a column of smoke. No breath of air stirred it, nor did it seem to advance a yard. The sky was a steely blue, the air quivered like the white heat from a cauldron of molten metal. In the crisp and dry buffalo grass myriad insect life gave to the simmering air a dreamy, monotonous sound like the …ming of far away bees.

…afternoon passed, darkness gathered … with the rising moon came a cool … from off the snow crested … cloud of dust subsided … line of moving, white …

… drew near a gaunt … suddenly out of the … long, dolorous howl and fled across the plain. After him, as if they had risen from the earth by magic, went a pony and rider, a bronzed, grizzled old man, as gaunt and evidently dreading the new comers as much as the wolf.

The caravan, numbering thirty wagons, went into camp in the form of a hollow square, the people and animals inside the barrier of wagons. The sound of voices, the smell of cooking, the laughter of children and the red glow of the camp fires made a bit of welcome life in the solemn land, breaking the soundless monotony of centuries.

Later, when the fires were low and when the only noises were the champing of the animals and the tread of the sentry on watch, a strange, elfish figure ran out of the stockade and began to dance in the moonlight—a girl of 12 or thereabouts, with big, sparkling eyes and short, black curls flying over her pretty brow. A bearded face was thrust out under a wagon cover and a gruff but not unkindly voice called:

"Come in, you Maverick. Want Injuns to git ye?"

The child laughed mockingly and continued her dance. After the third call the big man jumped out of the wagon and ran after her. When she could run no longer she dropped like a …, remaining stiff and still, while he carried her to the wagon.

"Gritty, ain't she, marm?" he said.

The lady addressed was a tall, thin person with a wrinkled face, sharp black eyes behind spectacles, corkscrew curls, and a habit of wearing little shoulder capes in the hottest weather. She was a New England school teacher going west to better herself.

"'Gritty' is western, I presume, Mr… Chase," said the lady, Miss Mary Ann …. "What on earth do you call … Maverick for?" Miss Reed clicked needles viciously. She knitted all … jolting in a corner of the wagon. … martyrdom.—

"… my kentry, Texas," said Chase, … calls thein stray cattle that don't … branded Mavericks; they don't … to no herd, an' them that finds …"

"… got folks in Denver," said …

"Hmm," whispered the man, with … look toward the sleeping … "A letter that met me two days … the east bound wagon train told … pa and ma had died suddenly, … children had scattered, an' he'd … heered o' Janet at all. Her gran'… had kep' her from a baby, an' … old lady dyin', Janet's uncle jest … her off to Denver, where her … livin'. Don't seem nobody to …

"… didn't you send her back with …?" asked Miss Reed.

"… they was only harf way, an' … grub; they wouldn't take …

"… ick was a great pet on … very one liked her and … ight presence to the … the camp fires even … to hear her sing the … her grandmother had … held tired babies till … were numb, she told … children and was a … at every wagon—at … train most of all.

… joined the train in … ged to an unfortu… ase called "Pikes." … sickly man, drove … the mother, half … seldom lifted her head from her bed; and the nine children, practically of name, took care of themselves and of a little, motherless girl, sent out with this family to her father in Denver.

This baby, Rose, was a merry little creature of 3, beautiful and winning and much liked. But the days were tiresome ones, and as the Browns had charge of her no one interfered, though many of the party wondered who could have trusted her with them.

The two youngest Browns, homely, faded little souls, were faithful guardians over her. The other children were unruly and rude, but these two seemed like some good old folks who had lived out well rounded lives and been translated back to earth to begin over again.

To these children Janet's presence was the one happiness of their day, nor could she tell stories enough to satisfy them. Once Janet, coming unobserved, heard the youngest Pike telling baby Rose, who was cross, one of her own stories.

"You sorrerful little things," cried Janet, "can't you make 'em up yourselves of your own?"

For a week at night the sentry at the stockade saw far off, black, moving specks on the horizon, and weary and anxious were the hours of darkness, early the start, eager the hope to get on without the attack. Each man would mutter in the gray dawn, as haggard and white he harnessed his team. "Thank God, another night of peace; no Indians yet!"

"Janet," said Chase one morning, when she came to watch him harness his team, "ef them Injuns comes an' gits the better o' us you git on that ere leetle gray pony, Nance, thar, an' take Rose an' set out fer them low hills 'cross thar."

"Nance likes me; I feed her my bread."

"All of us like ye, ye Maverick, ye're so chipper allus," Chase said, admiringly. "The Injuns sha'n't git ye ef we kin help it."

That day a young wife was sick, and all the long hours Janet tended the wailing baby its mother was too ill to care for. She looked back at the line of wagons and thought of baby Rose, that she loved best of all.

"Those good little Pikes will see to her," she thought, hopefully. But the two little Pikes were weary that day—they lay in a strange stupor, those pathetic guardians—and no one noted them. Locked in each other's arms they lay unheeded, and one was drifting away beyond earthly aid.

At the night halt Janet, freed from her charge, ran for Rose. Then the news flew from wagon to wagon. The child was gone, and no one had seen her all day. Miss Reed remembered seeing her running among the sunflowers at breakfast time.

"Ain't nobody going for her?" cried Janet, in agony. She ran to each wagon, to be met with the same answer, "It cannot be done."

"You see, Janet," said Chase, a sob in his voice, "there's fifty women an' children here an', only thirty men to guard 'em; there may be hundreds of Injuns out there. We daren't leave camp or they'll know it, an' we've searched all the plains with a glass an' there's no sign of her."

"But ter-morrer"— choked Janet.

"She'll not be a-wanderin', maisy—don't ask me to tell ye, but there's Injuns an' perarie wolves."

"We must only tell her father she died—never the whole truth," said Miss Reed, coming to the wagon for her rubbers, which she wore on the driest nights.

Chase walked away and sat down by the fire. "No, don't talk no more, Janet," as the child went to him, "it aren't no use. I'm the only old Injun fighter in camp. I've got ter take the lead."

Janet went quietly to her wagon. By the light of a flickering candle she printed, in a round, childish hand, on a bit of paper, these few words:

Mr. Chase, I am goin' to find Rose an' take Nance. I ain't no good in fightin' Injuns, an' I heard you say my folks was dead. Don't you come for me 'cause they need you. They don't me that is only a Maverick. JANET.

She pinned this note to his blanket, then went softly out in the starlight to the corner where Nance stood. Fearlessly she blanketed the animal, fastened the surcingle, then led her quietly out to an open space between two wagons.

She looked back at the dying camp fires, the group of men sleeping in the light of them, their guns by their sides, the silhouettes of the women against the wagon curtains, Miss Reed's prim and queer with the funny curls. How safe it was here, how lonely and dreadful outside! She climbed on the pony and turned her head toward the east; the animal, thinking of her home, struck into a run. The sentinel saw Nance disappear in the darkness, but did not note the little rider.

"That onery gray pony as ain't been worked all the way hev got loose an' gone," he said to the crowd of excited men who ran out at the noise.

Every unusual rattling of gravel under Nance's hoofs quickened the beating of Janet's heart; every dark object was to her a beast of prey, every sound the coming of the red men. She thought of the old time stories of Indian warfare and cruelty her grandmother had told her; of the horrors of the plains she men spoke of by the camp fires.

"But I'm the only one in all that train as hasn't anybody to care for me," she said, bravely. "There was only me to be spared."

When the moon rose it showed no living object on the great plains. The camp was far out of vision, and not even a spark from its fires glimmered on the still air. Absolute quiet and solitude; the world asleep.

At the top of a little rise in the road Janet halted to rest her tired horse and once more to look around the lonely land. The quivering of Nance startled her, and peering ahead Janet saw a thrilling sight she never afterward forgot.

There in the moonlit roadstead baby Rose, her yellow curls disheveled, her face tear stained and dirty, her gown torn, her little feet bare and bleeding. She still clung to her flowers that had led her astray.

Near the child a lean wolf sat on his haunches, regarding her with a profound and melancholy stare.

At the sight of the pony the wolf gave a weird howl, turned and trotted swiftly across the plains. The child with a wild cry ran forward.

"I knew you'd turn, Janie. I losted all day an' hungry, an' the doggie comed an' singed. I had a doggie once, Beatrice, where mamma was. Oh, I want my mamma!"

Janet held her close, kissed her tears away and then she gave her the food she had brought—her own supper. She lifted her to the pony's back, led Nance to some low hills that might give them shelter and there waited patiently for daylight.

"I never knew nights was so long before!" sighed Janet, holding Rose in her tired little arms. "Nance is laid down an' asleep. Only me awake, an' I must keep watch for wolves an' Injuns. Now the moon's goin', too, an' it gets lonesomer. I'll say all the hymns I know to keep me awake an' brave."

Try as she would her head would droop, the words grow confused and weary. As the moon sank and the chill increased, the shivering child covered Rose with her own skirt, and then to keep warm and awake walked up and down beside her.

"What was it, that low, trampling sound coming louder and nearer so fast?" Janet caught up Rose and ran back to the hill; the horse followed, trembling in every limb. Just beyond the hill in a furious gallop came a mass of horses, and dimly amid the fog of dust about them Janet saw the forms of their Indian riders.

"Joe said Injuns was wuss'n wolves!" sobbed Janet. "Dear Lord, let them go on an' not find us!"

The Indians passed on, their paths marked by clouds of sand that helped mercifully to hide the children.

"They're gone!" cried Janet; but hardly were the words uttered when there came another louder trampling, the clicks of arms against saddles and more horses—hundreds of them it seemed to Janet—and then, bringing joy to her heart, an American voice calling "Forward!" as the cavalry men pressed on after the retreating Indians.

The danger having passed the tired child fell asleep with Rose in her arms. When she woke it was bright sunlight. Her dazed eyes saw Nance feeding nearby, Rose running toward her and an oldish man, with a gray beard and bronzed face, looking at her kindly. By his side was the lean wolf Rose had called a dog.

"I knew it was a tame one!" cried Janet.

"In course you did," smiled the old man. "He an' my gal, Ann Reed, fed out twenty odd year ago 'cause I owned a tame b'ar. She went ter Bosting turned schoolmarm, an' I emigrated to Iowy."

Janet, very wide eyed, told him about Miss Reed, who was one of their brave party. She also gave her own history and Rose's as far as she knew.

"Wall, you be a powerful talker!" cried the old man. "Now come eat, an' then we'll ketch up with the caravan. Say, though, sis, would you say, 'lowin' fer age an' my whiskers, Ann Reed ain't no better lookin' than me?"

"You're both nice for old folks," said Janet, politely.

He led them to a dugout in the hills where they found plenty to eat, and then they set out for the wagons, Janet with Rose on Nance, the wolf following the old man's bronco.

"The row last night, sis," he said, "was Uncle Sam's sojers arter the Injuns, same as has been hangin' round yer train. Wonder how them set in his ways of Ann Reed's would 'a' took with Injuns?"

At night they reached the camping place of the wagons, where there was great rejoicing. Chase especially coming often to stroke Janet's curls and mutter, "Ef you ain't a borned hero I never knowed one! The staff of a pioneer!"

Janet's only sadness was that one little grave where the youngest "Pike" lay. The child had died the night before. How many nameless graves, tiny ones, there used to be on that great pathway to the west!

When Janet, with Rose in her arms, climbed into her wagon the hermit approached and said mysteriously, "It's the same Ann Read, sis, an' she's there a petkin' that wolf like he were a poodle dorg. Ain't set agin 'em no more."

Two miles from Denver they met a horseman, so pale and anxious they knew who he was even before he called hoarsely:

"Is my baby with you?"

"Aye, she be," answered Chase, "but we'd met ye with blank faces an' sorrerful hearts but for Janet here."

Then he told the story, and his father got down from his horse to kiss her first—before his own child.

"I'm well off, Joe," he said, brokenly. "I can do well for her, and you say she has no one. I will have two daughters instead of one."

"You ain't a maverick no more, Janet," cried Joe, something shining in his honest eyes, "an' there ain't one of us but will bid ye godspeed. Ef ever a lone little child was worth a father's love an' care you be, an' the blessin' of all us that knowed ye goes with ye."

And as she, with Rose and her father, parted from the companions of the long wagon journey, they followed her with loving, tearful eyes, that little Maverick who had found a happy home.—Patience Stapleton in Youth's Companion.

The Old Creeds and the New.

An unecclesiastical and broad minded clergyman whom we will call Smith was walking down Broadway in company with a friend whom we will call Jones. Pretty soon they met an acquaintance of Jones, who presented his clerical companion in these words: "Let me introduce you to my friend the Rev. Mr. Smith, who, as you may infer, makes divinity his specialty." "Pardon me for making a correction," said Mr. Smith laughingly, "but if I make a specialty of anything it is humanity rather than divinity." This answer shows the very marked line of cleavage between the old and the new school of clergymen. The former thought so much of the attributes of God that they had little time to think of man; while the latter pay so much attention to man that they have little room in their system for abstract speculations about God.—New York Tribune.

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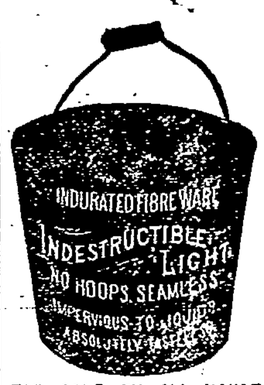

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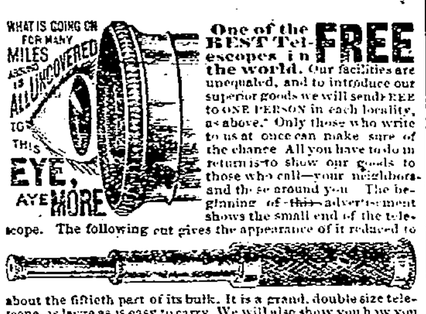

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