

THE GIRL AT THE HALFWAY HOUSE

A STORY OF THE PLAINS BY E. HOUGH, AUTHOR OF THE STORY OF THE COWBOY

CHAPTER XXV.—Continued.

The sun came on, valiantly stripped bare, knowing what was to be. Still louder rose the requiem of the wire. The sky smiled on. There was no token to strike with alarm these human beings, their faculties dulled by a thousand years of differentiation.

To the north there appeared a long, black cloud, hanging low as the trail of some far-off locomotive, new upon the land. All at once the cloud sprang up, unfurling tattered battle flags, and hurrying to meet the sun upon the zenith battle ground.

Once the wind petted the slant snow through the interstices of the grasses upon the furry back of the covering coyote. Now they found a new sport in driving the icy powder through the cracks of the loose board shanty, upon the stripped back of the mother huddling her sobbing children against the empty, impotent stove, perhaps wrapping her young in the worn and whitened robe of the buffalo taken years ago.

The men who had no fuel did as their natures bid, some dying at the ice-bound stove and others in the open on their way for fuel. Mishap passed by but few of the remoter homes found unprepared with fuel, and Christmas day, deceitfully fair, dawned on many homes that were to be fatherless, motherless, or robbed of a first-born. Thus it was that from this, the hardest and most self-reliant population ever known on earth, there rose the heartbroken cry for comfort and for help, the frontier for the first time begging aid to hold the skirmish line.

Sam Poston came into the office

go some day." His words drove Franklin again to his feet, and he walked up and down, his face gone pinched and old.

At dawn the wind lulled. The clouds swept by and the sun shone for an hour over a vast landscape buried under white. Sam was ready to start, having worked half the night making runners for a sled at which his wild team snorted in the terror of unacquaintance. The sled box was piled full of robes and coal and food and liquor—all things that seemed needful and which could hurriedly be secured.

With perfect horsemanship Sam drove his team rapidly on to the south, five miles, ten miles, fifteen, the horses now warming up, but still restless and nervous, even on the way so familiar to them from their frequent journeyings. The steam of their breath enveloped the travelers in a wide, white cloud. The rude runners crushed into and over the packed drifts, or along the sandy grime where the wind had swept the earth bare of snow. In less than an hour they would see the Halfway House. They would know whether or not there was smoke.

But in less than two hours on that morning of deceit the sun was lost again. The winds piped up, the cold continued, and again there came the blinding snow, wrapping all things in its dancing, dizzy mist.

"The wind's just on my right cheek," said Sam, putting up a mitten. "But where's it gone?" "You're frozen, man!" cried Franklin. "Pull up, and let me rub your face."

"No, no, we can't stop," said Sam, catching up some snow and rubbing his white cheeks as he drove. "Keep the wind on your right cheek—we're over the Sand Run now, I think, and on the long ridge, back of the White

which looked questioningly back at him, their heads drooping, their breath freezing upon their coats in spicules of white.

"Wait!" cried Franklin. "I know this hole! I've been here before. The team's come here for shelter—"

"Oh, it's the White Woman breaks—why, sure!" cried Sam in return. "Yes, that's where it is. We're less than half a mile from the house. Wait, now, and let me think. I've got to figure this out a while."

"It's off there," said Sam, pointing across the coulee; "but we can't get there."

"Yes, we can, old man; yes, we can!" insisted Franklin. "I'll tell you. Let me think. Good God! why can't I think? Yes—see here, you go down the bottom of this gully to the mouth of the coulee, and then we turn to the left—no, it's to the right—and you bear up along the side of the draw till you get to the ridge, and then the house is right in front of you. Listen now! The wind's northwest, and the house is west of the head of the coulee; so the mouth is east of us, and that brings the wind on the left cheek at the mouth of the coulee, and it comes more and more on the right cheek as we turn up the ridge; and it's on the front half of the right cheek when we face the house. I'm sure that's right—wait, I'll mark it out here in the snow. God! how cold it is! It must be right. Come on; come! We must try it, anyway."

"We may hit the house, Cap," said Sam calmly, "but if we miss it we'll go God knows where! Anyhow, I'm with you, an' if we don't turn up, we can't help it, an' we done our best."

"Come," cried Franklin once more. "Let's get to the mouth of the coulee. I know this place perfectly."

And so, advancing and calling, and waiting while Sam fought the stubborn horses with lash and rein out of the shelter which they coveted, Franklin led out of the flat coulee, into the wider draw, and edged up and up to the right, agonizedly repeating to himself, over and over again, the instructions he had laid down, and which the dizzy whirl of the snow mingled ever confusedly in his mind. At last they had the full gale again in their faces as they reached the level of the prairies, and cast loose for what they thought was west, fearfully, tremblingly, the voyage a quarter of a mile, the danger infinitely great; for beyond lay only the cruel plains and the bitter storm—this double norther of a woeful Christmas tide.

Once again Providence aided them, by agency of brute instinct. One of the horses threw up its head and neighed, and then both pressed forward eagerly. The low moan of penned cattle came down the wind. They crashed into a fence of lath. They passed its end—a broken, rattling end, that trailed and swept back and forth in the wind.

"It's the chicken corral," cried Sam, "an' it's down! They've been burnt!"

"Go on! Go on—hurry!" shouted Franklin, bending down his head so that the gale might not quite rob him of his breath, and Sam urged on the now willing horses.

They came to the sod bars, and here they left the team that had saved them, not pausing to take them from the harness. They crept to the low and white-banked wall in which showed two windows, glazed with frost. They could see the chimney plainly, but it carried no smell of smoke. The stairway leading down to the door of the dugout was missing, the excavation which held it was drifted full of snow, and the snow bore no track of human foot. All was white and silent. It might have been a vault far in the frozen northern sea.

(To be continued.)

ADMIRAL TOGO'S CADET DAYS.

Reminiscences of the Foremost Japanese Admiral.

A retired English naval officer, who, when a lad, was on board the training ship Worcester at the same time as the prominent Japanese Admiral Togo, tells the following reminiscences:

Togo was constantly the victim of all manner of chaff from the young Britishers on board, who called him "One-go-two-go-three-go." Disliked at first, perhaps because he was unlike his mates, he grew in popularity on account of his remarkably alert mind and agile body, until at length he became a general favorite with officers and boys.

He stood all chaff with a certain amount of bravado, unless it touched on his resemblance to the Chinese. To one fellow sailor who dubbed him a Chinaman he said with emphasis: "You wait; when I am 'the' admiral I hang you on the yardarm." One day that Togo had his leave stopped for some small offense, "Liberty boys to go ashore" was piped, and the boys went up to him and said, "Are you to go?" "No," he replied, immediately the youngsters got round him and pinched him for telling lies, shouting at the same time, "You are Togo!"

His Christian name being rather difficult to pronounce, Togo was told by one of the boys to shoot his godfather and godmother on his return home. "We do not shoot gods in Japan," was his reply.

Traveling Together. "Where's that dude hunter?" "Oh, he left me to go after a bear." "When's he coming back?" "Whenever the bear does."

Couldn't Find It. "Why don't you appeal to his conscience?" "Td have to locate it first, and I have no microscope."

Illinois News

Choice items from over the state, specially selected for our readers

YOUNG FOLKS IN SUICIDE CLUB.

Boys and Girls Ate Said to Have Joined in Pledge of Death.

The body of Claude Van Alstine of Secor, of Eureka, the brother of Frank Van Alstine, circuit clerk of Woodford county, was found in the timber dangling from the end of a halter strap, seven miles from his home. His funeral took place and during its progress Grover Moreland, his boy friend, swallowed poison, after having adjusted a noose around his neck, dangling from the same tree where Van Alstine had died. Aid arrived too late, and death claimed victim No. 2 of a club of young men who, it is said, have pledged to die by suicide. Relatives are employing detectives to break up the club. Grover Moreland said "he would go like Claude." He purchased a three-ounce bottle of wood alcohol and that was the last seen of him until he was found hanging. Several young women are said to be identified with the club.

May Locate Smelting Works.

A party of St. Louis gentlemen, accompanied by T. C. Johnson of Madison, visited Edwardsville, looking for a site for the establishment of smelting works. They also desire to purchase a coal mine to operate in connection with the works. President J. T. Tart of the Commercial club and other citizens have the matter in charge and will endeavor to secure the enterprise.

Reception to Missionaries.

Eight missionaries who have been engaged in work in Burmah and who are now living or visiting in Alton and Upper Alton, were given a reception in the First Baptist church. They are Dr. and Mrs. M. Jameson, Rev. and Mrs. H. H. Tilbe and Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Roach and Rev. and Mrs. A. E. Carson of Oneida, New York.

Actor Says He Was Robbed.

John Slavin, a member of a theatrical troupe, reported that he was robbed of a gold watch on a Chicago and Alton train and demanded that the Alton police arrest three suspects. The men refused to be searched and were arrested, as there was not time to prosecute a swiftp swiftp swiftp to procure a warrant.

Push Work on Road.

The contract for building the electric line from Alton to St. Louis has been awarded by the Alton, Granite and St. Louis traction company to a New York firm. Three engineers arrived in Alton and began preparations for construction work. It is planned to have the line in operation by September 1.

Coal Miner is Injured.

Albert Gunning, a coal miner, residing at Belleville, had both of his hands almost crushed off while attempting to board a freight train. He was removed to the county hospital and three fingers of his right hand and one finger of his left hand were amputated.

Honor for Editor.

J. M. Page of Jerseyville, editor of the Jersey County Democrat, has been appointed an assistant sergeant-at-arms of the Democratic national convention by Col. John I. Martin. Mr. Page is to have charge of the speakers' platform.

Buy Right of Way.

The condemnation proceedings of the Illinois Central traction company against John P. Faris and others for right of way for the interurban through Niantic has been settled by the company paying the landowners \$1,825 for the right of way.

Lamp Explosion.

A farmhouse near Elsieh, owned by Rev. R. M. Smith and occupied by Seth Flisk and family, was totally destroyed by fire. The fire was caused by the explosion of a lamp.

Buy Stock in Factory.

A citizens' meeting was held at the court house in Chester in the interest of the proposed knitting factory. Nearly \$5,000 stock was subscribed.

Naval Militia Cruise.

The Alton division of naval militia is preparing to go on the annual cruise July 16. The new uniforms for the division have arrived.

Coal Company Suspend Work.

The Donk Bros. Coal Company has suspended operations of its mines near Belleville and taken out all of the cars and machinery.

Adds 600 to List.

Assessor H. W. Denny has added over 600 names to the list of personal property owners in Alton.

Widow Must Remain Single.

The will of Christian Budde of Quincy leaves his entire estate to his widow as long as she remains single. In the event of her marriage she is to have her legal share, and the residue divided among his children.

High School for Carbondale.

The Carbondale board of education has accepted plans for the new high school building, which is to be erected during the summer. It will be two stories and contain twelve rooms. It will cost \$17,000.

WIDOW GETS ILLEGAL PENSION.

Widow Who Remarries Continues to Draw Money from Government.

Mrs. Clara Ingram, residing in High street, in Paris, has been arrested by a deputy United States marshal on charge of violating the pension laws, having been indicted by the Federal grand jury at Indianapolis. It is charged by the pension examiners that she secured a pension as the widow of William McKinney of Company E, Seventy-first Indiana Volunteers, for several years, when, in fact, she has since been married to both Warren Ingram and H. H. Harvey, and she only a few weeks ago secured a divorce from Harvey, and resumed the name of Ingram. The case is brought in Indiana, owing to the fact that she made quarterly trips to Terre Haute, where she secured the pension through attorneys who were ignorant of the fact that she had remarried.

Beggar Claims Noble Lineage.

M. von Goetz, claiming to be a German count, was arrested in Alton for begging and given transportation out of the city. He had been straying around Alton a week and conducted himself so queerly that it was supposed he was insane, but the police believe he is a clever sharp. He visited the heads of the principal manufacturing institutions in Alton, and from each of them asked their autograph, some of whom complied. He represented himself as being connected with a St. Louis paper, but when arrested he denied it.

Girl Orator Wins.

The intercollegiate prohibition oratorical contest of the central division at Springfield was won by Miss Mamie White of Wheaton college. Her subject was "The Right to Prohibit Wrong." Hugh Lomax of Conner (Cotner) college, Nebraska, was second and J. H. Booth of Drake university third. The three winners received \$50, \$30 and \$20, respectively.

Pupils Are Punctual.

Julius Becker and Miss Clara Stewart have been given the credit in the Centralia schools of being neither tardy nor absent for five years. Geo. Heidler, Mono Horn, Claude Kell, Emma McGuire and Nora Stonecipher each have a record of four years.

Flies Invade Alton.

Myriads of flies invaded Alton recently, the noise of the buzzing swarm attracting much attention. The flies were of a large size and settled in the houses and stores for a short time, before proceeding on their journey.

New Coal Mining Company.

The Hoyleton Coal and Mining Company has organized at Hoyleton for the purpose of sinking and operating a coal shaft. The company is capitalized at \$50,000, and all the stock has been subscribed.

Postoffice is Robbed.

The postoffice at Ava was entered by burglars at about 2 o'clock in the morning, the safe blown open and about \$20 belonging to the postmaster and some government money was stolen.

Switchman is Injured.

Harry Phillips, a switchman for the Wabash road, at Granite City, was struck on the head last night by a swinging door of a car and severely injured.

Profit in Farm Deal.

Mary P. Healy sold 270 acres of land in Rountree township to Thomas H. Wood for \$18,225. Wood has resold the land to J. W. Beattie for \$21,000.

Blind Woman Asks Pension.

Mrs. Louisa Rech of North Alton, aged 78, has made formal application to the Madison board of supervisors for a pension as an indigent blind person, under the new state law.

Boy Rides Borrowed Horse.

Roy Coates, aged 12, of East St. Louis, has been arrested, charged with taking a horse belonging to John L. Jones from a livery stable and riding it for several hours.

Woman is Injured.

Mrs. George Schneider was thrown from a runaway wagon at Glen Carbon, sustaining serious injuries. Two children who were in the vehicle with her escaped serious injury.

Big Waste of Water.

A committee of the Springfield council has been appointed to investigate the great waste of city water. It is said the daily waste is 1,690,000 gallons.

Apple Growers' President.

Former Mayor Frank Schwartz of Salem has been elected vice president of the Mississippi Valley Apple Growers' Association. This organization embraces many extensive growers in eleven Illinois and ten Missouri counties.

Centralia C. E. Convention.

Mrs. D. D. Haynie of Salem, president of the Centralia district Christian Endeavor union, has announced that the annual district convention will be held at Mount Vernon on June 14.

HOLDS MOCK MARRIAGE LEGAL.

Belleville Judge Refuses to Grant Divorce to Woman in the Case.

The testimony of Mrs. Carson, mother of Mrs. Jessie Carson of East St. Louis, who is seeking a divorce from Roscoe Carson on the ground that she was under the impression that the ceremony was not binding and was intended as a practical joke, was heard by Judge Holder in the circuit court at Belleville. The court also heard the testimony of M. R. Roberts, with whom is said Roscoe Carson laid the wager which led to his being married to Mrs. Carson, under the name of Lizzie Vogt, April 23 last, but refused to grant the decree, ruling that the evidence was insufficient, and that the bill of particulars must be altered before he could grant a decree. It is claimed that Mrs. Carson is engaged to marry another man, but that the wedding will have to be postponed until her present legal entanglement is straightened out.

Big Plant Nearly Ready.

The work on the plant of the American radiator works in Litchfield is being pushed rapidly. The warehouse is nearing completion, and an effort will be made to have the entire plant completed by July 1. The corner stone will be laid in the northwest corner of warehouse No. 1 on June 8. An excellent programme of music and speeches, with a banquet, is being prepared for the occasion.

Unions Win Peoria Strike.

The strike of building trades which has completely tied up all building operations in Peoria for seven weeks, ended in a victory for the men. The holdovers precipitated the strike to force the contractors to recognize orders from the union for initiation fee of new members. The bricklayers and plasterers refused to work with non-union men and all building stopped.

Sues the Saloonkeeper.

Mrs. Electa Yarnell, widow of the late J. H. Yarnell, an attorney of Pana, has commenced suit in the circuit court against F. R. Williams, a saloonkeeper of Pana, for damages in the sum of \$5,000. The suit is based on the death of the complainant's husband. She alleges that his death was caused by liquor which Williams sold him.

Homeopaths Elect Officers.

"Surgery" was the first topic for discussion of the twenty-first annual convention of the Central Illinois Homeopathic Society at Bloomington. New officers were chosen as follows: President, C. F. Hough, Champaign; vice president, I. T. Rhoades, Lincoln; secretary, A. E. Small, LeRoy; treasurer, Geo. D. Lockie, Pontiac.

Dies at Washington.

Word has been received of the death in Washington, D. C., of August Held, a former well-known resident of Belleville. The deceased was 49 years of age and was employed as undergardener at the Capitol building grounds. He is survived by his wife and three daughters, at present residing in East St. Louis.

Indict Road Commissioners.

The grand jury has returned indictments against Joshua Hubbard and Henry Ammann, highway commissioners of Decatur township. It is alleged that they owned teams and wagons, which were unlawfully hired on the township roads.

Files Heavy Mortgage.

The Kintoch telephone company has filed a first mortgage deed of trust in the office of Circuit Clerk L. Laurent of Jerseyville. The deed is for \$5,000,000 and is given to secure twenty-year 5 per cent gold bonds.

Cares for Athletic Pupils.

Supt. F. C. Prowdly of the Nashville public schools has been chosen secretary and treasurer of the Southern Illinois Athletic and Oratorical association. The meet next year will be held in Mount Vernon.

Cheap Farms.

George W. Bryant of Jerseyville has sold his farm of 80 acres in section 25-12 to Josephine A. Stahl for \$1,000. Martin Finkes sold to Emanuel Stritz 70 acres in section 24-6-11 for \$2,700.

Silver Medal Orator.

A silver medal was awarded to Walter Stahl at Alton, in an oratorical contest held in the Congregational church.

Slow-Up in Powder House.

A wheelhouse at the plant of the Equitable powder company, East Alton, blew up. The damage was slight.

Child is Burned.

Etta, the 7-year-old daughter of J. A. Naylor, North Madison, was severely burned while playing near a fire in the yard near her home.

One-Legged Chickens.

Williamsville, Ill., dispatch: A hen belonging to Frank Prather, a big stock man living near here, hatched out ten chickens, nine of which had but one leg each, while the tenth was born with all. All the chicks were perfectly developed in every way.



"Whoa, Jack! Whoa, Bill! Git out o' here!"

where Franklin sat on Christmas eve, listening to the clinking rattle of the hard snow on the pane. Sam was white from head to foot. His face was anxious, his habitual uncertainty and diffidence were gone.

"Cap," said he, with no prelude, "the whole country below'll be froze out. The blizzard's awful."

"I know it," said Franklin. "We must get out with help soon as we can. How far down do you think the danger line begins?"

"Well, up to three or four miles out it's thicker settled, an' most o' the folks could git into town. As far out as thirty miles to the south, they might git a little timber yet, over on the Smoky. The worst strip is fifteen to twenty-five miles below."

Franklin felt a tightening at his heart. "About fifteen to twenty-five miles?" he said. Sam nodded. Both were silent.

"Look here, Cap," said the driver presently, "you've alius told me not to say nuthin' 'bout the folks down to the Halfway house, an' I hain't said a thing. I low you got jarred down there some. I know how that is. All the same, I reckon maybe you sorter have a learnin' that way still. You may be worried some—"

Franklin groaned as he sank into a chair, his face between his hands. Then he sprang up. "We must go!" he cried.

"I know it," said Sam simply. "Get ready!" exclaimed Franklin, reaching for his coat.

"What do you mean, Cap—now?" "Yes, to-night—at once."

"You d—d fool!" said Sam.

"You coward!" cried Franklin.

"What! Are you afraid to go out when people are freezing—when—?" Sam rose to his feet, his slow features working. "That ain't right, Cap," said he. "I know I'm scared to do some things, but I—I don't believe I'm no coward. I ain't afraid to go down there, but I won't go to-night, ner let you go, fer it's the same as death to start now. We couldn't maybe make it in the daytime, but I'm willin' to try it then. Don't you call no coward to me. It ain't right."

Franklin again cast himself into his chair, his hand and arm smiting on the table. "I beg your pardon, Sam," said he presently. "I know you're not a coward. We'll start together in the morning. But it's killing me to wait. Good God! they may be freezing now, while we're here, warm and safe!"

"That's so," said Sam sententiously. "We can't help it. We all got to

Woman. It can't be over two miles more. Git along, boys. Whoa! What's the matter there?"

The horses had stopped plunging at something which they could not pass. "Good God!" cried Franklin, "whose fence is that? Are we at Buford's?"

"No," said Sam, "this must be at old man Hancock's. He fenced across the old road, and we had to make a jog around his d—d broom-corn field. It's only a couple o' miles now to Buford's."

"Shall I tear down the fence?" asked Franklin.

"No, it's no use; it'd only let us in his field, an' maybe we couldn't hit the trail on the fur side. We got to follow the fence a way. May God everlastingly damn any man that'll fence up the free range! Whoa, Jack! Whoa, Bill! Git out o' here! Git up!"

They tried to parallel the fence, but the horses edged away from the wind continually, so that it was difficult to keep eye upon the infrequent posts of the meagre, straggling fence that this man had put upon the "public lands."

"Hold on, Sam!" cried Franklin.

"That's right, Cap," said Sam. "Git out an' go on ahead a way, then hold to me, so's I kin come up to you. When we git around the corner we'll be all right."

But when they got around the corner they were not all right. At such times the mind of man is thrown off its balance, so that it does strange and irregular things. Both these men had agreed a moment ago that the wind should be on the right; now they disagreed, one thinking that Hancock's house was to the left, the other to the right, their ideas as to the direction of the Buford ranch being equally at variance. The horses decided it, breaking once again down wind, and striking a low-headed, sullen trot, as though they would out-march the storm. And so the two argued, and so they rode, until at last there was a lurch and a crash, and they found themselves in rough going, the sled half overturned, with no fence, no house, no landmark of any sort visible, and the snow drifting thicker than before. They sprang out and righted the sled, but the horses doggedly pulled on, plunging down and down; and they followed, clinging to reins and sled as best they might.

"We've lost the trail, but we done the best we could," said Sam doggedly, going to the heads of the horses,