The Acton Free Press

THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 1926

JOY IN LIVING

There is lots of joy in living if you strike the proper gait;
If you always come up smiling in the face of every fate.
If you're keeping step and whistling some lively little tune,
You'll be living gay and happy as a summer day in June.

Keep a level head, don't worry, help your brothers on the way;
Let the sunshine of good humor shine upon you every day;
Speak a cheerful word at all times, never "knock" your fellow man,
And you'll surely be rewarded—just keep doing all you can.

There is lots of joy in living if you live your life aright;
Lots of sunshine and of roses, keep your eyes turned to the light;
Look behind the clouds of trouble; there's a silver lining there,
And you'll find it if you're only living life upon the square.

Scatter good cheer like the thistle scattered seed before the wind,
And the petty woes and troubles soon will be left far behind;
Be a "booster" every minute, help along your fellow man,
And you'll surely be rewarded, just doing all you can.

Danae, Deputy Sheriff

By Marianne Gates.

THIS is the story of a girl who was deputy sheriff, of a boy whom no one knew, and of a wild little horse that held back an eastbound train. It begins with the girl.

She had always done odd things. Aunt Miriam Jaxon sometimes thought it was on account of her name; her father, a college professor, had called her Danae, but her brothers had made it Dan or Danny. Aunt Miriam had frequently said to her, "Danae, there are some things a girl must leave to men."

Her father once added to the admonition, "Yes, daughter. Don't do these things your aunt speaks of, except when there's no man at hand to attend to them." And she remembered his "except."

When she was twenty-two, Dan went West—to teach, but also to see the country. Her father was quite willing that she should be as independent as the boys.

She taught in a wild little town. The one street zigzagged along the floor of a Rocky Mountain canon, through which roared a river, full of trout. Snow fell in July on the dark broken hills; for much of the year the place was winter-bound. Wolves ventured into the street at night.

Dan's home was with the Poindexters. Poindexter himself was county sheriff—a fine, fair-minded giant of a man, who had come West in the days of Indians and buffaloes. It was on a Saturday that Dan met her adventure.

For some days there had been much excitement regarding the Fowler affair. The three men who killed the miner for his money were supposed to be hiding in the mountains. But Dan was not thinking of them; she ordered Mrs. Poindexter's groceries, then went to the post-office window, where she received a letter from home. She had not finished reading it when she noticed the stranger. He was perhaps eighteen years old—city-bred, for his skin, sunburned to a dark pink from unaccustomed exposure, was peeling off in places, like a baby's. She started at sight of him, then turned to the placard on the wall and read:

Joe Harrisburn—twenty years old, will claim to be younger. Red hair, brown eyes, a scar—

Dan glanced again at the strange boy. On his face was a scar, running close to the hair and ending abruptly on the temple. She then looked at the men who had gathered in the store. The steadier citizens were almost all away, working in the mining camps; left in town were reckless young men and ne'er-do-wells, old enough to be wiser than they were. The look of their faces frightened her; she realized what they might do—what they had been saying they would do if they should capture any of the three men.

Thrusting her letter, half read, into her blouse, she left the store and went to Poindexter. "There's a strange boy in town," she said. "He has red hair and a scar on his face. I think he needs looking after."

When the strange boy was brought to the sheriff's, he said that he had been in the West only a week. He was travelling alone; his mother had given him this trip to the mountains as a treat on his graduation from high school in Kansas City, Missouri. He had always lived there with his mother, who was a widow.

Dan spoke suddenly. "You say you live in Kansas City? What part of the town? What school did you go to? Who was the principal? I taught a year at the Washington, in Kansas City. Who was the music teacher at your school last year?" All these questions she hurled at the boy in quick succession; and he replied without faltering, looking directly into her frank, gray eyes.

Dan was a fine disciplinarian. Before she came to the mountain town two other teachers had failed with the upper-grade room in which she was so successful. One of the secrets of her management was her faculty for finding out the truth about things. She turned from the boy. "All his answers are straight, Mr. Poindexter. I think—don't you?—he's just what he says he is."

There was a sudden pounding at the part of the house that served the county for a jail. The strange boy became pale and laughed shakily.

"Don't be worried," Dan said to him. "Mr. Poindexter isn't the man to let any rowdies in here. It's Dr. Pitney at the door; he always knocks in that noisy way."

She followed Poindexter into the kitchen.

"I stopped to warn the sheriff," said Dr. Pitney. "They're talking mob on the street. They say they'll take the boy away from the sheriff to-day."

"Not h-h-h—" began Dan.

"Yes, they say they'll hang him. They think he's Joe Harrisburn. Most of 'em are drunk, and they're sending to camps down the river for help. There'll be a hundred men in the mob by noon."

"Telegraph for help," suggested Dan.

"I was going to add—they have possession of the station," said Pitney.

The sheriff grew pale. He thought for a moment, then turned to Dan.

"You were going to drive Mittie back to her homestead claim this afternoon?" Mittie was the sheriff's sister. "People know, pretty generally, you're going—don't they?"

"Going to smuggle the boy under the buggy seat?" asked the doctor; but Poindexter did not answer.

An hour later the sheriff called Dan aside. "I think, Miss Jaxon, I'll swear you in as a deputy."

Dan gasped. "Mr. Poindexter! Me!"

"I've thought it all out. You might get safely out of town. Any man who rides with me would be watched. Not!"

It was then afternoon. The mountains had grown dark, and it was beginning to rain—the daily shower of the Rockies. In the dim parlor, with her hand on the Poindexter family Bible, Dan took an oath to perform the duties of her office.

From the post office and railway station came loud talking and awful cheering. The street near the store was full of men on horseback. Finally two of them came to station themselves before the jail in the rain. They were pickets, set to watch the sheriff's house.

The shower proved unusually long and heavy. The wind had risen and a thick mist was blowing from the west when Dan drove round to the sitting-room door. She had the light buggy and Poindexter's racing colt. She tried to seem in no haste. Now and then she glanced at the door. No one came out, but she saw near the window a figure in a raincoat and thick veil. Finally the sheriff's sister, Mittie Poindexter, called, "Got my telescope in the buggy?" Then the raincoated figure appeared for a moment at the door. Poindexter came out and put a travelling bag into the buggy. Dan's heart beat violently as one of the pickets approached.

"Miss Poindexter leaving in all this rain, eh?" the man asked.

"You can't choose your time when you live on a homestead claim," Dan answered.

The man dismounted and walked up to the buggy. With a slight, sneering laugh he said to the sheriff, "Poindexter, lemme look under that buggy seat."

Poindexter, who was not quick of wit, made no reply. Dan's heart leaped as the figure in the raincoat appeared on the steps.

The picket continued, "I think I left some harness under the seat when I borrowed the buggy."

"I looked," said Dan; "there was none there."

The reply failed to satisfy the man, though he pretended to turn away. But as the girl, with a "Now, Miss Mittie!" stepped from the buggy, he wheeled, and thrust an arm under the seat.

The space was empty, as Dan had said.

Dan helped the raincoated figure into the buggy; then, facing the picket, she asked, "Since when do you question my word?"

The sheriff took his cue from her. "And since when do you make insinuations about us, like you just did?" He walked toward the fellow, rolling up one sleeve.

"Oh, shut up, Poindexter!" the picket replied. "I didn't mean no insinuation. Keep cool, can't yer?"

As Dan took her seat she let it be seen that she was still angry. Her cheeks were red, her eyes seemed to flash, she struck the horse sharply with her whip. And the sheriff kept insisting on an explanation from the man.

The ruse—the pretended anger—was successful. Both pickets looked at Poindexter and hardly noticed the veiled person in the raincoat who sat beside Dan. The rain and blowing mist served as a shield from observation. Dan drove away safely.

Notwithstanding the shower, the road was fairly good, and Dan drove smartly toward the canon. The last house on the street, a small one painted blue, happened to be occupied by one of the worst of the rioters. Dan turned toward the boy in Miss Poindexter's coat.

"We'll make the train at Daytown. We're safe."

"No, we're not!" he replied. For a woman had run from the blue house into the road.

"Miss Jaxon!" she was crying. "I want to tell Mittie Poindexter good-by."

Dan barely turned her head. "Can't—miss our train!" She drove on, but failed to notice some sticky loam at the roadside. It sucked at the wheel, and the buggy stopped. Again and again Dan struck the horse. He tugged at the mired wheel in vain.

Then everything went whirling before her eyes, for the woman reached the buggy. "Hey! you had to stop—" she began.

With a wrench, the horse pulled the wheel free; but it was too late. The woman stared at Danae, and at the strange boy. Her eyes, they saw with surprise, were red from weeping.

"God bless you, Miss Jaxon!" she cried. "I ran down to tell Mittie how I felt about what my man is a-trying to do to-day. He's clean crazy, and I can't stop him. You're pretty near late for that train, but you'll make it. Good-by!"

Dan turned at last into the canon. On one side of the trail was a wall of rock; on the other side the river, swollen by recent rains, roared down toward Daytown. The shower had stopped, but the sky was overcast; it was twilight down by the river. For an hour or two they had the canon to themselves, with no sound except the roar of water and the rapid hoof beats of the horse.

Suddenly the boy said, "This is my day to write home."

Dan seemed to see a city street and a woman watching for the postman. Then—she imagined—the letter had not come, and the woman was turning into the house. A messenger boy came up with a yellow envelope—

"You can write on the train tonight," she said quickly. "Don't worry. It'll be all right."

It was nearly sunset when they approached the break in the canon where a road comes in from Bear Gulch. Dan feared that, if the men had discovered her ruse, they had sent word to the gulch. In that case, men might be waiting at the gap for the buggy. Her heart beat hard as she drove on.

They came out where the river widens and low hills roll northward. Behind a rock Dan saw the shoulder of a man in gray flannel. She glanced round. The trail was too narrow to permit her to turn; she could only go forward. Loosening rein, she prepared to dash the ambush.

But the man in gray proved to be only a fisherman with a string of trout. The buggy flew by him. The last stretch of the journey began.

Again the canon was dark and narrow, again the rocks threw back with deafening echoes the noise of water and beat of hoofs. In places a sticky red clay impeded progress. Dan grew uneasy, looked at her watch, and began to listen for the rumble of the train.

As they neared the mouth of the canon, with Daytown beyond, the light grew brighter, and red clouds could be seen round the setting sun. A short way off among the hills was a white film of smoke, and Dan heard the whistle of the engine. "We'll make it! We must!" she cried. And the colt flew forward over a bridge to the hard road beyond.

Then suddenly Dan heard behind her a clattering of hoofs. Riding over the low hills from Bear Gulch came a dozen men.

Dan's tired horse showed flecks of foam, and he held his head low until she pulled rein to let him hear the pursuing hoofs! Instantly, then, he was off, with a forward rush that carried the buggy to the point where the road crossed the railway tracks. Already the tracks shook under the coming train, and the engine appeared at a bend of the road.

The horse leaped directly before it, though it was so near that the engineer shouted, and a woman standing near the tracks screamed and hid her eyes. Danae closed her own.

There was a shriek from the engine, a rush of air, a think, black smoke. For a minute the horse was scrambling up a bank that crumbled beneath his hoofs. Suddenly the danger was over. The buggy flew down the Daytown road, which followed the track for a while, then crossed it again to the station.

The train had gone toward the station. As Danae watched, she realized what would happen to the boy if that train left him in Daytown. "We have three minutes!" she whispered.

The Bear Gulch men had left the canon and crossed the track. Their shouts caused her horse to increase his speed, but it seemed to her that he was years in covering the short stretch to the station.

Between the road and the railway tracks was a grassy strip, broken by ditches, with water trickling through; a buggy could not use it as a short cut. Danae kept to the road. On the grassy, broken strip, a pretty young horse had been grazing—a third filly that had run up into the road at the first whistle of the coming train. Hilt saw the sheriff's buggy and heard the shouts of the pursuing mob.

The little horse paused an instant, trembling, with her nostrils very wide, to look at the Bear Gulch men. More afraid of the mob than of the train, she plunged down from the road and began to run alongside the train. As the engine slowed, she gained on it. When it stopped, she stood quivering, undecided what to do, for she was in the middle of the little town.

Dan saw the train stop and knew that the stay at the station would be very short. She was so near she could see Poindexter's regular deputy, who had met all trains that afternoon, hoping to be of use. She shouted, but he did not hear. Despair filled her heart; she felt—saw—she was too late. The train was starting.

Again the mob shouted; and their cries sent terror to the heart of the wild little horse, which now stood very near the engine. Lifting her mane, she snorted wildly. Then she leaped into the middle of the track. Right in the way of the engine she stood, with her eyes wide. No man could wantonly have hurt her. The engine stopped in the act of starting.

For a moment the filly looked at the engine and the man in the cab. Above the canon the sun was making old Red Mountain like blood. Then with a snort and one more fling of her heels the wild little horse was racing off—the train had been delayed for scarcely a minute.

But in that little time Poindexter's deputy had heard Dan's shout for help; he had seen; he understood. As the buggy stopped, he dragged the boy from it and hurried him aboard the train.

Dan came to herself at last. The disappearing train was on its way to Denver. She sat alone in the buggy. As she felt for the reins, which had fallen on her tired horse, she did not realize that she had saved an innocent boy, that she had saved the Gulch men also—from doing a terrible wrong that they could never have righted. She felt numb and bewildered.

A man from Bear Gulch rode up and stopped. He eyed her in astonishment. "Why, who are you?" he asked.

"I'm a deputy sheriff," replied Danae, realizing at last the great thing she had done.

AGE NO BAR TO USEFULNESS

Time was when men and women who had reached middle life were looked upon as "old people." They donned the garb of the aged, and, generally speaking, settled themselves to an existence of inaction. Naturally this sluggishness impaired their faculties, and their inertia doubtless made life seem a burden to themselves, as well as to those about them. Not so in the present. The half century mark has ceased to proclaim the end of all activities for the human race—rather, it finds men and women in the hey-day of achievement with determination to hold fast to present attainments and with ambition undaunted by the passing of years for future victories. No man, therefore, need feel discouraged because he is approaching or has passed the "dividing line" between youth and old age. After all, "one is only as old as his arteries," and with right habits of living, their elasticity may be extended indefinitely.

Intelligent physical and mental exercise prolongs youth, and keeps the human machine in a condition fit to cope with the exigencies of everyday life. It is only the person who allows himself to become slack; who permits enthusiasm and ambition to die; who makes no effort to maintain interest in the affairs of his community or the world at large; who ceases to be a vital part of the important movement of the day; who stops work—that is old.

By yielding to inaction, a man's growth is stunted and finally killed. He becomes a slacker and shows the white feather. Only by "enduring to the end" can one reach the highest individual development of which the human being with its wonderful innate powers is capable, and thus contribute in the greatest degree possible to the betterment of the race—which is the universal task of mankind.

FOR THOSE WEARY OF WANDERINGS

The chaplain of a Glasgow prison tells an experience which illustrates the power of a beautiful hymn.

One day, when a cell door was opened, I found a young woman eighteen or nineteen years of age standing with her hymn-book in her hand. She looked up from it, and holding it out, said: "This is a hymn which I'm much taken up wi'." I read the first two lines:

"Weary of wandering from my God,
And now made ready to return."

I found my eyes filling with tears as I looked at her and said: "Are you weary of wandering from your God?" The answer was a straight "Yes, indeed, I am." Thereupon I had the great privilege of helping one who was anxious to be helped.

As I left her cell I had got a message for the many others. On the following Sunday we not only sang the hymn, but I preached specially to weary wanderers.

On the following day an old man grasped my hands as I entered his cell and in an earnest and solemn, yet very soft and penitent voice, said: "When the great day comes there will be found a soul among the redeemed, brought there through that hymn we sang yesterday, for," he continued, "when you read out, 'Weary of wandering from my God,' I said, 'That's me.' I'm weary, and I'm made ready to return, and," he added, "come back to my God I have."

I surely am not wrong when I cherish the belief that there are others to whom this same hymn has been a blessing.

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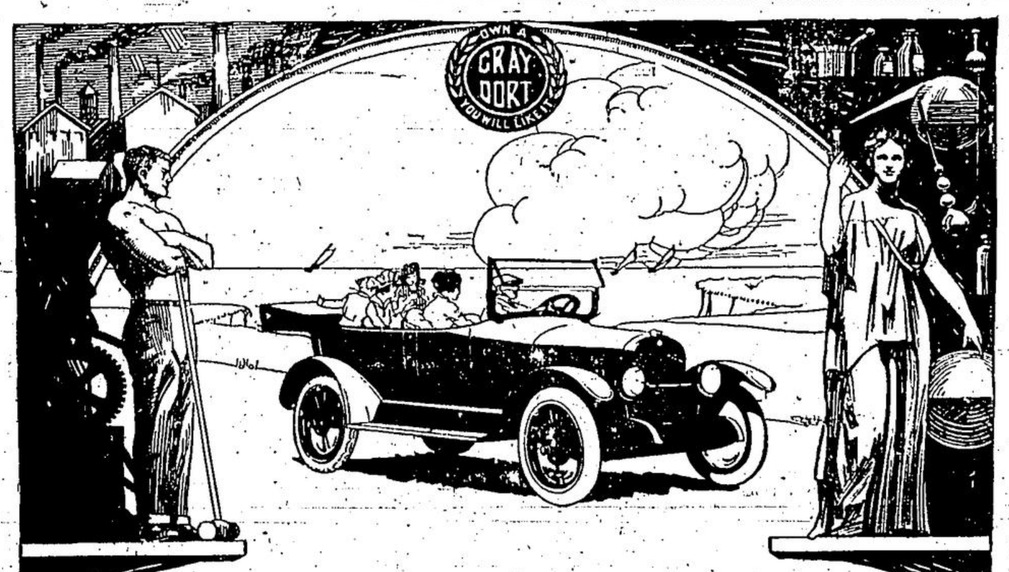

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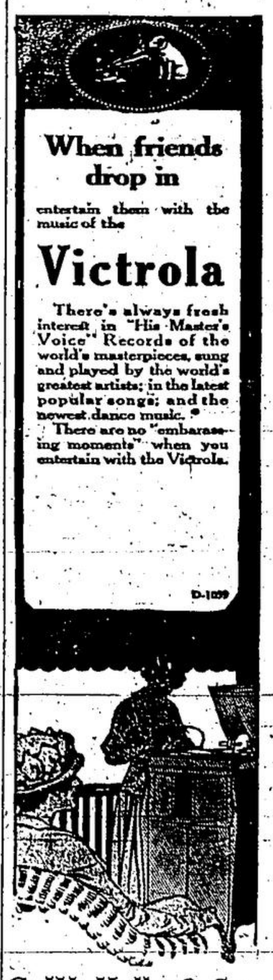

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