

A TOUCH OF NATURE

By WM. F. BROWN

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Hardly had he lifted his face from the cool spring, when Lieut. Herbert Craddock was seized from behind by two union soldiers. The game was up—yet he trusted his unshaven face, torn and dirty clothing and general woe-begone appearance to conceal the fact that he was a confederate officer, the bearer of an important dispatch.

When he faced the keen-eyed and soldierly federal captain he saw at once that it would be useless to deny being a soldier, and so, in answer to the question: "Who are you?" he replied simply:

"Lieut. Craddock of the confederate service."

"How came you inside our lines and in disguise?"

"I was taken prisoner," he answered, slowly, "and escaped. I was making for Gen. Lee's lines when your soldiers captured me. The briars had literally torn my uniform to shreds, and yesterday I exchanged its remnants for these planter's clothes."

This tale was true enough as far as it went, but it made no visible impression on the stern-faced inquisitor.

"Search him!" he ordered, sharply.

The two troopers obeyed. Finally the taller of the two looked up and in a disappointed tone reported:

"There isn't a thing on him, sir."

The faint ghost of a smile of amusement stole over the face of the confederate. The next instant he cursed himself for his folly, for the sharp eyes of the captain interpreted the look aright, and he sternly exclaimed:

"Search him again to the very skin—rip open his clothes from head to foot."

This time the investigation was so thorough that when the shorter trooper with his saber pried the



"Was Seized from Behind by Two Union Soldiers."

heels from the prisoner's boots a wad of tissue paper dropped from a hollow in one of them and fell to the ground.

"So!" said Capt. Freeman, straightening out the sheet, "you are a spy, as I thought. What have you to say?"

"Nothing," answered Craddock.

What was there to say? He knew that the scrap of paper in the captain's hand meant death for him as surely as he stood there. It was military law, and inexorable as fate.

Alone in an old log hut, with a sentinel pacing before the door and the single small window, Craddock was left to his thoughts. In the morning he was to die. He stared across the peaceful valley to the rise beyond, tipped with somber pines, the declining sun flooding it all with golden glory. He was not afraid to die—he had faced death on too many battlefields for that. He had taken the deadly risk of his own free

will, and the hazard had gone against him. Well, he would pay the price, like an officer and a gentleman.

But it was not of himself he was thinking as he stood there watching his last sunset, but of some one else, dearer by far than his own life. Some one who was waiting, hoping, praying for him to come back to her among the magnolias—one whom he had hoped, when the war should be over, to call his wife. Heaven!

How could he write to tell her that they would meet no more on earth—that, even as his letter reached her, he would be lying in his grave?

As he bitterly mused there rose on the still southern air, from out the dark shadow of the pines, a sweet and plaintive tenor voice, singing the melody of "Home, Sweet Home."

It floated out on the evening silence like an angel's message of peace, bringing to the captive's staring eyes a sudden rush of tears. Had the Yankees no hearts, no feeling, that they could sing that song of all others to one who loved his home as well as they did theirs, and would never see it again?

He savagely gripped the rough slabs nailed across his narrow window, as the song suddenly ended in a long, high-pitched, quivering cry that changed to a shout, and then, running along the fringe of pines like an irregular rifle volley, burst into a cheer that echoed again and again along the quiet valley.

"Another federal victory!" thought Craddock, mournfully. "Poor old Dixie—she has not many left to fight her battles."

Listening to the growing tumult, he presently saw the figure of a man dash out from the shadow of the pines and come racing down the slope toward the hut. As he tore along, the incessant cheering behind him, like a huge wave, seemed to bear him onward. He reached the sentry, flung two words at him over his shoulder, and dashed on without a pause. The wondering prisoner saw the sentry stare, and then with a wild yell throw up his rifle and fire it in the air.

The door of the hut was flung violently open, and the breathless runner, a fair-haired lieutenant, almost a boy, stood facing Craddock in the little room.

"Capt. Freeman's compliments," he panted, "and he wishes to say that we are about to have supper, and he would feel honored if you would join us. It is poor fare, but you will be heartily welcome."

The confederate officer looked into the messenger's boyish, excited face, astounded.

"Your captain is very kind," he answered, wondering. "But is it not an unusual proceeding to ask a prisoner to dine with his captors? It is very chivalrous, doubtless, but it is scarcely war."

"War!" he had echoed. Then his voice choked, and he grasped Craddock's hand and wrung it till the sinewy arm ached. "War!" he repeated, his voice ringing high and shrill, "there is no more war—Gen. Lee surrendered at Appomattox this morning—the war is over."

The curious incident at the wedding of Earl Poulett and Miss Storey of the ring falling on the ground and being for some time the subject of a fruitless search suggests the query as to what would have occurred if the missing ring had not been found. In such case any ring sent temporarily for the purpose would have been an effective substitute, and another wedding ring could afterward have been procured.

In one distinguished and historic English family, the same ring has been used for several generations at the marriage of its members, for which subsequently ordinary wedding rings are substituted.—Westminster Gazette.

MISSING WEDDING RING.

Out of Their Element.

The admission of women to the professions of medicine and the bar has so far caused them nothing but disappointment, and has increased the number of women out of their element.

SENSITIVE PLANTS.

A large number of species of plants have become sensitive to the touch or blow of a solid object in a manner broadly analogous to the touch reactions of animals. One form of this reaction is exhibited by plants which climb by the aid of tendrils. Tendrils are usually long, slender organs sensitive on one surface only, although in some species the percipient cells cover the entire surface. When one of these organs comes into contact with a solid object the outer sensitive cells are stimulated and communicate an impulse to cells not far distant and curvature ensues within a second, or a few seconds at most, which usually results in curling the organ around the object.

A MAMMOTH CUCUMBER.

Androscoggin county need not go to putting on airs, over its big cucumbers, for Kennebec is something in that line. The Boston Post recently had the story of Auburn's prize cucumber, even publishing a picture of its owner holding it in his arms. It was a fairly sizable cucumber, 13 1/2 inches long, 10 inches in circumference and weighing exactly three pounds. But here in the Kennebec Journal office we have a cucumber from the garden of George W. Vickery of this city which beats it. Our cucumber is 13 1/4 inches long, 12 inches in circumference and weighs three pounds and two ounces.—Kennebec Journal.

THE OLD JOKE REVISED.

"There was a rap on his lordship's door."

"My lord," announced the servant with a low bow, "the airship awaits without."

"Without what, James?" queried his lordship as he lit another cigarette.

"Without wings, without gasoline, without ropes and without propeller. We have just been in a collision."

And with an impatient wave of his hand his lordship ordered the airship taken around to the airsmith without delay.

TRUE SYMPATHY.

Yunger—Three years ago I married your only daughter.

Oldun—Yes.

Yunger—And I have never ceased to regret it.

Oldun—Let us sympathize with each other, my boy.

Yunger—With each other?

Oldun—Yes; I married her mother.—Chicago News.

PLAGIARISM.

At the literary club a sympathetic crowd surrounded the humorist, whose house had been robbed.

"They cleaned out everything," said the man. "Everything. But, thank goodness, they didn't swipe from my desk the manuscript column of jokes for next week's paper."

"Perhaps they knew," suggested a sonneteer, cynically, "that the jokes had already been swiped."

MODERN INSTANCES.

Peggy—What did that independent, self-willed, handsome sister do?

Paula—Oh, she married one of the assistant bookkeepers to her father's bank. He's still an assistant bookkeeper.

Peggy—And what did the homely modest girl do?

Paula—Oh, she married a little dude to please her father. He is now a member of the firm.

HOW THE COOK DECLINES.

"Did you say that your cook was going into a decline?"

"No; I said from the way things were disappearing I concluded that she was wasting away."

Among all the excitements of politics, the vicissitudes of business, and the disturbance of the social order, science goes quietly on its way, discovering new applications of energy, adding constantly to the power of man, and increasing the comfort and happiness of all nations.

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