

LONG JAKE'S TRIP HOME.

Jo Long Jake's trip home

The widow looked up from her needle-work in surprise, as well she might. "How do you mean?" asked she, not without apprehension.

"These here ranges—I'm going to leave 'em."

"Yes?"—in a tone indicating interest.

"Yes,"—in one betraying exhaustion of spirit.

"And where do you go then?"

"Ha!" with unexpected relief, and surprise that he should have forgotten what was indeed his point—"home to England."

Mrs. Truscott dropped her work on her lap and looked swiftly up at the speaker. And for a single moment—in spite of her thin worn cheeks, in spite of the lines that had come ten years before their time—for that one moment the parted lips, the wide-open blue eyes, the sudden flash of strong interest, lit up the woman's face into beauty. The next, the blue eyes filled with tears, the chin dropped, the cheeks went paler than before, and a broken voice repeated in a wondering whisper: "Home to England?"

"Yes," said Long Jake softly, "home for a trip."

But he had no sooner uttered the words than he jumped up clumsily without a word of warning and stepped hastily out of the veranda. Almost instantaneously, Mrs. Truscott heard shrill exclamation, followed by a volley of angry words.

"Why, whatever is it? Ah, dear, dear, dear!" she cried, rushing out, with something akin to a fresh pang in her heart.

"It's only this, ma'am," he cried, savagely, throwing out a dramatic arm in the direction of a dark little figure that was racing rapidly down the broad bush high road towards the other houses; "that there little snake has been a-hiding behind this here picket fence, and a-listening to every word you and me has been a-saying. Confound her!"

The widow turned, and though the evening gloom was settling rapidly, it needed but a glance to assure her that yonder skittering imp was the one human creature in the township in whom she took any sort of interest—little Martha Byrne, whom she had even attempted to teach to read. The hot blood mounted to the woman's faded face. She faced about. But Long Jake was gone. Growing momentarily fainter, his mare's rhythmic canter was borne to Mrs. Truscott's ears as the strokes rang out from the flint-strewn track. The widow sighed deeply. Every breath she drew was a sigh; but this one came with new force from a new pain, or rather, from an ever-present pain re-awakened.

"Poor thing!" said Jake aloud, as the mare dropped into a walk at the foot of the steep winding track over Razorback. "No signs of business as I could see. Why, the place was never fairly started. Poor thing!"

Nearly an hour later, he put the mare into a canter at the top of the long gentle slope that stretched, through miles of timber, right down to the hut, and then he was thinking of that look of Mrs. Truscott's when he spoke the word "Home." Ay, she'd go home, too, fast enough, if she had the money," thought Jake.

With the quickened stride of the mare, the rider's thoughts, too, came the quicker. At first he made no effort to check them; but presently he found himself spurring on the mare in order to leave them far behind. The grotesquely-twisted gums fled by on either hand, bowing mockingly in the evening breeze as he passed; then the round moon shot up and painted the narrow track an ashy gray, and threw into merciless relief, among a world of phantoms, one solitary mortal flying from a Thought. But the Thought was not to be run away from. It twined its tendrils about the man's mind, and grew and grew until he became hardly conscious of the trees rushing beneath, the scent of the eucalyptus forest tingling in his nostrils. Suddenly a peal of harsh grating laughter broke upon the silence. The rider instinctively pulled up. The hoarse diabolical peal was repeated; but this time it was echoed by a low chuckle from Long Jake. He had lived in the bush more years than he could count, yet here, forsooth, he was startled by the bushman's familiar, the laughing-jackass! The momentary sensation, however, had an immediate effect; Long Jake shook himself together and rode slowly and soberly onward. Not that the Thought was expelled; it was allowed to remain, but on a different footing; for now it was no longer resisted, but willingly, coolly, discriminatingly entertained.

Before starting on the rounds of his paddocks next morning, Long Jake made a calculation with the butt-end of his stock-whip on the sandy soil outside the hut door. When the sum was worked out, he stamped out the figures, as if ashamed. Yet he had merely satisfied himself that in three months' time his gross earnings would amount to pretty nearly fifty pounds. "And on that," said Long Jake slowly, "and what the mare brings, we might manage it."

The spring months that followed were trying ones to Long Jake. He never went near King-parrot Flat. One or two trips he made over to Wattle-town, in order to negotiate for the sale of the ware with a storekeeper there, which ended in a bargain being struck that the mare should be delivered and paid for by Christmas

the latest; but on these occasions Wattle-town observed that the man from Razorback conducted himself very meanly, and that the little money he did spend was in hard cash. In place of fact he made it his first business to cash a small cheque at the bank on entering the township. Then, of course, there was the inevitable visit to the home station. But only two circumstances happened really to break the monotony of life, which, after years and years of it, became actively unpalatable to Long Jake's temperament for the first time. The first of these was a visit from hand some John Byrne, who slept at the hut on his way to the home station, where—so he said—he had business with Mr. Noble; though, in fact—which he omitted to add—he paid Jake the compliment of travelling many miles out of his way in order to see him, since he came straight from the lair of a lynx-eyed congenial spirit at Wattle-town, and not from the plain-shanty on the Flat. The visitor, however, was too welcome for Long Jake to consider the visit mysterious; and as for sinister glances and cunning questions, Jake never saw the first, nor was he even aware that the second had been put—and answered.

The other circumstance was this one day he found lying in the station store an envelope addressed to "The Boundary-man on Razorback." It contained a few lines from Mrs. Truscott, begging Jake to call at her store before his departure for England, and to bring her a message to be the bearer of a message and a trifle or two besides. He spelt through the note with difficulty, then laboriously indited a reply and dropped it into the mail-bag. In his note a day in December was mentioned on which he would without fail present himself at Mrs. Truscott's service. After that, with a feeling of satisfaction quite new to him, he inquired for the Mr. Noble, who had already heard with amusement of Jake's projected trip home, was not surprised to hear now that he intended coming in for his cheque about the middle of December. Jake, however, promised to stay until a new boundary-rider should be sent out to the hut, which, it was in turn promised, should be done a day or two before that on which he wished expressly to leave.

As December drew gradually nearer, he grew daily wearier of his daily work. He became restlessly impatient; and his nights were broken by vivid, disturbing dreams. As a rule these dreams bore him back across seas of time and the world to a peaceful little hamlet in Somersetshire. But they invariably ended by the distant and indistinct image of the English village fading before the strong, convincing presentation of King-parrot Flat; or the two places would be fused fantastically together, as is the way with dream-locality.

When at length the great day dawned, Jake set out for the station at sunrise, riding the mare, and carrying all his personal belongings in the swag strapped across the saddle. At the station Jake received his breakfast and his check; the latter—the account coming to a few pounds under fifty—being written for the round sum, thanks to a graceful bonus from the boss. Thus emancipated, Jake rode on to Wattle-town with a heart of air, leading a station horse which Noble lent him for the completion of his roundabout journey to King-parrot Flat. At Wattle-town the mare was sold, according to previous arrangement, for twenty pounds down in cash; the cheque was cashed—all gold; so that when Jake rode away from that prosperous settlement at four in the afternoon, he had seventy sovereigns in the leather pouch on his belt, which was imprudent, in spite of his modest conviction that not a soul was concerned—and therefore, he argued, not a soul could be acquainted—with the movements of so obscure an individual as Long Jake.

After an hour's easy riding Jake was once more on a thoroughly familiar ground for half-way between the Flat and his old home track was joined by one from Wattle-town. Never had this man's spirits been so high before, never had the somber tints of the bush seemed so warm and gay in the glinting sunlight. The gray rough track had never bounded so lightly from the heels of the good old mare; though surely this heavy pony hack was not a patch upon her for speed and lightness. The excitement that had entered his spirit during the last months had given new life and animation to a narrow, silent, well-nigh animal existence. He was no longer the thing that repeatedly, for days, lay helpless at Byrne's bar, and returned to the hut he called home without a pang, without a regret, without a hope. And here it was, in these endless forests of smooth, round trunks, that the Thought came to him, which had worked all this wondrous change—the Thought that was now at last to be put to the test, whether it was wise, or unwise, good or evil.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Ah, that could startle him then, but not now! Long Jake turned round in the saddle to look at the queer clumsy bird—he surely a bird of good omen. But he did not slacken his steady canter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

This time the laugh did not come from behind. Jake turned sharply. Directly in the track sat a tall, motionless, masked figure on horseback; and a voice that Jake thought he recognized cried: "Bale up!"

Bale up,—the seventy sovereigns Jake's heart quailed and sickened for a moment. The long barrel of a revolver covered him, and glittered in the sunlight. Must he be robbed in broad daylight? Wiry, wild cry of rage and despair he buried his spurs in the sides of his heavy mount and dashed straight at the highwayman, leaning forward with his face on the horse's mane. The robber, being less heavily mounted, backed a pace; and as Long Jake came on, unarmed and reckless, took deliberate aim at the chest of the charging horse. A firm quick touch on the reins caused the heavy brute to swerve; and with a loud ring the bullet struck the near stirrup-iron, thence burying itself in the heel of Jake's boot. The frightened animal thundered on; and in an

instant they were past, nearly bringing the smaller horse to earth in their rush. A quick succession of shots and an even louder volley of curses filled the air; Long Jake felt a stinging, burning blow between the shoulder-blades; his brain sickened and his body reeled in the saddle!

Just as the fiery sun began to dip behind the range, Mrs. Truscott heard a furious clatter of hoofs outside. She rose hastily and ran out. So did Martha Byrne, whom the widow had tried in vain to get rid of all the afternoon. Staggering through the little wicket-gate was a strange figure, all dust and sweat and blood, and the ashiest man ever reeled under. He made his way unsteadily up the veranda, where he and his head would have fallen back upon the boards had not the widow caught his shoulders and supported him. His breath came thick and fast, his eyes seemed closing; yet his fingers fumbled feebly until they had unfastened a leather pouch from his belt. And then his hands were powerless to lift it.

The stranger man looked dumbly upward at the woman; he could just grasp a trembling pointing hand to her, then drop it significantly on the pouch. His was lips moved, and from between them came the faint word: "Home."

Little Martha had for once used her long thin legs to some purpose. After one quick, intelligent glance at the pallid face of Long Jake she had rushed like the wind to her father's shanty; and now she was returning, almost as swiftly, with a posse of his choice spirits. John Byrne was absent, and mysteriously absent, from the township; but foremost among them was Surgeon-major Wagstaff, carrying his instrument case, and a vastly augmented posmosity of bearing, and devoutly hoping that, whoever the fellow was, he would be long enough to give him Wagstaff, a show of getting his hand in once more. Jack Rogers was there, too, and Paddy Welch, and one or two others. As they came up to the end of the store they could see right along the raised veranda. With the carmine glare of the setting sun behind them, the two figures that met their gaze seemed of carved ebony, both were so black and so rigid.

As one man, the little party slackened its pace; Paddy Welch doffed his felt wide-awake, and the others did the same; then they moved forward very, very slowly and Jack Rogers said, just above his breath, but, somehow, more gruffly than he intended to say it: "He's gone home square enough, now, boys, and for good."

Yet darkness fell over King-parrot Flat, and the boys still lingered outside the door of the now flourishing shanty. The Surgeon-major said there was still the ghost of a chance; and the Surgeon-major was sober and on his mettle, and ought to have known, even if he didn't.

That day week they ran John Byrne to earth in the ranges. They dragged him back to the Flat, and would have lynched him in sight of his own bar, but for one circumstance. The ink blotted spore of the door of the flour-mill, which was set forth that the patient was at last definitely out of danger. And they found its author, the gallant and skilful Surgeon-major, already gloriously drunk after his week of enforced sobriety by the sick man's bed.

So Mr. John Byrne, amateur bush-ranger, was taken over to Wattle-town and handed over, quite nicely, to the police.

Thanks to a woman's nursing and a Surgeon-major's experience, Long Jake pulled through. Just when the days began to shorten, and camping on Razorback became mean work, the shutters were put up at the new store. A week later, Long Jake's trip home began. But Jack Rogers turned out quite right after all; the trip was confessedly "for good." Nor was it made alone.

The End.

A LOVE LETTER.

He hurried up to the office as soon as he entered the hotel, and without waiting to register, inquired eagerly: "Any letters for me?"

The clerk sorted out a package with a negligent attention that comes with practice, then flipped one—a very small one—on the counter. The traveling man took it with a curious smile. He smiled more as he read it. Then, obvious to the other travelers who jostled him, he laid it gently against his lips and actually kissed it. A loud laugh startled him.

"Now, look here, old fellow," said a loud voice, "that won't do, you know. Too spoony for anything."

Said the traveling man, "The letter is from my best girl."

The admission was so unexpected that "It's no use, you've got to read it to us," said one of them. "We want to know all about your best girl."

"So you shall," said the one addressed, with great coolness. "I'll give you the letter and you can read it for yourselves."

"I guess not," said one who had been the loudest in demanding it; "we like to chaff a little, but we hope we are gentlemen."

"But I insist upon it," was the answer, "there is nothing to be ashamed of, except the spelling; that's a little shaky, I'll admit; but she won't care in the least. Read it, Hardy, and judge for yourself."

Thus armed, Hardy took the letter shamefacedly enough and read it. First he laughed, then swallowed suspiciously, and as he finished, threw it upon the table and again rubbed the back of his hand against his eyes, as if troubled with dimness of vision.

"Pshaw! if I had a love letter like that,"—and then was silent.

"Fair play!" cried one of the others with an uneasy laugh.

"I'll read it to you, boys," said their friend, "and I think that you'll agree with me that it's a model love letter."

"Mi oween dear papa."

"I sa mi Prairs every nite and wen I kiss your Pieshure I ask God to bless you. good bi Papa yure best gurl."

FEATHERS MUST GO.

The question of vegetarianism is causing a good deal of agitation in certain parts of Europe just now, and an attempt is being made to interest persons in this country in the same subject. The headquarters of the movement is in London, and the leader of the European vegetarians is Mme. Alexandrine Viergele. She is president of the Vegetarian Society and a woman of considerable prominence.

For years there have been vegetarians in England, but not until quite recently did they make much effort to gain converts or to bring themselves into public notice. They ate their vegetable dinners, they held their monthly meetings, they abstained firmly from all flesh food, and they flattered themselves that in doing so they were gaining both physically, morally and mentally. They never tried to thrust their views upon others, and they were sufficiently happy if none of the elect relapsed into the vicious habit of eating flesh.

Into this quiet community, which is, by the way, mainly composed of women, came Mme. Alexandrine Viergele. She saw the necessity of more strenuous work—indeed, of a vigorous crusade—and straightway she set on foot a meeting for the purpose of propagating the doctrines of vegetarianism. This meeting was largely attended, most of those present being women.

Mme. Viergele acted as president, and when the preliminary proceedings were over she made a proposition which fairly took the breath away from her auditors. It was highly desirable, she said, that to abstain from flesh food, but that was not enough. All self-respecting and humane persons, she insisted, and especially women, should abstain from the use of any article composed of animal material. Thus, according to her, women should not use silk garments, because the material in them is the work of insects; neither should they use animal skins, for the reason that the animals, feathers are to be discarded for the reason that many birds are sacrificed in order to obtain them. Of course, all fur garments are also to be discarded, and for a similar humane reason.

Naturally a lively discussion ensued as to the feasibility of organizing a crusade on these lines. Some thought the idea excellent; others, on the contrary, insisted that it was too extreme and could never be carried into practice, and still others, while admitting that it might be desirable theoretically, vigorously pointed out that many reputable persons would be ruined if it were carried out. They argued that among the vegetarians are many women who make their living as milliners and that they would be driven out of business if their customers ceased to purchase feathers, furs or other animal goods.

Mme. Viergele replied that quite as becoming articles could be fashioned from vegetable materials. Thus from the ramie plant, she said, could be made a dress which would closely resemble silk, and from the same plant could be made satin, velvet and other desirable textures. Finally, she insisted that even furs and feathers could easily be replaced by goods of a vegetable material, which would be quite as satisfactory as that obtained from animals. She argued well and long, but the audience was against her and finally it was decided to take no action, at least for the present.

Mme. Viergele, however is bent on going ahead, and if she cannot bring about a reform in one direction she will in another. A single example will suffice to show her energy.

STOVES AND RANGES USED AT SEA.

Contrivances to Keep Oven Doors Shut and Things from Sliding Off the Top.

Stoves and ranges used at sea have two peculiarities. One is that the doors are made to turn down and not to swing, and have fastenings to hold them securely when they are shut, so that they can't possibly fly open. The other peculiarity is in the rack top. It is elevated four or five inches and runs around the edge of the stove to keep the pots and kettles from sliding off.

Some stoves and ranges used afloat are also provided with cross rods which run from the fixed rod at the back of the stove to the roll in front, across the top of the pots and kettles and hold them down and keep them from shifting. They are used in very heavy weather, or when the ship is rolling. For some reason these cross rods are more used on British than they are on American ships.

When a vessel is in port the front rail of the rack is usually taken out, and then the cook has an easy access to the stove as he would have with a stove ashore.

A QUEEN'S APHORISMS.

Queen Natalie of Servia has just published a volume of aphorisms. Half a dozen or so will be quite enough to show their quality.

"A moment of apathy may render superfluous the whole existence of the greatest energy."

"A woman is like a blind man, she goes ahead, even when she falls."

"A woman always loves only the man who can master her."

"The young woman is an angel; take care that she does not become, woman-like, a devil."

"A heart tried too far no longer knows how to be happy."

"Independence is not always happiness."

"Unhappy is he who has not experienced the happiness of doing good."

"Riches have only one excuse—beneficence."

LONDON'S VIBRATIONS.

London is in a continual state of vibration. To demonstrate this a mirror was recently suspended by a fine thread so as to throw a point of light upon a screen, the movements of which showed the extent to which the building was affected by the traffic taking place within a radius of two or three miles.

RUSSIA IS REGENERATED.

WHAT HER PROGRESSIVE Czar IS DOING FOR THE PEOPLE.

Improvements by the Present Emperor. A More Humane System of Government Prevails.

Emperor Nicholas of Russia has completed a piece of work which calculated to interest students of history. Finding that the wooden category, or hut, occupied by Peter the Great, while under the name of Peter Mikailof, he laboured as a carpenter-shipwright at Saardam, was in danger of destruction through damp and neglect, he has caused the entire structure to be enveloped in a sort of coat of armor of granite and red brick, instead of resting as heretofore on piles, the hut now reposes on a foundation of concrete. There is a cleverly devised heating apparatus to preserve the hut against damp, while a mosaic floor outside the hut and a delectable floor inside enable visitors to walk about the place without danger of any harm or injury to the interesting old edifice.

The hut is a regular labouring man's dwelling, consisting of two rooms, and is constructed of gray planks, with the roof of red tile. There are two windows to the house, and while there is no furniture, that used by Peter the Great having been taken to St. Petersburg, there are several tables and planks at which the founder of the Russian Empire worked. The walls are adorned with paintings and inscriptions, mostly placed there by former emperors of Russia.

King of Holland presented the hut and the surrounding gardens to his Russian daughter-in-law, sister of Emperor Nicholas I., and she in turn bequeathed it to her nephew, Czar Alexander II. Until the beginning of the present reign it was shielded by a sort of barrier of wood, which had been built over it, but it was not until the present Emperor interested himself in the matter that the proper steps were taken to preserve its historical relic. It may be added that the trees, the shrubs, and the very soil of the large garden, and prettily laid out garden surrounding the imposing granite edifice, have all been brought especially from Russia for the purpose.

A PROGRESSIVE EMPEROR.

Talking of Russia, it may be mentioned that, although the grant of a constitution is as far off as ever, there are very great changes for the better that have been introduced by the present Emperor, and, whereas formerly the despotism of the Crown was narrow and reactionary, it is now progressive and enlightened. With some exceptions there are the same laws, but they are administered in an entirely different fashion, and now in quite a different spirit to what was the case two or three years ago. The officials have become, thanks to the Czar's influence, quite human in their dealings. They even condescend to offer explanations when things go wrong, and they actually seem anxious to conciliate public opinion.

All persecution of Roman Catholics, and especially of Lutherans, the faith of which the Czarina was a member, have been stopped, and even the Jews, who a few notable exceptions, have been allowed to go their way in peace. Strikers no longer are treated as mere revolutionists, but are accorded by the Government a hearing, while during the last year there actually have been cases where the local governors and the police magistrates have declared the demands of the strikers to be well founded, and have insisted on the employers yielding.

RIGHT OF APPEAL.

Last, and by no means least, is the permission accorded to the zemstvos, or county and district councils, to appeal directly to the Czar against veto or interference on the part of the Provincial Governor or County Deputy Governor. Each zemstvo is supposed to have full control of the local affairs of the district which it represents, its members being elected by the taxpayers. But until a year ago every decision of the council, no matter whether it related to schools, the management of hospitals, the relief of the poor, or what not, was subject to the veto of the Governor of the province. This veto was used in such arbitrary fashion that it practically deprived the councils of all power.

True, they possessed the right of appeal to the Czar, but according to the rules and regulations devised by the bureaucrats and officials, the appeal of the council to the Czar against the veto of the Governor could only be transmitted to the throne through the Governor in question himself. The result was that out of 1,000 appeals from zemstvos during the first two years of the present reign not more than twenty actually reached the Emperor.

Nicholas has now insisted that all be sent to him direct, without passing through the hands of the Governor, and the consequence has been that during the last few months nearly every appeal that has reached him from the Councils has been granted, while the Governors and their deputies are being coming very chary indeed about using their right of veto. In fact, for the first time since the organization of the zemstvos, nearly 40 years ago, they are beginning to enjoy the power, the prerogatives and the usefulness which it originally was intended they should possess.

A KLONDIKE WOMAN NOW.

The first woman who can cut and fit a dress has arrived at Klondike, and is making a fortune with her needle. She is Mrs. Chester C. Adams, and inside of 30 working hours in Dawson City she netted \$30 from sewing. From making a common, every day mother's dress, she received \$5, and for a waist without "bones" or any of the frills of civilization she was readily paid from \$10 to \$15 in nuggets. The plainest of work brought from \$5 to \$10.

PRACTICAL FARMING.

CAUSES OF POOR CROPS.

Poor crops are bound to come for another. Sometimes the result of natural causes, sometimes not. Too much or too little heat or too much cold, too much the power of the farmer. It frequently happens that even with a favorable crop is gathered. A few causes are—

To enable a growing crop to get the food in the soil the most perfect condition. If too compact, it deprives the plant of a large part of the plant food. If the soil is lumpy the plant rootlets are retarded in their growth. Propagation and a thorough working will go far towards putting it into shape. An occasional dose of also greatly improve the condition of the soil. If it should be too heavy the soil will make it more compact; if it is poor policy to grow crop on the same soil year after year. Every farmer should select suitable to his particular soil, include some leguminous clover or peas in the rotation, can absorb nitrogen from the air, thus add to the soil's supply of food.

The plant must be fed an equal amount of another nutrient. If the soil is disturbed, and an abundance of the first nutrients which are first exhausted and which must be replaced by nitrogen, potash and acid. When applied in the proper proportions and in a proper way will enrich any plant and increase its yield. If the nitrogen is obtained through clover or peas, the cost of this costly ingredient is saved and it remains for the use of other plants. The quantities of potash and acid can be determined by analytical experiments. By analytical quantities on different fields he can soon ascertain the limit of profitable fertilization.

Often the entire success of a crop depends upon the time of the fertilizers; especially in case during a dry season. If the fertilizers are not applied until the soil is ready to receive them, they are not absorbed. If the soil is too dry, the fertilizers are not absorbed. If the soil is too wet, the fertilizers are not absorbed. If the soil is too dry, the fertilizers are not absorbed. If the soil is too wet, the fertilizers are not absorbed.