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MELVIN BROS.

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NIGGER BEND TRAGEDY.

"Sam Blakeley is killed!"

A dozen men who were seated about the logging shanty smoking or playing cards started and looked about at this sudden announcement.

Shorty, the skidder, stood just within the room swinging a smoke-begrimed lantern and looking straight ahead at the group of loggers gathered about the greasy pine table with a sputtering tallow candle in the centre. The gane of euchre came to a sudden halt. Jim Sweezy turned half round on his stool and grinned at Ned Oakley, or Shorty, and growled.

"Bosh! What you givin' us now, Shorty?"

"Rats!" and a general laugh followed.

But the stumpy skidder knew what he was talking about, and was not to be put down by unseemly levity. He advanced to the centre of the room, and then several of the loggers could see that his bronzed face was pale, and that a scared look filled his eyes. Shorty was not easily overcome. Something of an unusual nature must have happened, and no mistake.

Jim Sweezy crushed his cards down upon the table and wheeled squarely about as Shorty said:

"It's God's truth, boys; Sam's dead, for I saw him under a tree-top not five minutes ago."

"Durn cur'us, seems to me," muttered Jim Sweezy. "The fellow started this mornin' to go down to Nigger Bend, and I don't see how he got back an' planked hisself under a tree. You ain't comin no cod now, Shorty. Ef you be, I'll smash every bone in yer body soon's I find it out."

"I tell you 'twas God's truth."

"Boys, Shorty ain't lyin' now. He's seen somethin' anyhow. Let's go out and 'vestigate," cried a huge, red-bearded teamster, who had until now sat with his back leaned against the log ribs of the shanty, smoking a briarwood pipe. He knocked the ashes out quickly, and then thrust the hot briarwood into a side pocket of his womus.

"Bob Stiles is right; we'll 'vestigate."

There was a general commotion now, and soon nearly every man in the shanty, including many who had crawled into their bunks before Shorty's coming, poured into the crisp outer air, and followed the flame of the skidder's lantern to a tree top about forty rods away.

When the skidder came to a halt he had his lantern high, thus permitting every man to see the dark object that lay upon the ground just under a projecting limb of the giant pine.

"It's Sam Blakeley, sure enough!" cried Tom Holcomb, the scaler. "He must have come back through the woods, and got under this tree just as it fell. Poor fellow!"

A feeling of awe came over that group of rough loggers, and for a time they spoke in subdued tones, and moved about with solemn tread, as though fearful of disturbing the rest of their dead comrade. Poor Blakeley's skull was crushed in, but he was not disfigured otherwise. Sam was quite a gentleman among the loggers. He was fairly educated, and withal a keen business sort of a young fellow.

On the following day the body of the young logger was conveyed to Nigger Bend and consigned to earth. The shanty crew attended in a body. May Andrews and her mother were the only mourners. May and her mother, the latter a widow, were employed to do the cooking. Mrs. Andrews' brother doing the chores about the shanty. Sam Blakeley was May's cousin, and he was often at the cook's shanty in consequence.

One other had frequently been at the women's shanty—Tom Holcomb, the scaler. Which one was the girl's favorite none could tell. May seemed deeply moved at the untimely taking off of her cousin, and her eyes were red with weeping for some days thereafter.

It was learned that Sam Blakeley had been to Nigger Bend on the day in question, and had set out to return to the shanty just before dark on that fatal day. No one saw him after he left Bend until Shorty's discovery of his body under the pine top. The tree had been felled just at dark, and the choppers had left it, expecting to top and measure the same the first thing in the morning. It was a wonder with many how Blakeley came to be in the spot where the tree struck him down. Certainly it was not on his road home, and he had not been to either of the shanties, since the women or the chore boy would have seen him.

There was something mysterious about the affair. But the sad event was soon forgotten and camp life in the woods went on in its old, jolly, careless fashion.

Snow soon came and the teams were busy for several weeks hauling the logs to the river. When the final break came several millions of pine logs were heaped against the high rollway above the roiled waters of the Muskegon, and one more act in the forest drama must be performed ere the logs were afloat in the stream.

The shanties were deserted for the season. Black, glistening trails wound their way through the woods where once were the smooth roads over which huge pyramids of pine had been hauled during the cold months just passed.

April sunshine rapidly dissipated the ice and snow, and the roiled Muskegon flowed on unvexed to the lake.

A wedding at Nigger Bend was not an everyday occurrence, and when one was announced, the boys were on the *qui vive* at once. Visions of a "horning bee" and plenty of liquor filled the brains of the woodsmen. For once, however, a part of the program was destined not to take place. Tom Holcomb did not propose to submit to a "shivaree," so he publicly invited Nigger Bend to come to the wedding and dance all night if they choose at his expense.

Since the young scaler was so liberal no one thought of troubling him to furnish refreshments of a liquid nature. Tom, however, understood what would best suit the denizens of Nigger Bend, and so he had a keg of beer on tap the evening of the wedding and dance.

The marriage was performed by old Squire Hawke, and May Andrews was made Mrs. Tom Holcomb in short order. After the ceremony the fun commenced. People may talk and write about an Old Virginia breakdown, but for genuine, boisterous jollity nothing can equal these backwoods "shindigs" so popular among the loggers and lumbermen a few years ago.

Of all the "digs" ever held in Nigger Bend the one given by Tom Holcomb the night he became a Benedict was the *ne plus ultra*.

Tom himself felt his oats, and danced and drank with the merriest of them. That wedding was one long remembered in Nigger Bend, so soon was it followed by a tragedy that sent a shudder to all hearts. So boisterous did the jolly wedded scaler become that more than once the pretty bride remonstrated with him.

"Don't worry, May," retorted Tom, with his merry laugh. "I mean to lead a sober, industrious life after to-night. This is the last fun I will have with the boys, you know; let me improve it, here's a dear."

May good-naturedly yielded, and the consequence was the dance continued until the gray streaks of dawn were seen in the east. With the stereotyped "I wish you much joy," the woodsmen departed, leaving Tom Holcomb alone with his bride and Mrs. Andrews, for he remembered the party came off at the widow's house.

"I must leave you here for the present, May," said Tom. "I contracted with the Wards to break their big rollway, and, as the men will be on this morning, I must go at once to the rollway. I will be back to-night to supper."

Kissing his new-made wife, Tom Holcomb hurried from the house. Was May Holcomb happy? Those who saw her the night of the party believed that she was. Nevertheless, she was not wholly free from haunting thoughts, for the man who had met with death in the autumn under a fallen tree had held her plighted troth, and but for that tragedy May would never have become the wife of the scaler. When Sam Blakeley left the woods to go to Nigger Bend he was a happy man, for his pretty cousin had promised to become his wife some day. Sam was overjoyed, since he had all along recognized in the handsome Tom Holcomb a formidable rival. Sam had been six months dead, and May was now the wife of his handsome rival. So goes the world, in wilderness, country, or city, and so it will doubtless go on forever.

Ten thousand frogs were singing enough to split their throats along the bush-lined shores of the Muskegon, and brothers of the same family were tuning up in the waterholes at the back of Nigger Bend, when May Holcomb, in robe of spotless white, walked out to the rude gate in front of the widow's house and looked anxiously up the road.

Tom promised to be home to supper, and it was past the usual supper hour now, and he had not yet put in an appearance. It was the first evening of her wedded life, and the bride was anxious for the coming of her husband. Long she stood watching different forms as they came and went down the one straggling street.

"There was a big break up to the rollway an hour ago," said a man to his companion as the twain passed the anxious watcher at the gate.

"That's Tom Holcomb's rollway?"

"Yes. It's one of the worst places out. He don't get enough for the work. It's a mighty dangerous place, too."

The men passed out of hearing, and still May lingered. The shadows deepened into intense darkness. May was on the point of turning, when a light gleamed through the gloom far up the wagon-road.

Tom was coming at last. She waited expectantly until the light drew near, and paused in front of the gate. It was not Tom, but a short, thick-set man who held the smoke-begrimed lantern in front of him as he came to a pause. May recognized him at once. "Shorty, you have come from the big rollway?" she quickly questioned.

"Yes, Mrs. Tom—"

"My husband? Why did he not come? Surely he can do nothing on the rollway after night."

"N-oo," faltered the man. "You see, miss, er—he won't come because he can't."

"Shorty, what do you mean?"

"I mean, marm, that there's been an accident, and your man's hurt."

"Hurt! Oh, Tom! I must go to him at once," exclaimed May, pushing open the gate and passing into the road. A detaining hand was pressed against her arm, and a husky voice said:

"No, no use, marm. Tom Holcomb's killed."

An inarticulate cry answered the terrible announcement of the skidder, and the next moment he held a white robed form in his arms, silent, in a dead faint.

A big break had occurred on the rollway and Tom Holcomb had been caught in an exposed position. A mass of logs went over him, and when the rush had ceased, a mangled mass of flesh and bone, sickening to behold, was lifted from the hillside and borne to a leaf-strewn mound on the summit of the bluff. Was the scaler dead?

No, he still breathed, but it was evident that life was fluttering but faintly in the mangled form.

"Oh, my God!"

Thus groaned the blood-smeared lips in husky accents. Jim Sweezy knelt quickly beside the poor fellow, and bent his shaggy head low.

"Ef you've got a word to say better speak, Tom. Maybe your woman——"

"Don't. I loved her; that's why I did it. I'm going to die, Jim."

"I expect you be. No doctor kin help you now, Tom——"

A deep and awful groan interrupted Sweezy.

"In great pain, Tom? Heaven help you, old boy." Then Sweezy gazed away to avoid the anguished sight.

"I—I'm not in stch bodily pain," articulated the purple lips," but, Jim, I ain't fit to die."

"None of us is, I reckon," uttered Jim Sweezy, still looking into the gathering shadows along the edge of the forest.

"I'm worse than any of you. Bend down low, lower Jim," gasped the dying man, in husky accents. The stout woodman obeyed and bent his ear close to the purple lips of the fast-sinking man.

A dozen men, stout, red-shirted fellows, stood round the two forms on the ground, awed into silence at what they beheld. Not one of those men heard the words uttered in husky accents by the *debonair* young scaler, words that sent a chill to the heart of Jim Sweezy, an astounded look to his face. This was the communication that reached his ear, uttered in a voice below a whisper.

"I—I killed Sam Blakeley, Jim! I did it with a club, and put his body under the tree to ward off suspicion. It was for her, for May, that I became a murderer!"

A gasp came at the last, followed by a rattle in the throat. An instant later, when Jim Sweezy rose to his feet and turned from the spot with white face, Tom Holcomb was dead. No one in that crew ever learned the truth, and the scaler received an honored burial, with many sincere mourners following his corpse to the grave.

It was not until ten years later, when May had been six years married to John Norman, that the author learned from Jim Sweezy's lips the story of the tragedy among the pine.

"You must keep the secret, Redwing, for May never 'spected the truth," said Jim, and I do not reveal it when I tell the story, guarding the real characters under fictitious names.

OVER THE SEA.

I am looking back through the days and weeks
That lie in the shadowy land of yore,
And a waking spirit stirs and speaks—
The spirit of dead years gone before.

Speaks with a murmur of mournful sighs,
In a voice that carries the sound of fears,
And, lighting the lamp of its passionate eyes,
It opens the shroud of the buried years.

The wind is blowing up from the wold,
The stars are shining down on the sea,
But the wind is bleak and the light is cold,
And 'tis only of pain they speak to me.

For the wind once toyed with a silken tress,
And the stars once shone on a saintly face;
And how can a faithful love grow less?
Or a new love take the old love's place?

The sea is swirling up to my feet,
Singing its moody soft and low:
But the song of the sea is deadly sweet,
For I mind how it slew me years ago.

We have been parted, I and she,
With many a hundred miles between,
And now she was coming across the sea,
(Oh, the sky was blue and the waves were green!)

Coming—and yet she never came!
Meeting—and yet we met no more!
She heard me not when I called her name,
Though the dead might have heard me on that shore.

Oh, love, though my eyes but dimly see,
There is hope in my pathway where I tread,
That over the seas thou wilt sail to me,
In the day when the sea gives up her dead.

BE A WOMAN.

Oft I've heard a gentle mother,
As the twilight hours began,
Pleading with a son on duty,
Urging him to be a man.
But unto her blue-eyed daughter,
Though with love's words quite as ready,
Points she out the other duty—
"Strive, my dear, to be a lady."

What's a lady? Is it something
Made of hoops and silks and airs,
Used to decorate the parlor,
Like the fancy rings and chairs?
Is it one that wastes on novels
Every feeling that is human?
It 'tis this to be a lady,
'Tis not this to be a woman.

Mother, then, unto your daughter
Speak of something higher far
Than to be mere fashion's lady—
"Woman" is the brightest star.
If you, in your strong affection,
Urge your son to be a true man,
Urge your daughter no less strongly
To arise and be a woman.

Yes, a woman! Brightest model
Of that high and perfect beauty
Where the mind and soul and body
Blend to work out life's great duty.
Be a woman, naught is higher
On the gilded crest of time;
On the catalogue of virtue
There's no brighter, holier name.

NEW YORK BROKERS.

How They Get Rich Buying and Selling Stocks on Commission.

In ordinary brisk times the Wall street brokers make more money, and make it easier, than any one other set of professional men. To do a legitimate brokerage business does not necessitate the slightest risk, nor does it imply that the broker must in any way become a speculator. As business is conducted on the New York Stock Exchange, the broker simply lends the money to his customer with which to purchase stocks, and then does the buying for the purchaser. The customer makes a part payment, which is called margin, and that insures the broker against loss through the depreciation of the property purchased. An erroneous impression prevails that there is no genuine transactions in stock when a purchase or sale is made in the New York Stock Exchange, but that the whole is fictitious. This is true of some of the great marts, but in the Stock Exchange the stock certificate is bought, paid for and delivered, and may be transferred into the name of a customer on the company's books. That is one reason why the transactions of the brokers become so enormous, and why so much capital is required to carry on brokerage business. A broker who buys 100 shares of Lackawanna at 90 gives his check for $9,000 to the broker who sold it, and gets the stock certificate in return. If he buys 1,000 shares he pays $90,000 for it. In other words he gives $90 a share. In brisk times the big stock brokerage houses do 20,000 shares a day, and give checks or take checks for $2,000,000. They need not have that much capital, for the sales and purchases as a rule about balance one another. And the total of the checks received equal the total paid out. The purchase of stocks is a very simple process, although to the world at large there is about it enough of the hidden to make it a deep and fascinating mystery.

It is notable that genuine brokers rarely retire from Wall street unless it be because they have accumulated large riches or have grown too old to do the work. The reason is that it is a very profitable business. A very few customers will keep a broker going. The commissions are large. To buy and sell 100 shares of stock the broker charges the customer $25; to turn 1,000 shares, $250. The good houses that in brisk times trade in 20,000 shares a day get $5,000 for doing so. For weeks and for months, in the booming times of 1880-81, the daily transactions on the Stock Exchange amounted to 500,000 shares. On this the commissions were the enormous sum of $125,000. As there are 1,100 members of the Exchange, it is plain that the average profit to each was something more than $100. It is very easily earned, but capital is required, first to purchase a Stock Exchange seat, and then to pay in full for the stock which the customers buy.

The greatest trouble is to get the customers. While very many business and professional men speculate in Wall street, they are careful not to let the fact be known. For it to be gossiped that a tradesman speculates is to imperil or absolutely ruin his credit. For a professional man it implies disregard for and neglect of his regular pursuits. In many a Wall street broker's office may be seen physicians, lawyers and men who are working on salary for other people—neglecting their patients, or their clients, or their employers. So it happens that the average speculator keeps very quiet about his gambling. It is hard, therefore, for a broker to drum up custom. To openly solicit it in business houses or social gatherings would be to meet rebuff at every hand. It is only through gaining extensive acquaintanceship and through advertising, that brokers get new customers. But once gotten, a customer who will trade in a few hundred shares of stock in a day, or even a week, is indeed a bonanza. Every 100 shares is $25 to the broker, as already explained. Yet there are hundreds of speculators in the street who trade in their 5,000 to 10,000 shares a week. Hosts of Wall street brokers have had the command over themselves to abstain from speculating on their own hook, when they must have known that the market was sure to go in a given direction.

There are the men who grew rich with great rapidity. They are calm and coolheaded in every emergency, while their brother brokers are wild over prospective loss or reckless over possible gains. They are content to take commission and let the speculators run the risk. The coolheaded broker has a sure fortune if he will only avoid speculation on his own hook—that as a rule, means ruin to everyone, be he broker or customer, who undertakes it. The brokerage firms who get the business of the big men of the street have the biggest bonanzas of all. To make a successful movement in stocks requires a purchase or sale, or both, of a vast quantity of stock, for which the operator must pay commission in full. In his manipulation of Western Union and Missouri Pacific in the last year, Jay Gould has probably bought and sold twice over what equals the entire capital stock of both companies.

IMAGINATION.

The Important Part It Plays in Matters Involving Life and Death.

"Don't a good many people procure medical treatment who are not sick?" asked a reporter of the Detroit *Post* of a prominent physician.

"Of course they do. There's nothing the matter with half the so-called invalids. I always keep a big batch of bread pills made up for that class of patients. Many a one I've got out of bed with that sham medicine, and they thought me a man of profound learning and skill."

"They just imagine they are sick?"

"Certainly! A woman is the contrariest of God's creatures. If she makes up her mind she's sick, you can't talk her out of it. You must administer something. I had one call me years ago that lay in bed nine months, and she was as well as I am. On a certain day there was one of these circus and animal show combinations passing. I had an inspiration that beat any compound my skill could produce. I hired the manager to let a tame bear out of the cage and we all set up a hue and cry, the children went for the woods, and that woman took after them without even stopping to make a toilet. There was nothing under the heavens the matter with her, and when her husband came to settle, I thought for a while he'd boot her all over the farm."

"Ever have any other case of the imagination?"

"Lots of them. A big hulking fellow about ten miles from the town I was practicing in got the idea that he was going to die at just 11 o'clock in the forenoon of a certain day. About 9 o'clock a messenger came. I hurried out. When I got there the crank had fifteen minutes to live according to his calculations. He did look like a man on the verge of eternity. His eyes were dim and sunken, his face had that peculiar pallor which heralds the near approach of death, and his breathing was very labored. The family were gathered around and weeping as they took a final leave. Something had to be done quick. There was a smart looking woman there, and I called her aside. Pointing to the clock on the mantelpiece which the patient was watching, I said: 'When I have his attention turn that ahead.' Then I crowded into the family group, hustled them into the next room, sat down on the edge of the bed, and began telling that fellow one of the most horrible murder stories you ever heard. I located it right in the town where he knew everybody, named the woman killed, went into blood-curdling details, and so completely interested the man that he forgot about his 11 o'clock appointment. When I gave him a chance to look it was twenty minutes to twelve, and he was actually mad for the time, claiming that he had been tricked. He finally got to laughing, and we all took dinner together. The next day he whipped two men at a barn-raising for twitting him about the program of death that miscarried."

"Wasn't there anything the matter with him?"

"Not a thing except what he imagined. He was sound as a bullet, but if I had not adopted that ruse he would have gone over to the majority at 11 o'clock."

"Doesn't imagination sometimes cure people who are really ill?"

"To be sure it does. Imagination has a strange and unaccountable power. I had a funny incident that answers your inquiry. There was a giddy young widow called at my office one day. She was a hity-tity creature. Talked all the time she was awake, you know, and had as much laughs as she had talk. She wasn't very chipper when she came, however. She was on crutches and accompanied by a solicitous companion who was brim full of sympathy. The invalid had a knee badly swollen from rheumatism and wanted to know if I could administer electricity, which always helped her. I soon had a battery in shape. The sympathetic friend placed one connection at the invalid's knee. I held the other connection in my left hand so as to complete the circuit by touching the patient with my right hand. I drew my fingers across the back of her neck, and of course she indulged in a few little screams and some hysterical conversation. "Doctor, that's a strange sensation. Ouch! Haven't I got about enough? My knee feels a great deal better. Don't fill me up with that electricity. There, no, you must just quit; I've got a whole streak o' lightning in me now, and I know it was all I needed. The pretty widow walked out to her carriage without a limp, and had no trouble in being the belle of all balls for the remainder of the season. I had noticed a waggish student of mine in the next room stuffing handkerchiefs in his mouth, writhing with suppressed laughter, winking at me on the sly and indulging in a can-can whenever visible to me alone.

"What in thunder are you making such a fool of yourself about," I inquired when the ladies had departed. He roared away and pointing to the battery said, 'You might have killed that had some creature by an overcharge of electricity.' I looked and joined in the hilarity. I had neglected to hitch on to the battery, and the widow's vivid imagination had supplied the currents which wrought so sudden a cure."

He Remembered the Poor After a Fashion.

"Well, deacon, have you remembered the poor during this cold weather?"

"Yes, parson, I think of them very often. Only yesterday a poor, shivering little fellow came to my door without clothes enough to cover his nakedness. It was a very pathetic sight."

"What did you do for the poor little creature, deacon?"

"I let him shovel off my sidewalk, and then made him so nice and warm he actually sweated."—[*Boston Herald.*

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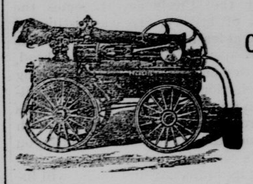

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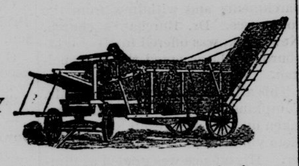

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