INNOCENCE.

In house Bostonia, upon the sea,
Lives a gentleman's son,
A little boy of quick activity
Among the public ways.

And he the first time in his life
Has bought pennyroyal
Good ale The world beyond his house
Is pleasure enough for him.

With beaming face and happy song
He trudges on toward the house,
And ponder the sweet pennyroyal pills
Long on the way he had drawn.

He carefully trudges upon the pole,
Hands in pocket to boot,
A wonderful pennyroyal without
The street can be equal.

And when the good old gentleman reads,
With his long pipe near,
Asked, "Pipe, what's my pill tell me, sir,
Are I for Abortions?"

"Pipe's what you are, my honest lad,"
He chuckled with a grin,
"Pipe's what you are, my boy!" the said,
"If Pipe is wanted!"

—Gilbert Bennett in Washington Star.

A STROKE OF LIGHTNING.

"Welcome, stranger. Can you take pot-luck with us? Hi Jim, bring another plate for the gentleman. Just pitch your hoss, sir, and make yourself at home. This is Cap'n Wilson; his brother Dan; my name is Hoit. The boys generally calls me 'Grover,' 'cause the governor of this state is named Hoit but we're relation to me though. Elliott, Viney Elliott, did you say the name was? Glad to see you. This venison is good; pitch in and help yourself; we're just got through."

Such was the greeting received one autumnal evening back in the seventies by a lone horseman who rode up to the camp of an engineering party of the Rio Grande railway in Colorado. As the stranger sat eating his supper, thoroughly at ease with the men he had never even heard of an hour before, the others watched him curiously, wondering who he might be, and his destination—where it could be.

This looking fellow he was, too, about thirty-five years old, with a well built figure, piercing black eyes, hair the same color, curly as a child's, strong white teeth that gleamed through his moustache, and a long, good natured, continuously sir that made friends for him so easily. His hands especially attracted their attention. They were as white, the nails as neatly trimmed, as a woman's. But the strong muscles of their pinions, until his appetite was appeased, then stretched himself face downward on the ground watching the fire and talking with the others.

"Said Elliott you were over there! Isn't she a beauty? She came from New Mexico. I was down there at a round up several years ago. Must have been 300 head of horses at the corrals. As I stood idle watching the work I saw a horse vault into the air, clearing an eight foot fence at a bound, and was off like the wind. Far out on the prairie the vaqueros captured her and brought her in. This is the mare. She was too neat and pretty to be branded, and I bought her for $100 in gold. She ought to be tired, for I've ridden her hard today."

As he finished speaking he gave a low, peculiar whistle and the mare whinnied in return, a perfect picture as she stood with mane and tail flying in the breeze, outlined against the foothills.

Soon all the men were wrapped in their blankets, feet to the fire, and fast asleep—all but one. That one was Elliott. The glowing embers, now and again emitting a crackle and spark as a bit of wood caught fire, pleased his fancy as he lay watching them, his thoughts miles away. He dozed again playing poker in the gambling hell in Hinkville with stacks of chips in front of him, and their unusual color was true to his core.

"What good luck I had here in that pick pot, standing all the raises on a pair of jacks, but when I drew in two more in my three card draw against those pat hands, I felt easier. Guess I cleaned them out pretty well, for I won pots. Lucky for me I cashed in and went to supper. I was only in a few hundred when that row came up."

He felt of his belt. Yes, the money was safe, snuggled around his waist under his shirt.

"I wonder if that fellow's dead yet. The contemptible cheat. Thought he could deal second card on us, did he? Well, it didn't work. Wonder who fired that shot. When the fight went out I felt pretty squeamish. He spoke my name; I heard it plainly just as I went you the door, but I didn't stop; I didn't have time; too many around those dog-gups just then. Wonder if that bullet was went through the roof. It helped to increase the confusion, and I didn't want my sheriff's party in that room, not any. Awkward, my dropping that pistol. Wish I had it back again, for I've carried it so many years. Wonder if I'll find Mollie over at that railroad town. She use to have marked there yesterday, and I'm late, but I guess she'll wait. How pretty I loved Dear old Molly—And to spoil the sleep that only outdoor exercise can give.

Early dawn found the party breakfasted, and Elliott, bidding his hosts good-by, was on his way back that trail to that lonely mountain village where the railroad should bring his loved one to him.

Busy with their plans and the repair of their surveying instruments for the day's use, the engineering party did not notice the approach of a band of men whose sudden appearance startled them in no wise. There were seven of them, armed to the teeth with rifles, revolvers and bowie knives and below jolly or stolid camp equipage of a short journey. The leader cautiously inquired if they had seen a tall, dark man dressed in a nothing suit. The description fitted Elliott so exactly that the newcomers soon elicited the desired information and started on up the valley, simply considering the information that the gentleman had gone on ahead of them and they wished to overtake him.

Riding at a slow, easy lope away from the camp where he had spent the night and been so hospitably entertained, Elliott felt the exhilaration of the fresh mountain air and quickened his horse's pace to a gallop. The mare caught the hint in her teeth and away they went, faster and faster. Thus it was that the party riding over the same track, hastily equipped by having to watch for the tongue of the horse's hoofs as they went along, did not catch sight of Elliott until almost unhidden. The trail, narrow in the foothills, led them to a more traveled road, which skirted the marks of a wagon having traveled it. The road led from to an old alone hut, the roof looking strange to the men accustomed to seeing shingle and board roofs. As the party drew nearer to this deserted house of cowboys in other days they saw Elliott, sitting on an empty pickle barrel, leaning up against the side of the house, his horse quietly grazing near at hand.

When near enough to recognize him the party quickened their pace, and laughed jeeringly when they saw him wave his hand at them. For his part he was wondering what had brought them to this out of the way place, but glad of the company on his way should it also prove friendly. Then they came nearer he recognized what made them so jolly he was not alone, and his face grew stern and he sat motionless, his hands on his knees, his eyes fixed on the party as they drew rein before him.

"Where is he? Bring out your man!" he said, in a voice as hard as his face. Not a word was spoken in response, but the leader, pushing aside his companions, commanded him to hold up his hands.

"What in hell has get into you fellows?" asked Elliott.

"Shut up," answered the leader. "Hold, Walker, and shoot quick if you and we don't want any talk from you at all. Hank Green fired long enough night before last to tell who filled him, and you've got to swing for it. Come on, boys."

Elliott's protestations of his innocence were not even heeded. His weapons were taken from him, his hands tied behind him, and quicker than it takes to tell it one of the party had skinned up a tree which stood handily near and fastened a lasso to a branch. The empty pool barrel was rolled out under it, turned upon end, and Elliott was stood on it, while one of the men with no gentle hand knotted the rope about his neck, throwing over his saddle to complete the operation.

His captors gathered about him and he was commanded to speak out if he had anything to say. Only a slight pack would have sent the barrel from beneath his feet. He could feel the cold sweat even heard of an hour before, the others watched him curiously, wondering who he might be, and his destination—where it could be.

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