Sport Harry's Blind.

A STORY OF

THE HUNGRY GULCH GHOST

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CHAPTER I.

ROARING A TIGER.

Gold Dust was on the golf rife.

It had been rumored; at last it was assured! The "city" was to have a brand new institution.

Whether Gold Dust was in need of such an enterprise herself and for her own

"HELLO! EXCLAIMED SPORT HARRY, "WHAT'S THE MATTER HERE?" "THIS YOUNG MAN MADE THE MISTAKE OF CALLING ME A Liar."
There was a standing offer of $500 to the man who could solve the mystery and lay the ghost.

It was at this time of the talk of pulling down the mansion and making use of the material in putting up another building that the advance agent of a Ketchin and Godwin came along looking for a likely place to open a sanitarium.

The Hough mansion filled his eye completely as a most excellent building for the purpose, the best he had ever seen, as he frankly declared; and he began bargaining with Mr. Hough.

He would not take a refusal, and finally Dalton & Godwin rented the house at a figure highly satisfactory to all parties concerned.

The advance agent took hold immediately, had the house thoroughly cleaned, and in a little while a goodly lot of furniture came along whereabouts to gladden the interior. It was apparent that there was money back of the enterprise and the agent declared that they were not in the habit of doing things in a half-way manner. And, as a finishing touch, over the parlor appeared the sign, in big gold letters:

**GOLD DUST GOLD CURE.**

And now, on this day that witnesses the opening of our story, the head of the concern, with his corps of assistants, was looking upon the site.

"By the way," remarked one Harry Meyers, better known as "Handsome" Harry, the Sport, "I wonder what they will do with it when they come to open their concern?"

"Begorra, that same is phwath Ol have been (tukkin' it)," replied Felix Shea.

"Sure, and they can play the Saint Patrick act wid de snakes, Ol see no rayson why dey should not be able to do it, and dey is too well done, as is usual with a ghost."

"Would it not be a good idea for them to catch it and tame it, and apply it profitably in displacing the Jim-Jams?"

"Begorra, that same is phwath Ol have been (tukkin' it)," insisted Felix Shea.

"You mean it a part of the cure?" asked Joyful Jimmie.

"Yes."

"It would be enough in itself in my opinion," said the old bummer—for such in Hough Gulch, he fought it up, and was going to give it the greatest boom a mine ever had. He started a town, calling it Hough City, and built a mansion, and have the snakes remove the curse, and it had never yet been occupied. Ten years later the property was sold for a song.

Gough Gulch was a gold magnate in his day, a bold speculator, and immensely rich. A rich vein having been struck in Hungry Gulch, he sought it up, and was going to give it the greatest boom a mine ever had. He started a town, calling it Hough City, and built a mansion, and have the snakes remove the curse, and it had never yet been occupied. Ten years later the property was sold for a song.

"What is this you are talking about?" asked the advance agent of the gold dust concern.

"What's the matter with the mansion? This is not the first hint I have heard. What is it?"

"Do you mean to say that you do not know the house is haunted?" asked Handsome Harry, in surprise.

"This is the first I have heard of it, on my word."

"And been here as long as you have! Well, well, that points a pretty shrewd play on the part of Seth Dalton and Alf Godwin, hang me if it don't. They have kept it pretty still!"

"Begorra, it must be deaf, dumb and blind, ye have been T'rind Murphy," cried Felix Shea, "dat ye have not heard av dat. Sure, Ol could'nt seal ye mesmerize, as is usual with a ghost in dat house."

"I would wonder if this fact is likely to incure our business?" inquired Murphy of Handsome Harry.

"Wouldn't wonder if it did," was the reply. "If you are patient, and spend a month in that house, you may make up your mind that he is desperate in earnest, that's all."

"Well, I don't know of this in the first place. I might have backed out, but as it is we have got the house and are all ready for business. We'll have to lay the ghost, that's all. Ah! here comes Prentice— and an extra one behind him, as I live!"

"Sure, it looks likhe dhey have come," said Shea.

"Yes. They have come, sure enough," assured Murphy, with enthusiasm. "Now we'll soon have our palatial sanitarium open for business. There is hope for even you, my friend."

That was not said to Shea, but addressed to Joyful Jimmie, who knew that Murphy wished to arrest the spirit. Jimmie made haste to respond. "I would want to shuffl off this mortal coil insted of it I thought you had got the good feller. I am only waitin' fer pay day to come around again, that's all, then hoory!"

The stages came on apace, and presently drew up in front of the Dalton House and stopped.

This was the leading hotel, and was owned by Seth Dalton, and named for himself. There was little in Hungry Gulch that Dalton or Godwin, or both together, did not own.

When the regular stage stopped, that being the one in the lead, the first man that got off was a goodly black-faced fellow, with dark hair and mustache and keen, penetrating black eyes of magnetic power. He was roughly clad, and was followed by two women, evidently servants for the mansion.

The man Murphy stepped quickly forward, and held out his hand to the portly man in black.

"Welcome to Gold Dust, Mr. Morrison!"

"How are you, Murphy?" was the cordial greeting, as they shook hands.

"So, this is the place you have been booming, is it?"

"This is the place, sir, and yonder's the house. You will agree with me, sir, that it is a fine building for your purpose. I know. Is it not all that I said of it?"

"It is, it is," exclaimed the portly gentleman, with enthusiasm. "We made up our minds to make it our home entirely to you, Murphy, no mistake at all. We'll introduce me to the mayor, or the leading men of the town, and let me get acquainted."

This Murphy proceeded to do forthwith, presenting the gentleman to Dalton and Godwin, and others.

Meanwhile, the man first to alight had sauntered on to the piazza of the hotel, and had mounted the steps. The piazza was about shoulder high from the ground.

As he was ascending the steps, a young man who was standing there was overtaking him closely. The stranger saw it, but paid no attention to it, and when he reached the piazza he turned and looked to see the passengers who had come by the special.

He noted that the young man was approaching him, but gave him no attention until a hand was laid on his shoulder.

"You are Tiger Joe," said a voice.

"No, not," was the cool reply, and the stranger turned calmly and looked at his accuser.

"I do, I know that you are, sir!"

"And I assure you that I am not. You have made a mistake."
CHAPTER II
A MOOTED QUESTION.

Everybody turned in the direction of the voice.
"It would be as if the young man had made a mistake, indeed, as the other had tried to assure him.

In making the charge he had made, his hand had moved to his hip, as if for a gun with which to back up his accusation, but he never drew it.

Before he could even get his fingers upon it, the stranger was performing the action described, and with his words he had swung his hand over the railing and held him there.

"Hello!" exclaimed Handsome Harry, who happened to be the nearest.

"Who's the gentleman over there?"

"This young gentleman made the mistake of calling me a liar, that is all," answered the stranger. "Who are you? If anybody claims him in ten seconds, I'll drop him with a force that may do more than kill.

"Here, I'll take him!" said Handsome Harry, stepping quickly forward. He put up his arms, and the young man was dropped into them by the stranger, who stepped to his feet at once, instantly the young man swung his hand to his hip, exclaiming:

"Curse you! I'll fix you!"

"Better go slow, my young gentleman!"

The stranger of the dark eyes was looking down at him over the tube of a thirty-two.

See here, Tom, what is the meaning of all this anyhow?" demanded Handsome Harry, catching the young man's pistol hand, and preventing him from drawing. Where have you been?"

"He is Tiger Joe," that's what—"

"Pshaw! you are dreaming, boy. He is no more Tiger Joe than I am," answered the stranger, "but he would have his own way about it, and wanted to make me agree with him.

Then let him say who he is," cried the ruffled young gentleman.

He, by the way, was the son of All Godwin, of whom casual mention has been made, and was used to having his own way in and about Gold Dust.

"I am Tiger Joe, the fellow you call me," said the stranger, "and you will do well to remember it."

The mayor was dropped into them by the stranger, who stepped to his feet at once, instantly the young man swung his hand to his hip, exclaiming:

"Curse you! I'll fix you!"

"Better go slow, my young gentleman!"

The stranger of the dark eyes was looking down at him over the tube of a thirty-two.

"Who are you?" demanded the mayor, "Trump Finnegan, at your service."

"Can you prove that?"

"What kind of proof do you want?"

"That I am the mayor of this city, and that I have made a blunder. Men of Gold Dust, is that a fair proposal to you?"

"Begorra, nothing could be fairer, Oi!" said the mayor, and the stranger, Felix Shean, loudly.

"Hould yer whast toll Oi put it to dhe boys mesel', an' see phwat dhey have to say about it. Min of Gold Dust, a'.
CHAPTER III.
JOYFUL JIMMIE'S SCHEME.
Felix Snip's proposition evoked a hearty laugh. And that laugh worked a good deal in Truman's favor, for laughing was hardly severe.

"Let him go, mayor!" spoke up Handsome Harry. You all know me, and I am not going to vociferate. Maybe Tom has made a mistake, and it would be rough on the stranger.

The crowd supported that proposition by a shout.

"You can't lose anything by that," assumed Finneggan. "You are a whole town, and you can make a man, and after all I am the chap you want, it hadn't ought to be much trouble to get me. I certainly have no intention of running away from my accuser.

"What say, boys?" and the mayor turned to his son.

"Do as you please," was the answer, and the young man turned on his heel.

"Well, for the present you may remain at large," announced the mayor to the expedition. "Don't forget, though, that you are under suspicion."

"Thank you for nothing," rejoined Finneggan.

"Yes, I have a little something for you," said the mayor. "I have a little something for you who have taken a hand in the affair."

"Pshaw! that was nothing. You held the winning hand without any assistance."

"Yes, and it is a trump ye are, for fail not at this game."

"Ah! I see. Quite a novelty, for this part of the country, I should say."

"Yes, decidedly."

"And that is the building over there? They are going in on a grand scale, no denying that."

"Yes, that is the building, but they did not erect it for that purpose."

And that was the last of Handsome Harry. An hour later, the mayor proceeded to give the newcomer a sketch of the town's history.

Meantime the Godwins, father and son, had entered the hotel office.

"You are sure that is the man?" the mayor demanded.

"Of course I am! Didn't you notice the way he handled his guns? What other man you ever heard of could handle the poppers like that?"

"Well, that is good evidence, certainly."

"And then his cool nerve. Did you ever see the like? He had you and your gang completely balked." "I guess I'll have to admit it, Tom." "And how did you get enough, add to the fact that I have seen the fellow, and can solemnly swear he is the gentleman you are looking for," the mayor continued.

"Well, that settles it. Then not likely that you could be mistaken, I guess. But we will have to take care of him in some other way. He is too many for us, open.

Prof. Morrison had been busy registering for himself and company for the party who were to take their dinner—rather supper—there at the Dalton House. He now turned to Godwin.

"What is this my man Murphy tells me about our house being haunted?" he demanded."

"Well, that is the story that is around," said Godwin, laughing lightly. "I hope that you are not going to take stock in any such old woman's story as that."

"But, it seems to be a fact."

"Like a good many other facts, my dear professor. Give a dog a bad name, and hang the dog, you know."

"But he tells me that you and your partner have a standing reward of five hundred dollars for anyone who will lay the ghost. If there is no ghost, why a reward?"

"Don't you see?"

"I must confess that I don't, sir."

"Why, to lead men to investigate and prove the fallacy of the rumor."

"And by that means redeem the house from the stigma—I see, I see. Not a bad stroke of policy."

"Not believing the report ourselves, there was a possibility of a good chance by mentioning it to your man, and so no mention was made of it. You are too long-headed to take stock in any such folderol."

"And that offer of five hundred dollars is still open?"

"Yes, it is still open."

"Then, if we succeed in establishing the fact that there is no ghost in the house, you will place it to our credit."

"I will."

"Good enough. That will be a big item to offset the rent. We will have to pay you that much enhancement of the value of the property, so we shall come off about even by the transaction."

"Exactly."

"Well, I will go over to the house to lay the ghost, and to your interest to have it laid. I haven't the slightest doubt but that we shall be able to prove it a myth."

"Or, I, Professor Morrison."

"I say, mayor."

"Well, it is just, Joyful Jimmie?"

"It was that personage, who had been waiting to chip in."

"Is this the peruser what's goin' to run the snake-annihilation establishment?

"Yes, he is the gentleman, Jimmie."

The professor smiled.

"Well, Jimmie, I see."

"You'll give me knock-down to him, will ye?" Joyful Jimmie asked.

"Why, certainly. Professor Morrison, this here is just the peruser you know as Joyful Jimmie, on account of his fondness for the flowing bowl and his happy disposition when in his cups."

"Ah! that's the professor, taking the bummer's hand. "Perhaps you want to inquire into the merits of our gold curse, that is known far and wide?"

"Wull, now, peruser, you couldn't a' hit the bull's-eye closer 'n that if you had tried," said Joyful Jimmie, with a broad smile. "That is just what I do want to 'quire about."

"Very well. What do you want to know? If you are tired of being a slave to strong drink, I will give you a written ticket to rid you of the appetite or refund your money and pay you for your lost time while you are in the sanitarium besides.

You must have fullest faith in your cure," remarked Mr. Godwin, with a smile."

"We have, sir."

"And ye don't kill the patient," quizzed Joyful.

"No, we don't kill the patient," the professor assured. "We guarantee to cure him."

"Wull, now, it would be well sigh a miracle, in my case, perusing the old camp bummer. I am a genuine old soak, and I opine my veins run likker instead of blood."

"No matter about that, sir; you place yourself under my care, and I guarantee to cure you and put blood in your veins instead of alcohol. I would like to get hold of just such an impossible case as yours, to show the people here just what we can do."

"I see."

"That is so, my friend."

"Wull, now, that is right along the line of what I was goin' to propose to ye."

"What was the proposition you had in mind?"

"Ye see, it is like this: I ain't got no hundred dollars, even a hundred cents, for matter of that, but I thought mebbe we could hit off a bargain. I am well known here as the worst old chronic in Hungry Gulch, and if you can cure me it will be a card worth more'n a hundred dollars five times over."

"I don't know but that you are right."

"I know I am."

"When can you put yourself under treatment, if we accept your proposition?"

"Hold on jist a minnitt before we talk about that," urged Joyful. "You are on the winnin' side in the game, accordin' to your own say, and I want to know a little more about it before we begin."

"Very well; what do you want to know?"

"I hear said that you allow a patient to swing and swing his heart's content before you 'ply them with the cure."

"Well, that is about right, my friend. We give our patients to drink just as long as they will drink. When they abate from it, then we give them the sense of the cure."

"That is all I wanted to know," assured Joyful. "I'm ready to begin at once, and the sooner the better."

"Very well; come to-morrow mornin'."

Joyful Jimmie hastened out, with a joyous smile on his face, and just around the corner he found Felix Sheaks.

"Eh, works it."

"Yes," answered Sheaks, slapping his knee and almost dancing in his delight. "Pay day is ten days off, but to-morrow I goin' to have the biggest old glorification on record, you bet!"

CHAPTER IV.
PLANNING THE PARTY PROGRAMME.
Prof. Morrison, after learning the story of the house, that it was haunted, decided not to open until the following morning.

He would allow his assistants and the others to spend the night at the hotel, and would call for sight for their first inspection of the haunted quarters. He believed that would be the better plan.

By that means his people would have
all day wherein to become acquainted with the premises by daylight. Chances to hear about the ghost, they would probably be in better nerve for the ordeal. Familiarity, he reasoned, would breed contempt.

So that plan he adopted. Now, the leading resort of an evening at Gold Dust was the Saloon.

This was owned by Seth Dalton, too, and it mattered little to him whether you patronized the hotel or the saloon, he got his money just the same; and if you patronized both, so much the better.

The saloon was a popular gaming establishment, and gaming, be it known, was legalized in that section of country. It was richly furnished and appointed, having the game of chance best of everything, and it aimed to be first-class, whether it was or not.

The place was well filled when "Trump, Finnegans quartered in, in company with Felix Shea.

Felix had taken a strong liking to Finnegans. This was probably owing to the fact of his prowess, as it had been displayed, and the fact that he laid claim to being an Irishman.

Handsome Harry was there, and, as seats happened to be vacant near him, Finnegans and Felix crossed a little ways, he said, and took the unoccupied places, with a word of greeting.

They entered into conversation, watching the players, the nearest of the tables with passing interest.

While they sat there, a man sauntered down the room past them, and on to the end and up the other side, and there he sat down.

He was a thickset fellow, with a red face and redder mustache.

They gave him no attention.

Outside the door, Harry was seeking for this fellow, and that man was the mayor of the camp.

"Well, did you get a good look at him?" he asked.

"Yes, good as I could," was the answer. "I would know him again any time.

"It is not a question of whether you would know him again or not, but do you know him when you see him?"

"Well, then, I don't!"

"All right; you come with me, and we'll talk the matter over. Have you have any such person on hand that will pay you well, if you perform well the work laid out for you?"

"I have done jobs for you before, mayor."

"That is just the reason that I have selected you for the present undertaking. Come on.

They crossed the street to a building in which the mayor had his office, and there Finnegans let himself in with a key.

A faint light was seen coming from a private room at the rear, and he led his companion in that direction, and then opened another door, and ushered him in.

Here were Godwin the younger and Seth Dalton.

"Found him, did you?" queried Dalton.

"How are you, Jasper?"

"So's to be and about, thank 'ee," the man responded. "How goes it with you?"

"Good enough. Sit down, for we want to talk this thing over.

"All right," dropping onto a chair.

"Go ahead. You in it, too, Tom?" to Godwin's son.

"Yes, I love my neck."

"Now, the matter is right here," began Godwin, having seated himself. "You said you did not know that fellow."

"Never seen him before in my born days, mayor, that's a fact."

"Well, then, we are going to put you on him. We happen to know who he is.

"Who is he?"

"Tiger Joe."

"The man leaped to his feet with astonishment."

"Ye don't mean it!" he cried. "Who says he is Tiger Joe? How do ye know he is?"

"I say he is," spoke up Tom Godwin.

"You? Where did you ever see Tiger Joe?"

"At Carson City when the sheriff's man had him there, before he shot Deputy Williams and got away.

"The old mischief, you say!"

"Fact."

"Now, you see what is required of you," said Godwin the elder. "You must arrest him and lodge him in the jail.

"That trick may be a good deal easier said than done, old man."

"If any man in this Gulch can do it, you are the man. And we'll be on hand to back you up."

"But, is it dead sure that he is the chap?"

"Of course it is dead sure," was the answer, in petulance. "Don't you suppose I know what I am talking about?"

"Yes, but the proof of it. Suppose he claims he ain't--

There, now you have come to the vital point," interrupted the mayor. "Do you think that a thousand dollars right down in hand would help you to remember him as Tiger Joe?"

"Oh, boy! Now I mumble. Now I bite, as it were. That man Tiger Joe? Why, bless yer heart, mayor, I kin swear to him as high as a mountain, if you want me to swear that they bears the same tellies that he got away from at Carson? Didn't I see him kill Williams--"

"Hold on, don't get in too deep!"

"-cautioned the mayor. "You were a deputy at Carson City at the time, that is enough. Here is the thousand dollars to fasten that point in your mind now. Have you got the sand to go and arrest him and 2am him into our jur--"

"The matter is this. The fellow's vanity a moment before, by the compliment paid him.

"Have the sand for it? Do I look like a rooster that wouldn't come to the scratch for a thousand dollars? Try me."

"Then you see what is required of you?"

"I reckon I do. You want me to go and scoop this chap, and swear that I know him personally for Tiger Joe."

"That is it, exactly. You have not heard that we tried to arrest him this afternoon."

"No, did ye?"

"Yes. There was only one thing lacking, and that was proof. My son here made the charge, but there was no proof to back it up, and so we had to let him off."

"I see."

"Now, it is not to be known that you have seen us, or heard anything about this matter. You have just come in from Red Horse; you simply got into the Silver Saloon, as is your custom, and then you see Tiger Joe, and you go for him without a second hesitation.

"I see, I see."

"My son will be there, and so will I and Dalton here, and the minute you make the charge he will be on hand to aid you in taking him. If you need any aid, which is not at all likely."

"All right, count on me. But, what is the game? Is it dead straight that he is Tiger Joe?"

"For the present, yes, he is. What we want is to get him away from here, and if it is found out that the take has been made, he can be set free and no harm done."

"I know. But there ain't no mistake; he is the man, and I'll swear to it."

"Good enough; you understand all right. Now, give us about ten minutes to go here and get things straight, and then you can come in and open up the ball. Be sure to have your gun out, for this fellow is lightning on the draw. Pocket your wad now, and be off."

CHAPTER V: A HITCH IN THE PREDEEDINGS.

"Trump" Finnegans and his two companions were enjoying some light drink and cigars, and were talking pleasantly among themselves, when the thickest fellow with the red face and redder mustache sauntered down that way again.

This time he stopped near where they sat, and looked on at the game that was in progress near at hand.

"Who is that fellow?" inquired Trump.

"Dad?" responded Felix. "Dad is Jasper Lord, a deputy from over to Red Horse."

"A deputy what?"

"Deputy sheriff," explained Handsome Harry. "You are not afraid of his kind, are you? But, that's only in jest."

"With the unmeant insinuation that I may be Tiger Joe after all. But, I attach no significance to your remark, and take it as it was meant. No, I'm not afraid of anybody."

Just at that moment the deputy turned his direction, and seeing Handsome Harry, apparently for the first time, he advanced, saying:

"Hello, Sport Harry; how is it you are not drinking this stuff?"

"Oh, I thought I would take an evening off--Tiger Joe, by all that's golden!"

So the deputy suddenly interrupted, and he had whipped out a gun at the first word and covered his man.

Harry, being the kind of Felix Shea started and stared at their companion, who sat unmoved. He was as cool as a Roman, and was looking the deputy in the eye.

The deputy had spoken in a loud tone, and the attention of half the people in the room was drawn to that.

"You are slightly mistaken, my friend," asserted the accused.

"Mistaken? Well, I rather guess not, my fine fellow; I rather guess not!"

"Then how much are you paid for making this charge?"

"Paid fur makin' the charge? Do you want me to bore ye right where you set this minnit? You are worth half as much dead as you are alive, and for a cent, I could do it."

"And be hanged for murder; that would pay you big, now wouldn't it? I am not offering the slightest resistance."

"And you'd better not, either, by golly!"

His loud tones had now drawn the attention of everybody, and the voice of Mayor Godwin was heard.

"What do! What is the meaning of this?"

"It means that I have just lighted on to Tiger Joe, that killed Deputy Williams,--" to Felix.

"Tiger Joe?"

"Yes, Tiger Joe."

"Then you know him, deputy?"
Well, ruther, I do! I have had my eye on you for protection, and a fair hearing to-morrow." "If you surrender," sneered the deputy, "what else can you do, I would like to know?" "That does not answer my question." "You will be lodged in the jail and kept there until the authorities at Carson can get you," asserted the mayor. "You will be protected all right; don't worry about that. We'll put you where the dogs won't bite you." "This is all one-sided, though." "What do you mean?" "You do not mean that I am to have a hearing, to defend myself and prove that I am not Tiger Joe, evidently." "That will come later. When the Carson people get hold of you they will give you all the trial you want, I guess; you needn't allow a little thing like that to disturb you." "That's what the matter!" cried the deputy. "That reward is mine, my chappie!" "Then you refuse a hearing?" "Yes, till the Carson people get here, we do," vaunted the mayor. "Very well. What I have got to say about it: I am not Tiger Joe, and I refuse to submit to this arrest." "Oh—bo! What are you going to do about it?" "Resist. There he sat, sipping his drink, the coolest man of them all, apparently. "Why, you don't look fool!" howled the deputy. "They have got the drop on ye in the hardest kind of way, and you ain't got a ghost of a show." "Look here, Jasper," cut in Handsome Harry, "are you sure that you are not making a mistake? The man is positive in declaring that he is not Tiger Joe, and he ought to have a hearing." "Let him have it, right here and now, then," cried the deputy. "Let him prove that he ain't Tiger Joe, and we'll deal with the corn. I was a deputy at Carson the time we had him there, and I guess I had ought to know him. Let him prove up, if he can." "That is the ticket!" cried the crowd. "Give every man a fair show, is our motto!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE TABLES TWICE TURNED.

A big crowd had now encircled the table.

The accused man was still sipping his wine, and Handsome Harry and Felix Shea were still seated with him. Having taken sides with him, and having expressed their friendship for him and invited him to call on them if he needed help, they were bound to him in honor.

At the same time, it was plain that they now doubted him, for the proof was too self-evident for any one to doubt; while the charge the accused had made savor of absurdity. It did not stand to reason that the mayor would send such a man as Tom Godwin and Seth Dalton to close by this time, and were ready to lay hands on the prisoner at the word.

Handsome Harry and the Irishman exchanged a glance, and stood up.

"Come, what are you going to do about it?" demanded the mayor, with a show of impatience. "I suppose you will allow me to stand up and show myself, and not put a bullet in my own back for it?" "Yes, you kin stand up," said the deputy, "but take awful good care that your hands don't move to's a gun. Ef they do, you are a goner that same instant." "All right; that is understood." "You've got that box of glass, and deliberately stood up in his chair, in plain sight of everybody. "Perhaps some of you remember what I said?" Dick, as remarked, in full, clear voice. "I said that when you could prove that I am Tiger Joe, I would walk into your jail and put a bullet in amurder. Do you remember that?" "Yes; and do you recall what I said?" demanded the deputy. "I said that you would go in, whether you made a kick or not." "Yes, so you did; and I observed at the time something about the possibility of your being mistaken." "It don't look much like it." "That's what I don't, by gad!" cried the deputy. They still had their guns covering the accused man's breast, and held the better hand. "We are not always to judge by appearances," said the prisoner. "I suppose the crowd is here on suspicion, if you produce good proof that I am not Tiger Joe? That same is all the bhoys want," assured Felix Shea. "And I have full confidence that he can produce it," declared Handsome Harry, "and I'll make it a fair deal, man of Gold Dust." "That's what we will!" "You bet!" "This is all the assurance I want, gentlemen," said the accused. "I suppose you will allow me to produce a paper from my pocket, deputy?" "I reckon so, but don't be all night about it. I know you are Tiger Joe, and it is all blame foolishness letting you try to make other folks think that you ain't." This would be a queer world if your idea of justice pleased such a Ghastly as the accused, as he produced a paper from his pocket and opened it. "I have here a description of this Tiger Joe, gentlemen, which I will read aloud for your benefit."

The Godwins exchanged quick glances. Here was something they had not counted on, evidently. Even the deputy was disconcerted. Without delay the accused read the description of Tiger Joe, as he was popularly known, and any one at all able to comprehend a word picture could see that it did not apply to him.

"There you have it," he said, in conclusion. "The man wanted is two inches under my height, weighs thirty pounds less, and has steel-gray eyes, and my own are hazel, and he has light complexion, and is of nervous temperament. Has a restless way of moving his fingers, and—"

"That ain't a fact," cried the deputy. "That don't fit you at all, and I swear that you are Tiger Joe. He does not fit me, you are right; and yet it is the published description of Tiger Joe, as sent out by the author- his-office. I wish I could put one of these things I might run across him some time." "More likely that you had it printed yourself as a means of fooling people enough to be allowed to rejoin the mayor. "How is it that these notices have never appeared at Gold Dust? Your story is of too thin fabric, my fine fellow."
Then you refuse to accept the proof?

"Which is proof in itself that you do not mean to give me a fair chance. I appeal to your citizens."

"I saw the proof that we do not mean to be humbugged," roared the mayor.

"Here are two men, well known to us, with money in their pockets that would be a set of fools not to take their word against yours."

"Very good; but if you will take the trouble to look, you will find that this paper is genuine, and bears the seal of the Secret Service."

Godwin was a nervous deputy, and in the sudden change of atmosphere he was as much at a loss as the mayor. He was to be the judge of this contest, and he was afraid that he might be made a tool of by the mayor.

"The Secret Service?" asked Handsome Harry.

"Exactly."

"What have you to do with the Secret Service?"

"I have not laid claim to having anything to do with it," was the return answer.

"This paper, however, is the genuine article."

"What is a list?" cried the mayor.

"I do not believe that any such paper has ever been issued, or I would have received copies of it, as mayor of this town."

"The queer thing about it is that you did not," said the accused, calmly. "It is passing strange that anyone here has taken it into his head to do business in this manner."

With a movement to rival the lightning, the accused man flung his hat and stuck the mayor a stinging blow in the face, and left.

And, with another motion, almost simultaneous, he gave the deputy's pistol handle a sharp kick. Away flew his weapon, and in all the motion the accused had covered. He had turned the table upon him in the nearest kind of manner.

"Since you have opened the ball and forced the issue," he cried, as we went to close it. "I am Tiger Joe, but there is a man not more than a thousand miles from this table who knows the description contained in this circular. Hold on there, my young gentleman!"

He turned one of his weapons upon Tom Godwin.

The mayor's son came to a stop, and turned the hie of death as he faced around.

"Men of Gold Dust," said the now master of the situation, "I leave it to you to say whether the description you hear fits this chap or not."

"What! You accuse my son of being a thief and murderer!" screamed the mayor. "Citizen, are you going to allow a curroth to come here and run things this way?"

"Tiger Joe," said the mayor, "the whole of it is foreordained."

The instant the reflection of the mayor was visible to the mayor, he was in the act of whooping for the mayor. "I am satisfied," said the mayor.

"We have got to do him up, and that night, or he will do for us all the worst way. There is no time for monkeying about it. Wonder if they have got him!"

"Ten to one they haven't."

"When I last saw him, the fellow was under arrest."

"I am looking," said Trump. "At that instant the report of a pistol rang out."

"Trump Finnegan was seen to start, as if the bullet had come close to his head. Such had been the case. But the bullet had been fired from the extreme rear of the room, if indeed in the room at all, and the bullet had come within an ace of its billet."

"No time for question or comment; the men rushing forward to answer Dalton's signal were at hand, and the contest was going on with all the energy of a full-hand contest. It looked as if the stranger might now get the worst of it."

At the moment of impact the room was plunged in darkness.

The place enjoyed the distinction of being lighted with gas from a supply tank in the rear.

"He had had a close call—more than once during the last hour!"

"Moving about the same as the others were moving, showing no haste that might arouse suspicion, he presently reached a rear window, and vaulted lightly out."

"He landed all right, he started around the wall toward the rear, and was gone a quarter of the distance when he came upon two men who were standing there in the shadow in conversation."

"A dozen and a half bar to stop without discovery."

The noise within the saloon had prevented his steps from being overheard. It was quite dark just there, and he had only been able to make out the outlines of the two men against the faint light of the street.

"Behind him there was no light that could reveal his presence in the same manner, and he stopped short at once and leaned against the building without taking another step or making a sound."

"I hit him!" one voice asked.

"Don't think you did; but the light went out so quick that a fellow couldn't tell."

"I hope I did, anyhow, curse him."

"There is no doubting that you were right, I guess."
of course, and was as much surprised as they.

Now, hold your hands while you count twenty," the unknown added, "and if you move out of your tracks before you finish the number you'll drop in behind the wall.

With that he stepped back, and vanished as he had come.

For a few moments the men were silent.

Trump Finnegan left his place silently and moved off in the direction the unknown had indicated.

He had gone but a little distance when a hand grabbed his arm and a voice said in his ear, in hasty manner:

"You are going to give me your death for you. You are known, and the sooner you get out of the way of these wolves the better for your health. Come, and I will show you a place."

"I am not in the habit of running away from danger," said Trump.

"Don't be a fool!"

"I try not to be. Who are you?"

"One who would be your friend, if you would let me."

"I never refuse a worthy friendship. You speak as if you knew who I am."

"Yes, I do know you."

"Where was it?"

"You are Deadwood Dick, Junior."

"Well, now, that is a wide departure from the first charge that was made, certainly.

"And a good deal nearer the truth. Come, will you allow me to show you a secure place of hiding? If not, you will likely regret it later on."

"You think so?"

"I know it."

"And where would you take me?

"Into the haunted mansion—I know a way of getting in."

"A way in through the window with the ghosts? I had rather face the dangers that I know all about than those I know not of, my good friend!"

"Very well, if your choice is made, so be it. I can be of no further help to you. See, they are lighting the saloon up again, you will be missed, and the whole camp will soon be buzzing about your ears."

CHAPTER VIII

CONFIDENCE MISPLACED.

The man was about drawing away, as he finally did, but Trump laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

At the same moment a bar of light shot from the window of the side windows of the saloon, and their faces were revealed to each other.

Trump Finnegan found in the man a rather good-looking fellow of about his own age, and clad in similar rough garb.

He had dark eyes, hair and mustache; in fact, was two of something alike.

At the first sight, as the bar of light shot out upon them, he had taken it to be Handsome Harry.

The next moment proved that it was not he.

Not more than a second elapsed, scemingly overdone, but it was long enough for discovery.

There was a flash and a sharp report, and a bullet whizzed between them so ungracefully near that it caused them both to dodge, and Finnegan whipped out a gun.

In the same moment he sent a bullet speeding to the spot where the flash had been seen.

Together the two men sprang out of the door.

"Say quick—will you come?" demanded the unknown.

"Why not fight it out?"

"There is no use throwing your life away for nothing. You are only one against the whole camp."

"I have you to back me."

"Not unless you come with me, and instantly begin to live for yourself if you have not. They know you, I tell you, and your doom is sealed unless you are guided."

"Then there are Handsome Harry and the Irish—"

"Hyar they be! Death to Tiger Joe an' all who stand for him! Let drive at 'em, boys!"

One flash and report, then another, and a shower of lead tore out of the lounge and the bullets were whistling through the air in a dangerous manner, some of them too close for comfort.

"What did I tell you?" demanded the unknown. "Follow me if you will; stay if you are determined.

With that he was off in the darkness.

There was no time given for consideration; in a second he would be out of sight in the gloom.

Trump Finnegan kept him, keeping close at his heels, not alone for safety, but with a double object in mind. The mention of the haunted house was a part of the consideration.

It was plain, now, that Dalton and the Godwins ruled things at Gold Dust.

The unknown had not magnified the danger.

Shots were still being fired, and men were running this way and that to make at least a show of doing something.

In another minute the shooting became meaningless; everybody who had a gun was using it to add to the general din, for camp denizens enjoy "shooting up" the town on occasion.

Out in the direction of the haunted house there was still silence.

The unknown—slackened his pace.

"You are there?" he asked in guarded tone.

"Yes, I thought I had better accept your offer, friend."

"The most sensible thing for you to do. Now, follow me and make no noise."

He advanced at a walk, and the other followed him. It was Deadwood Dick, as the unknown was; it was the sort of adventure he enjoyed.

They now came to the great, frowning house, forbidding enough in its appearance; the awful reputation of being haunted as well, and the unknown led the way around it to the rear.

There was a hard, flag walk, and their most careful stepping gave out some sound.

"Stop," said the unknown.

The other stopped to avoid a collision with him.

"When I open this secret door," said the unknown, "you step right in and I will follow and close the door after us. There is only room for one at a time, and you would not know how to secure the door."

"All right, if that is the programme," replied the other. "I have had a kick at a rasping sound, and a darker gap showed in the dark wall.

Their eyes had become slightly used to the gloom, by this time, or Finnegan's, at any rate, and he was enabled to make out this much.

"Now," said the unknown, "Is it level footing?" asked Finnegan.

"Yes, perfectly level; you can't miss it, pard."

Trump Finnegan stepped forward, never thinking of treachery, and was about to step through the opening, when he received a push from behind that sent him headlong into the place of Stygian darkness.

He realized the same instant that he had been cleverly duped and trapped, but what avail would all his weight, or the strength to break like lightning that it was a rope and he must clutch it for his life.

In the idea came the action, and he closed his arm upon the rope, and, in almost the same moment, grasped it with his hands. It yielded under his weight, or it might have been impossible for him to hold it, and from somewhere came the muffled clang of a bell.

There he swung, he knew not where, and far below he heard something strike upon the rock with a heavy thud, strike again, and then all was still.

Trump Finnegan, with rasping sound and a click told him that the door had been closed.

"Where was he? What dangers surrounded him?"

Deadwood Dick (for it he was) felt that he had had the escape of his lifetime.

And who was the scoundrel who had thus lured him to such a doom, under the guise of doing him a favor?

Once let him escape, once let him meet the fellow face to face, and there would be a day of reckoning. But, was that day ever likely to come? Alas! he feared it was not.

"Well, Richard, or Finnegan, or whatever your name may be, you have saved myself, having collected his girt, "you are in a deuce of a fix this time, sure enough. No matter what your name was when you came here, it is likely to be Dennis before you get out."

He had wound one leg around the rope, and was swaying with it, to and fro.

That it was the rope that had rung the bell he knew.

He gathered his strength; while he hung there, and the time was trying to decide whether to slide down or climb up.

"If I had not done what I did ring the bell again if he could help it. That would apprise his enemies that he had caught fast to the rope, and that he would be done for."

He could go down with less disturbance to the rope than up.

"It might not matter; even if he did ring the bell again his fate might be assured, all the same; but, there was a chance for him.

While there is life there is hope, was one of his mottoes, and he had considerable of both still left in his locker. So, with care, he let himself down, and down, feeling his way.

The rope swayed, but the bell did not give forth another warning note, and presently Dick discerned that the lower end of it was secured to something and that it was drawing him to one side of the dark hole as he descended, and that it was widening.

A little further, and he found support for his feet on what seemed to be a shelf of rock.

He did not let go of the rope, but held fast to it, while he rested and recovered his breath preparatory to further action. Trump Finnegan had offered a devilish thanksgiving for his miraculous preservation.
CHAPTER IX

JOYFUL JIMMY'S HAND

"Pawtaw me might as well have been brought here sort of hand," said Handsome Harry to the aged reporter. 

"That’s impossible to say," Handsome Harry replied, "but I’ve been here."

"What’s the matter?" asked Harry.

"An old, dhea pair of them," declared the young Irishman.

"Sure, anything is better than being here," answered Handsome Harry.

"It is that his enemies got the best of him, in that scrumming in the dark, and made away with him. If that is right, we may as well go into the story for him."

"Observe! That would be too bad, too bad! It would, if I had rather that he might be Tiger Joe on me wurrud, fur then he would stand a chance to become a daycent man; dhea which same a dead man can’t, ye see. But, dhea powers he was a daycent man as he was."

"I agree with you, Felix."

"Just then the Godwins, father and son, came out of the house."

"As I hear it," demanded the mayor. "It seems that your new acquaintance is not to be found this morning, Handsome Harry.

"That appears to be the situation, mayor," the sport agreed.

"A sign that he has cleared out, I take it. Has taken himself off between two days, as it were. What more proof do you want than that he was Tiger Joe, as my son says?"

"Well, there is not much ground for me to defend him on, mayor, that is the fact."

"Ha! ha! No, I should say not."

"I don’t see how you could doubt my word, Harry," said Tom Godwin. "You see how he tried to fit that description to my son here; why, it was absurdity!"

"I was just talking about him," said Handsome Harry, "and admit the suspicious look about the affair as it stands, and can think of only one other way of explaining it."

"How’s that?"

"That your men got the best of him and quietly put him out of the way last night—""

"Great Scot!" cried the mayor, interrupting. "You had better have a care, said I, but I really don’t think that I would ask such a thing as that to be done here in Dead Dust."

"It not have been done without your knowledge?"

"Possibly, but I don’t believe it. No, no, you want to get that out of your mind."

"Well, it was only a thought that came to me, that is all. The man is missing, and the great question is, what has become of him?"

"We will look to Jasper Lord to tell us that."

"He is still after him?"

"Yes, he set out bright and early to scour all the trails.

The mayor and his worthy son passed on and entered the mayor’s office on the other side of the street; and as they disappeared Felix Sheas shook his head."

"What is the matter?" asked Harry.

"A bad lot, dhe pair av them," declared the young Irishman.

I am inclined to agree with you, my boy," confided the sport; "but at the same time it does not do to speak what we think at all times."

While they were still talking Prof. Morrison made his appearance, looking refreshed after his night’s rest. His man Murphy was with him.

"A lively bunch you have here, I take it," the professor remarked to Handsome Harry.

"Well, sometimes yes," said the sport.

"You seemed to have had a lively time last night, judging from the shooting that was going on."

"Well, yes, there was a little excitement on foot last evening; but then that does not happen every night, you must understand."

"No, no, I suppose not, suppose not. But, about the information we have received here—can you tell me anything about that, my friend?"

"What about it?"

"That’s a haunted house."

"Well, yes, that is the story, I believe.

"Do you know anything about it?"

"Not a great deal. I have heard a good many tales concerning it."

"Well, I am not a believer in ghosts by any means, but, really, there is something amiss there."

"You think so?"

"There must be. In the first place, everybody here says so, as I am convinced by inquiry, and then I heard and saw things myself, last night, rather baffle me."

"So?"

"Yes, decidedly. Did you hear that ghostly howl about the time the shooting was going on?"

"Yes, I heard that, and it is said to come from the house."

"That is one of the things that no one has been able to explain. There is no bell in the house."

"There must be."

"So we all say, but where is it?"

"The professor simply shrugged his shoulders at that.

"And through the night, that howl of thibber and thibber about midnight—I confess that I was watching for the ghost at that hour.

"Yes, that is another feature of the place, sir. Do you think you will stick to your bargain and open for business in that house now, you will back out and leave it in possession of the spooks?"

"It is my intention, young man, to lay that ghost, and I would like to engage a fellow of about your appearance to aid me in doing it.

The man spoke with determination."

"Begor, can’t you take dhe pair av us?"

"Put in Felix."

"Yes, the pair of you, if you are partners, the professor readily agreed."

"Pawtaw me good sport?" cried Felix, eagerly. "Sure, av dhe pay is good, Oi don’t mind taking a whack at it."

"Pawtaw me good sport?" asked Felix, eagerly. "Sure, av dhe pay is good, Oi don’t mind taking a whack at it."

"Why, I am agreeable to promises excitement or sensation, and if you want to engage I will go with you.

Mr. Morrison?"

"Why, to have you come there and watch me take a ghost, and not to mention to any one, you know, that you are coming."

"All right, we’ll be on hand."

"Thank you heartily, sir. As to the pay—"

"As to that, fix it with Felix here; I will take him in ghost experience."

"Very well; consider it a bargain."

At that moment Joyful Jimmie came along with a cheery good morning.

"Ah! my man, you are on hand early, I see," welcomed the professor. "Well, are you still of the same mind?"

"I am not the more of the same mind, perferess," averted the bummer.

"I am just as eager to begin the experiment as you possibly kin be, and the sooner the better.

Joyful had slicked himself up in his best style for the occasion.

"All right, my man; we expect to be ready for you before noon; we’ll take dinner in our own house to-day. When we get the window up we shall see everything looking inviting, walk over and ring the bell.

"All right, perferess; I’ll be there, sure. But, about that place, you may be sure I am much for a foretaste of what’s to come? Suppose you give me a treat on account, to sort of limber up my throat, as it wur," emphasizing with a slight cough.

CHAPTER X

ROUTES IN COUNCIL.

When the mayor and his son entered the office they closed the door of the inner room after them.

"Well, there is one great stumbling block out of the way," remarked the mayor with satisfaction.

"Yes, thanks to Armstrong."

"Frank is a keen fellow, Tom, and a good deal of the success of our game is going to depend on him. I hope he and Dalton won’t keep us waiting long."

"Not likely that they will."

"Everything seems to be playing into our hands, so far."

"Yes, and only this one thing has turned up to give us uneasiness. We can’t have plain sailing, now."

"Now that he is out of the way."

"That is what I mean."

"Yes, the whole game is ours, now. It was a good thing that we took the precaution to forecast ourselves in that direction. But I thought he would come out on top, hang me if I didn’t."

"We knew what we had to deal with."

"That’s true."

"And I guess it is true that you are out a thousand dollars, the son reminded.

"How’s that?"

"You have a short memory. I mean the thousand you paid Jasper last night."

"Oh! that? That don’t come out of my pocket, my boy; that will have to go."

"That is the case with the concern we will have to stand it. Yes, it does look as if the man has skipped with it."

"Of course he has, we took the precaution to do us any harm or him any good."

They talked on this in vain, until Seth Dalton came in.

"Wag for you?" he inquired.
Yes, and had begun to think you were not coming.

"Couldn’t get away just at the minute, and thought it better to drop in just casually."

"Well, it is all right. Haven’t seen anything of Tiger Joe this morning, I suppose?"

"No—where can he be?"

"That is just what we want to tell you."

"Ah! then you had a hand in it?"

"Oh, no, not by any means. He met with an accident last night."

"Accident?"

"Drunk, and fell into a very deep hole."

"The mischief you say! How did that happen?"

Frank Armstrong had the shuffle and deal.

"Enough said. That is the best news I have heard in a year. No chance for mistake."

"Didn’t you see enough of him last night to answer that question?"

"Well, that’s so."

"Good man, but Deadwood Dick could handle himself the way he did, even if we hadn’t the additional proof of Tom’s recognizing him. Oh, we had the right party, even enough."

"And that is all?"

"Well, we want to understand one thing, so if inquiry is made for him, you know."

"Ah! sure enough."

"We have not seen the man; no one of that name has been here; no one has seen him. We know absolutely nothing about him or his business here, whatever it was."

"Why, certainly, that is understood."

"Better have it mentioned. I was just telling Tom we are on the road to success, and that drinking’s sailling."

"It looks like it."

"It is so. Nothing must come in the way, and if anything does, it must be removed. Too big a lay-out to allow it to be spoiled."

"Well, rather, I should say."

"We had run the old game just as long as possible, and it would soon have played out."

"Nothing truer. But we took the thing in hand and laid the foundation for another and better before the old foundation gave way. No one can get on to us, my dear fellow."

"Ha! ha! That was the cleverest thought that ever came to us."

"That is the best of it, is it, said the mayor’s son, “that it is a genuine institution."

"Ha! ha! ha! And think of it,” added Dalton, “we have Joyful Jimmie for the first patient! I have put the professor up to his game, and there will be some fun."

"Again they laughed."

"Well,” explained the mayor, “the thing was planned just as. The fact will be established that the house is not haunted and never was, and the Keely cure will be boomed so largely that it can’t help being a success. We’ll dispense a boon and blessing on the one hand, and on the other—robbed on the other scoop in the blessed shekels,” assumed Dalton.

While no one on earth will ever be able to get go on to our game,” from the mayor’s son.

"You have fixed the professor, then?"

"Yes, be understands fully what is required."

"And he will take steps toward laying the ghosts and proving that it was a myth?"

"He has already done that, having engaged Henry Harris to look it over, and whatever Handsome Harry says will go."

"Then the second one blazed up he tried the door, to find it locked."

"As might be expected,” he said to himself. “The predicament is about as possible. If it was left there, or shinn up the rope."

He discovered, however, that the bolt of the lock was not inserted, and it struck him that perhaps it could be moved.

Trying it, he found that his thought was right.

Had he been on the other side he could not possibly have opened the door with such a key, but here it was."

The bolt was flung back; the door swung open, outward, and with another lighted match he stepped into a passage with a light of stairs some distance away at the end.

He closed the door, and at once advanced to the stairs.

Then, lighting another match, he took his way up, and at the top found a landing and another door similar to the one he had opened to the stairs, and he found no difficulty in opening it.

It opened into a cell—cellar—a cellar of a sort, extending under the main part of the house.

It contained little or nothing save some rubbish, and the door, when closed, had been nailed down and was nailed to the wall, to correspond with the rest of the wall.

Without a good light it would be likely to escape discovery for an indefinite period.

The stairs leading up from the cellar were in an opposite corner, and striking another match, he crossed over and went up.

The door at the top was of the ordinary kind, and was found, not locked, so he passed out into what evidently was the kitchen of the house, and on a shelf near at hand he found candles.

This was what he desired, and quickly had a better light.

He was now in the house proper, and contemplated bing sans any of his usual, thought he would not care to enter in the same manner again.

"Well,” he thought, “that everything was in readiness for the opening of the house on the morrow. Provisions were there in quantities, and as he looked at these a new and unique idea came to him.

Why not take up his abode here for a time and let it appear that he had really met the fate intended for him?

What would so well suit his purpose?"

"That is what I will do,” he decided quickly. “provided that I can get along with the ghosts, and I’ll have to take the risk of that. In fact, why not be a ghost myself."

He chuckled at the idea of the dark."

His foes had every reason to suppose he was dead. Why not confirm their belief?

"Thrown into the horrible shaft of death—as he mentally called it, he had struck the bell rope, and the rope to sound the bell once, and then something had struck the bottom far below."

Dick did not know what that was, but supposed that it was the bell rope that had been dislodged from somewhere by the sudden jerk on the rope."

"Well,” was his decision. “I will take up my abode here, for the time being, and, if necessary, the game toward carrying our the work that he has been doing here. I am on the right trail, not a doubt of it."

CHAPTER XI.

DEADWOOD DICK’S DUNGEON.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., had rested a few minutes, allowing his mind and muscles to regain their normal condition.

felt around to learn where he was, He still held the rope upon the rope, for he did not know what moment something would happen and he had tested the grip to be sufficiently to know that it was to be depended on.

The footing where he stood seemed perfectly secure, a shelf, in fact, of the solid rock, and as he reason he had come to the conclusion that it was a place made there for a person to stand on to ring the bell; the fact that the rope was secured there indicated.

Feeling the place over with his feet, he found that it was about three feet wide, and that he could reach without letting go his hold on the rope.

Having satisfied himself that he was on safe footing, he let go of the rope and fishing his match-box out of his side-pocket, speedily had light, and was enabled to take a survey of his prison quarters.

It was not a charming place.

There was first a deep, dark shaft, more or less round, and the shelf on which he stood.

Then the rope, a big one, the end secured to a post in the side of the wall, within easy reach of any one standing on the platform. Most important of all, he saw a door.
He set out on an exploring expedition through the house. There was nothing unusual about its appearance, save that its plan was rather odd. All the rooms appeared to be on the same level, steps leading from one to another, one two, or three, as the case might be. Indeed, some of the rooms were queer in shape.

The place had been refurbished throughout, as stated, and presented a most agreeable and wholesome appearance. There were many separate rooms evidently for the patients of the institution, and in the master's dining and living rooms, there was, all together, palatial.

Dick had made up his mind to one thing.

Knowing what he did about the secret way to the dark shaft, he believed that that was the outlet and inlet for the spooks.

More than that, judging by what he had seen and by the odd shape of the interior of the house, he believed that the servants passages leading here and there behind the walls, so he resolved to investigate further.

Going back to the kitchen, he found a basket, which he filled with such of the provisions as could be eaten without cooking, and thus provided, he determined to sneak easier, and by the secret door into the place beyond, closing the door after him and carefully putting the bolt back in its place, that no one could know that it had been slipped.

Going on down the passage to the hearth, he put away his basket and proceeded to investigate carefully. The result was a surprise even to himself. He learned more than enough to confirm all the suspicions he had about the place, as well as sufficient to assure him that his life would not be worth a penny if he were to be discovered and caught.

Till long past midnight he investigated, and finally, tired, he put out his light and lay down to sleep, in a place he had selected for his headquarters.

CHAPTER XII.

JOYFUL JIMMIE DISCOVERED.

Early in the foreston the house and in around the Hough mansion began.

Professor Morrison, with his assistants and servants, took formal possession, and in a little while things began to work.

Edward Murphy, the advance agent, had been made superintendent of the concern, and he took hold as if he fully understood what was required of him and knew how to perform it.

Joyful Jimmie was loitering near, waiting for the front windows to open, indicating that the institution was ready for business.

While he stood waiting Felix said out aloud.

"Well, Joyful, it is on hand ye are, Oi see."

"Yes, and it is dry I am, too, as you sometimes say yourself," was the response.

"Sure, ye are the last men in the world that can be dry if the weather wants to go to u Keely cure, Joyful, Jimmie, so ye are."

Et ain't the cure I am after, as I told thee.

"I know, but meby you'll git it all dale same. Sure, it is a big risk ye are running.

If I thought there was any risk, you can bet your hat I would be the last man to tackle it, but I believe I am proof against anything they can produce, Felix. I ain't got all that stuff I want any more, and if you swill, the very best at that, and not a cent to pay. Wouldn't I be a plum howling idiot to let such a chance go by?"

"Hould yer whist!" cried Felix. "Sure it is makin' me mouth wacher ye are, and Oi have a notion to go off to town and jine mesel."

"Come right along — But hold on, have you got the hundred?"

"Divit a wzkine I'll tell."

"That settles it, I am in it and you are not, my son. But, no matter; maybe I can get the last of a bottle of something good and pass it out to you."

"Whist! Will ye do that same, Joyful?"

"I will if I kin, Felix, sure as my name is Jim Joy."

Begorra, Oi always said ye was a foine mon, Joyful, and here's the proof av it!"

"Ye see, it is like this, as I told ye: The old perfessor told me I was to have all I wanted before the cure commenced, and just before they commence the cure I'm goin' to stop."

"Well, it's a cruel compliment that ye won't be desaved, owd pard."

"They will have to wake early to fool an old bird like me, now I'm tellin' ye, Felix."

"And you won't forget your promise to me? Sure, Oi will depind on ye, and may dhe depind on bag yer bones av ye go back on me."

"I'll not forget ye, Felix, lad."

"See that ye don't. I'll tell ye phwat, Joyful."

"What is that?"

"You sample dhe lot, and then bring me av dhe two-pence."

"That is just what I will do. Have your eye peeled for me sometime this afternoon, and if chance offers I will make ye as joyful as I am myself — I mean if it's possible."

Sure, Oi don't expect ye to perform a miracle, Joyful; but do ye best ye can."

"Hillo! Up goes the curtains."

It was even so; the windows had been opened and the curtains were being raised.

"So-long to ye, Felix!" cried Joyful, with a wave of the hand. "I am now about to perform the operations of this snake-charming establishment."

"So-long, old fri'n'd!" cried Felix. "May ye have a joyful toime av it, and may yer patience against the worst dhey have got an' dhey try on any thricks wid ye. Moinde dghosts!"

"Wagh! I care nothing for ghosts when I'm on the hunt for spirits."

She laughed, and the bumper made for the sanitarium.

He mounted the steps that led to the front entrance and gave a pull at the bell.

The door was opened by the professor himself, and the patient, with his blander smile and a shake of the hand, saying:"

"My friend, you are prompt. Welcome to the retreat."

"I am always prompt, on business of this kind," asserted Joyful. "Let's git right down to business, perfessor."

"Very well, my good man, I am all prepared for you."

"Where is it?"

"Your room?"

"No, no, I mean the snake 'dducer."

"Ah! I see. That is up in your room. Follow me, mon."

The professor led the way up the stairs to a well-furnished room at the rear on the next floor.

There, on a table, were several bottles, filled with a glass base, and the perfessor was about to make a rush when the professor laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"Just a word of caution," he said.

"Say it quick!"

You see there are several bottles here, my man."

"Yes, yes."

"Well, this one," indicating, "is the one you are at liberty to take as you please, but the others are reserved. Do you understand?"

"Yes, yes; is that all?"

"Yes; it is about as freely as you desire of this bottle, but my advice is to let all the rest alone until I tell you to use them. Now I will leave you to yourself."

"Won't you take suthin' fore ye go?"

"I take something? My good man, my appetite was destroyed long ago."

"Mercy on ye, perfessor, what a wretched customer you must be! Well, I'm lookin' at ye with both eyes shut. May yer business prosper and yer cares be many."

"Amen, to that," said the professor. "Jimmie durf ha' been your very last glass from the bottle to which his attention had been directed, and he drained it without taking it from his lips."

"Ah! but that's nectar!" he cried, as he wiped his mouth with his coat-sleeve.

"Yes, yes."

"The best I ever tasted, on my word."

"Very well; make the most of it; but tell me what I said about the other bottles."

"All right, perfessor; don't you worry about me. Let me know when I am wanted for dinner, that's all. So-long!"

The professor smiled and withdrew; and Jimmie was left to himself, in an Eden, with forbidden fruit within his reach.

He picked up the bottles, one after another, and looked at them.

All had been uncorked and the stoppers were only loosely set in the necks, making the temptation all the greater.

One after another he held them up to the light, viewing them in a Beware of the Waterman's manner. By and by, having done that, he removed the corks one after another and took a long smell.

"Ah!" he said. "This is the bottle to which I turned the first bottle for another imbibition. "I wonder why he don't want me to tickle my palate with what's in these bottles? I believe he is mindful of expense, that's what!"

Having taken the second drink, he went through the same process as before with the other bottles, but he did not stop at that. He poured a trifle from each, one after the other, just to see what the taste was like, for surely there was no harm in that.

Needless to follow the process further. The benevolent incapable man was kept busy drinking. Joyful Jimmie was in a condition to justify his name, and was as happy as if he owned the whole establishment.

Would there be a penalty for his disobedience, however? We shall see.

CHAPTER XIII.

INTERVIEWED BY THE GHOSTS.

Soon after dinner the famous and illustrious Jimmie. The camp bummer was in spiritual galore, and had just topped off his drink with a close from one of the forbidden bottles.

"Well, my man, how do I find you?" asked the professor.

"Joyful as kin be," was the answer.

"Perfessor, this hyar is Arcadia!"
of the bell died away, and it was not heard again. The professor went down to his office, and the clock indicated the hour of one.

Jimmie took a poll at one of the bottles to some shores, and then put a sip from another bottle to take the taste of the first out of his mouth, and still another to remove the taste of that; but, somehow, none of it seemed to be just right.

The chair he occupied was an easy one, and, reclining in it, he was soon asleep.

When he awoke, an hour later, it was with a start.

"Had someone called him?"

"Jovial Jimmie?"

"It was a voice very distinct, but not very loud."

"Wull, kyre I am," called out Joyful, sitting up and staring around. "Who are you?"

There was no one in the room with him, and he was at a loss to account for the voice. Who was it had spoken?"

"I am the invisible, the ghost of the mansion," was the solemn reply. "But, be not alarmed; take a drink to my health and your nerves and I will speak further."

Jovial's eyes were fairly bulging.

"Well, you are a ghost of some sense, anyhow, and I can see why you are here."

He drew a wry face as he gulped the liquor, however, and wiped his mouth vigorously after he had taken it. Somehow it did not suit his taste. He would see the professor.

"Now, will you drink it?" he demanded.

"You have a friend named Felix Shea, have you not?"

"Yes; and by name, that is somethin', I had forgot! Go on."

"Well, he is out by the side of the Dalton House, looking wistfully in this direction, and I think you had better go out and see him."

"Yes, I must do that. He wus never forgive me in the world, if I do not keep my word with him. Ye see, ghost, I promised to take him a bottle of stuff if I had a supply—"

He stopped short, realizing that he was betwixt and between, and the same time could do a favor for me.

"What is it?"

"First give me your promise that you will tell no one else that I have spoken to you."

"Yes, I promise that."

"If you keep your word you need have no dread of me, for I will not harm you. No matter what you may hear and see in this house, do not be in the least alarmed, for I will protect you."

"A bargain," rejoined the professor.

"On the other hand, if you do not keep your word, the very worst that I can invent will be your portion—"

"Don't make me mad; you won't have no 'casion to carry it out, not a word of it. I'll do what you want me to, for that you may be sure and the peaceful possession of my room andlickers."

"Very well, and now attend me."

Joyful had at once located the voice as coming from a certain part of the wall at one end of the room, so had moved in that direction, and the words had been exchanged in low tones.

The hummer, giving close attention, evidently was greatly impressed, for he was somehow fascinated, and he returned to the table for another dose of his 'elixir ambrosia.' But the taste of it was growing obnoxious.

Putting on his hat, he selected the fullest bottle—and, by the way, the one he liked least. Putting this under his coat, he left the room, and, passing quietly down the stairs and out of the house, he turned his steps in the direction of the Dalton House.

There, sure enough, was Felix, waiting for him, and when the Irishman saw his friend, he bounded toward him so steadily in his gait, and holding something under his coat with care, a smile lit up his face.

"He is kapin' his promise, begobs!" he cried. "Sure, Oi can forgive him, so Oi can. How joyful he looks! Begorra, it is as full as a tick, and as happy as a clam! Maybe, now, he can tell me something about the bell dhat rang: Oi must ask him."

CHAPTER XIV.

A WHELMED QUARTETTE

Major Godwin was in his office when his son and the superintendent of the Rose Mine entered.

The Superintendent, Frank Armstrong, was rather good-looking but rather of old clad, as became his every-day station.

It was about the same time that Joyful Jimmie left the sanitarium to keep his bargain with Felix. They found the mayor in, as said, and Seth Dalton entered right behind them.

"What is wanted, dad?" inquired the son.

"The signal was rather sharp, and I came at once," observed Armstrong.

"Who was in the house? Who was it rang it?"

"Just what I thought," observed Dalton. "You beg the question.

"Could anybody help hearing it? Confound it! There is a crowd staring at the house now."

They could see the house from the rear windows.

"More care must be taken," said Tom. "Who was in the house? Who was it rang it?"

"That is just what I want to know," cried Godwin. "It was a confounded piece of business, I reckon, but no one there at this hour of the day, anyhow, could have looked from one to another in a puzzled manner."

"I heard it, of course, but I thought it was one of you others," added Tom.

"And it certainly wasn't me," declared Dalton.

"Nor me," echoed Godwin.

"Then who the mischief was it, and how was it done?" demanded the mayor, greatly excited.

"Is it be that some of the people have stumbled upon the secret of the old ranch already?" questioned Dalton.

"Next to impossible," thought Armstrong.

"How about—you know? from the mayor.

"Said as a door-nail," averred Armstrong, without a tremor. "I heard him strike the side and then the bottom when he went down. The bell gave out a trill at the face."

"And you said the man struck the rope."

"As I supposed—"

"And you are sure of his face—"

"Just as I tell you; I listened and heard him strike."

"No question about his face, then."
decided Tom. "But, who rang this time?"

"It was just one o'clock, asserted the mayor. "The clock struck the one o'clock, and the tone of the bell came right at the top of it, made think it was like a town clock.

They glanced at the dial as the mayor called attention to it, and it wanted but a minute of two o'clock."

"Does not answer my question, protested Tom. "There is no town clock about it; some hand pulled that rope, and we must find out whose it was. And yet we are not out of danger yet, for we must not be seen going near the house. I am puzzled, and—"

The clock struck the hour of two.

"That bell had ceased, when clong! went the great bell over in the haunted house, and again—clong!"

The four men in the room leaped to their feet, their faces pale as they looked at one another in bewilderment. It was something they could not understand.

"By heavens, if it isn't a town clock, it is mighty like one!" the mayor asserted.

"What is the meaning of it?" demanded the others.

"That is the bell to find out, declared Tom Godwin, determinedly, "This night we must investigate, and lay the ghost if we can.

"The ghost?"

"Well, it looks like once now, don't it?"

"Hang me if it don't," assurred Armstrong, who was paler than the rest, "I don't know what to make of it."

"It must be that the fellow you—visit me, I tell you that is simply impossible; I heard him strike the bell."

"What I was going to say," continued Tom, "maybe it is his ghost that is now taking things in hand, making a reality of our former make-believe."

"It is nothing to jest about," snapped Armstrong. Here comes the professor this way; we had better get out before he comes. No doubt he is coming to make inquiries about the bell.

Armstrong did not tarry, but left at once, Dalton and Tom Godwin soon following.

"That professor could not see them leave the office from the direction he was approaching, and he entered a few minutes after they had gone."

"See here, how is this mayor, the head of the Keely cure demanded."

"How is what?" asked the mayor.

"What about it?"

"Didn't you hear it?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Well, it frightened some of my servants half out of their wits. They have heard about the place being haunted, and they believe I'll be able to go there."

I wish I could help you, sir,"

"Confounded it! Do you mean to tell me that it is not yours doing?"

"On my word, professor, I am as much puzzled as you are."

Fred Morrison looked the amazement he felt, and he started at the mayor as if unable to comprehend.

"Did you not tell me that the ghost business was something you had been working for a purpose: that If I would come here and open this gold cure you would not only give me your thanks, but put up expenses of office? proved a losing venture? That is not the agreement?"

"No, that you, professor, Yes, that was the agreement, certainly."

"Yes, but didn't you say the other? And didn't you say that I was to have the honor of proving that the house was not haunted, and of laying the ghosts? And now you tell me that you don't know anything about this bell! What am I to make of such inconsistency, sir?"

"Everything is just as represented, sir."

"No, it is not! You say you do not control the ringing of this bell. If not, you, then who?

"As I just told you, I am as much puzzled as you are. We are going to investigate it to-night, and no doubt we'll be able to set the matter right and explain it."

"But by night my servants will be gone and my business ruined! If that bell sounds once more they will desert me!"

"Ha! a happy thought for you, sir."

"What is it?"

"Understand me that I know nothing about the matter: that I am puzzled completely; but, if at three o'clock that bell strikes, I can tell people that it is a clock you have discovered."

The look of anxiety left the professor's face instantly.

"Well, that is clever, on my word, it is," he admitted. "I don't see, though, why you should this evening have charge of it to me. Now I understand, sir."

"But, professor, believe me, it is something I do not understand at all; it is nothing to do with your research, and I cannot account for it, sir."

"Good, sir, good! I understand fully. You disclaim all knowledge; I am to discover what it is—that it is a clock set somewhere in the wall; I am to lay the ghosts and reclaim the house from its bad name. gladly, and I thank you for the manner in which you have given me the clue to the mystery, as a detective might say.

And so, with nods and chuckles, the professor bowed himself out and returned to the house, while the mayor paced the floor of his office, face troubled.

CHAPTER XV.

JOYFUL JIMMIE ALARMED."

"Well, how goes it, Joyful? Sure ye look as much like a demon as ever!"

So said Felix Shea, when Joyful Jimmie drew near, and he advanced a step to shake hands with him."

"Don't make a scene, myself, yir, and give me away, boy!" chided the bummer."

"Let's go around back of the stables, and there I'll tickle yer palate."

"Begorra, Oi knew ye would not forget me. Come on, and leave me see phwat kind av swill they are giving ye over there, anywery."

"That is jest what I want to do, Felix, and I want you to say how ye like it."

"That same Oi will, ould mon."

They moved around to a place out of sight, and there stopped.

"Now it is, and Joyful produced the bottle from under his coat.

The young Irishman's eyes danced as he took it, and he called down a blessing upon the head of his old friend and drank to his health and long life.

"Ah, but that is dheed stuff!" he exclaimed, when he let go.

"Then you like it?" asked Joyful.

"Never did think of Oi ever taste in me lolite, ould mon."

In proof of that, he put it to his lips again, while Joyful looked on ruefully and jealously.

He was at a loss to account for it, but somehow his taste was going back on him, for he put it better, though he did not admit it to Felix.

"Have a drap?" Felix invited.

"No, I have been swigging it all day and once got lots more in my room, so keep it all for yoursef, returned the old fellow, generously.

"That yure shadow never grow less, and may the sun never set on yure posessions!" cried the happy Irishman.

"Sure, and dbe places here would ownly know the loilk!" a drew.

Joyful could not understand, yet a terrible truth was dawning upon him. He saw that he had been had.

"Well ye may take yure head, ould mon," said Felix.

But he had misinterpreted.

"Yeavor, I am hyar on business as well as pleasure," announced the camp bum.

"I have a message fer Sport Harry that you are to deliver jist as ye hear it."

"A message! And who is it from?"

"The ghost of the mansion."

"Phwat de ould mischief has a ghost to devid a message for!"

"That is not for you to ask nor for me to know; all you have got to do is to carry it to the sport and say nothing."

"Well, foire ahead, and let me have it."

"Handsome Harry is wanted to come there this evening, and he'll come and pay me a visit in my room."

"Begorra, dat reminds me! Sure it is mesel! and Handsome Harry dat are to spind de night in de ould house fur de very purpose av laying de ghost, so we are."

"How comes that about?"

"De ouldpercer has engaged de pair av us."

"Well, now, that may alter things considerably. But, carry the message to Harry, and maybe he will come and see me at once."

"Begorra, Oif I'll do it. And, Oi says, Joyful."

"What is it?"

"Would it be any harrum av Oi call on ye mesel, says about dbe toime dis be goes dhir?"

"Come and welcome!" cried Jimmie."

I have a fine place there, a genuine pub, and, as for drunks—yer choice of half a dozen kinds."

"Ye may look fur me card!" cried Felix.

While they were still in conversation the bell sounded forth, as elsewhere mentioned.

Was there phwat is dbe meaning av dhat, Oi want to ask ye?" cried Felix."

"See dbe galoots, how dbe run and stare at the place?"

"Why, it is the ghost, as you know well enough," averred the bummer. "He has set up a clock, I take it, to excite the curiosity of the galoots hyar. He knows what he's about.

They were looking out from the place to which they had retreated, and while they looked they saw the professor come from the house.

His face was troubled, and he made straight for the mayor's office.

"That!" exclaimed Joyful, "that saves me a bother, by mighty! The ghost was goin' to find out that those fol-lers wur at about this time o' day."

"Phwat fellows?" asked Felix.

"The ones ye see comin' out of Godwin's office."

"Oh-ho! It seems to me dhat ghost has a mighty big interest in earthly things fur a ghost, Joyful."
“Never you mind,” chided the butcher. “You go and find Handsome Harry at once and tell him everything I have said, and add that he had better come right away.”

“Consider it done, Joyful.”

“And you see that you don’t draw no more on that bottle account until ye have done paid.”

They parted, Felix to look up Sport Harry and deliver the message and Jimmie to return to the inebriates’ sanitarium.

Jimmie was just in time to fall in with the professor on his way back from his call at the mayor’s office, and at sight of his patient he exclaimed:

“What! you out, sir?”

“Yes, Jimmie, I wished to see a friend,” explained the patient.

“Well, your friends must come and see you, but you go and see them,” averred the professor.

“That is just the p’int, perfesser,” declared the butcher. “I wanted to see ‘em, and I thought the quickest way would be to go and invite ‘em.”

“Well, for the dignity of the establishment it makes it necessary for the servants to deliver your message. You are unable to walk half straight, and only attract attention. Wait until we send your father. A man once more so that you can walk with head erect.”

“Oh, they all know me, perfesser, and as a matter of fact, I won’t do no harm to your establishment. I was ‘dicted that way ‘fore you came by.”

“But I say, perfesser.”

“What is it?”

“What is the matter with that likker in my room? I think you had better see to it at once.”

“Ach! Ah! So soon?”

“What do you mean?”

“My dear man, you have taken your courage in both hands. If you don’t see to it, you are going to be desperately sick before long, and after that you will not taste of the cursed drink for the richest mince in this guichl.”

Jimmie looked anything but joyful just then.

“Ye don’t mean it,” he gasped.

“As I live.”

“Great Goshen! Why, life won’t be worth living, perfesser.”

“The contrary, man, you will just begin to live. You will bless the day when you put yourself under my hands.”

“Mighty well,” cried the professor.

“My fine taste for old corn completely gone, strayed, stolen, destroyed! Perfection, sir, for damages, as my name is Jim Joy!”

“Why, man, it was a bargain; everybody knows the conditions. But you will bless me rather than curse me, later on.”

“Yes, but ye deceived me, blast ye!”

“In what particular?”

“I thought it took a week for the thing to act, and—”

“And you thought you had to have a good drunk and then retire and laugh at me, did ye! Ha! Ha! Ha! My friend, you fell into a trap of your own setting. You are a cured man!”

“She’s set me down for one satisfaction, anyhow,” assured the bum. “Misery loves company, and when my friend Felix Shea calls to see me, as he sartin will, all I have to do is that you send up a supply of your best for me to entertain him with. See?”

CHAPTER XVI

THE HANDBsome SPORT INITIATED

Doddie stepped up to the entrance of the house, but the professor stopped to speak to a group of men who had collected in front and who were idly staring.
CHAPTER XVII.

LADDER, LADDER! A LADDER!

The night was dark, as the previous night had been.
And as soon as it had become thoroughly dark, they made their way in the direction of the Hough mansion. They approached from the side of the gulch, so as to lessen the likelihood of their being seen, and came up alongside the house on the side where the paved walk lay.

At a certain point they stopped. There was a click and a slight rasping sound, and a door opened.
They entered, and the door closed.
"Now," said one, "we'll see whether the clock will strike again or not, Tom." "You are right, Frank," responded the other. "Just wait until I make a light and we'll go down. We'll see who's running the game, and I think we'll settle his score.
That's what I had a light, and proceeded down the winding steps by aid of the hand rail.
The mayor's son reached the bottom first. There he waited for Armstrong, who was bearing the light, and they examined the door first of all.
"Give it up," avowed Armstrong.
"Well, it wants but a couple of minutes to be fetched out, and we'll see what will be done. Not an heartbeat has been missed since one o'clock, so far." "And what if it rings?" "How can it, and we here by the rope?"
"But what if it does?" "It's the same. Still, if it should, for sake of argument, we'll go up to the bell itself.
"That will be the only thing left for us to do. We do not take any chances with ghosts, having been ghosts ourselves for so long a time. Watch the time, now." Thus they stood, Armstrong watching in hand waiting for the hour toll.
It came. There was a faint sound overhead, and a strange, sonorous voice of the bell spoke forth.
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine, and not a tremor of the rope, and the two men looked at each other with faces pale. It was more than they could understand.
"What does it mean?" gasped Tom Godwin.
"I'll be hanged if I know," answered the superintendent.
"There is no use for us to do but go up to the bell, and if any one is there—"
"If any one is there, may Satan help him, is all I have to say," grated Armstrong.
"Come on, let us go in—nothing will harm us, come in without virtue for the pit. Come on, and we'll soon see.
Armstrong led the way back again up the dangerous footway, to a point where there was a step that was broader than the others.
There stopped and pushed his way into a niche in the wall, and so on and into a passage that opened beyond it, the mayor's son following him, and the light disappeared.
Along that passage they went, until they came to a stairway, and up on through other passages until the difference in the material of the walls proved that they were moving among the partitions of the house itself. Still up and on, this was the way.
Finally, at the end of a passage to which they had had to climb by means of a ladder of considerable height, they stopped.
"The other ladder is gone," called out young Godwin.
"Proof that some human agency has been at work here," growled the superintendent.
"Well, we are not to be foiled this way," decided the mayor's son. "We will pull up the other ladder and go on up and see what is there. We have got somebody there."
"That is the idea," agreed Armstrong.
"Hold the light and I'll fetch it in a moment.
Tom took the light, and Frank went back along the passage.
Suddenly an oath was heard.
"What is it?"
"This ladder is gone, too!"
"No! Then we are trapped, curse the trick, trapped! We can't get up nor down!"
"But, who has taken the ladder? Has one of our number turned traitor? But, no; that is impossible, for every one is true; that we can swear. Who has served us this trick?"
"You must be mistaken about that fellow last night, Major," said young Godwin, looking at his companion in amazement. "The question is, how could any one get to the bell ring it?"
"Give it up," avowed Armstrong.
"Well, it wants but a couple of minutes to be fetched out, and we'll see what will be done. Not an heartbeat has been missed since one o'clock, so far." "And what if it rings?" "How can it, and we here by the rope?"
"But what if it does?" "It's the same. Still, if it should, for sake of argument, we'll go up to the bell itself.
"That will be the only thing left for us to do. We do not take any chances with ghosts, having been ghosts ourselves for so long a time. Watch the time, now." Thus they stood, Armstrong watching in hand waiting for the hour toll.

At the point where they had climbed up the last ladder to the level they were on, the mayor's son sat down and crossed his legs.
The ladder was gone, and they, like the others, were in a clever trap! There was no way of escape, for this was simply the route to the place where the big bell hung.
They had not spoken aloud, for, of course, had they done so, their voices would have been heard in the rooms of the house whose walls they were within; nor did they care to speak aloud, they hoped there would be a possible means of escape.
But none was to be found; they heard nothing more of the hour till twelve o'clock came, and the great bell told off the hour again; after that all was silent.
Tom rang no bell that night rolled on apiece. The prisoners, unable to escape, were obliged to remain where they had been trapped, and bitter were their excitements and dire their apprehensions.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EXPOSED AND RESULTS.

Clang-clong! Clang-clong! Clang-clong!
It was early morning over Hungry Gulch the great bell in the Hough mansion was sounding forth its deep, muffled reverberations.
No longer could it be likened to a clock; it was a resonant, brazen bell, pealing forth, though it had lost its muffled accents, which might have been taken as a loud alarm.
At first it was a surprise, then it crept in wonder, and at length curiosity impelled the people of the town to rush, yelling in the direction of the gold cure to learn what it meant. And there the authorities had hurried out, all filled with terror.
Clang-clong! Clang-clong! Clang-clong!
Still it rang on, and people began to question whether it would ever stop. A
great crowd had assembled, in fact the whole population of the gulch.

At last it stopped, and while the crowd yet watched and waited, as if aware that much was to follow, two came near upon the veranda of the saloon and were greeted with a cheer.

One was Handsome Harry, whom they all knew; the other the stranger who had come by the stage on the previous day.

"What is et, Sport Harry?" one man called out. "What does et mean?"

"I'll walk the response," said Handsome Harry.

"Citizens of Gold Dust, let me introduce Mr. Richard M. Bristol, better known as Deadwood Dick, Junior." Special greeting them was almost deafening. The people of Gold Dust were not acquainted with Deadwood Dick by reputation, and they gave him the heartiest kind of welcome.

Dick raised his hand for silence, and as they were eager to hear him say something, he soon had their attention.

"Men of Gold Dust," he said, "I came to your pretty camp on business, and that business has been accomplished more quickly than I anticipated. In fact, I feel as if I have had but little to do with it, further than to figure as the instigator. We are not here for the Gold Dust Novelists."

"I came here for the purpose of unravelling an illegal mint that was known to many people somewhere— somehow in the part of the country, and for which the Secret Service people have been searching for a long time. Harry Meyers here, where you have known as 'Handsome' Harry, the sport, has been here on the same business for some time, and to him, at least, the success I have been able to achieve. We have a fine disclosure to make you.

"Years ago, when this house was built, Seth Dalton and Alf Godwin were in the employ of Henry Hough. After Hough's death they laid a scheme by which they hoped to get hold of the property for a trifling sum. They reported the mine as played out; the business went down, and at last the mine shut down and the camp was deserted. They rested for a few years, but Dalton and Godwin were not idle during that time. They had another iron in the fire, as well, and while the coast was clear, they contrived to set up for the greatest counterfeiting undertaking ever heard of.

"To protect themselves, they arranged to have the old house haunted. They needed to say, were the ghosts. When ready, they bought the property, reopened the mines, and gave the town a boom. They prospered greatly, for a time, but at last the ghost story began to lose its hold upon the people, as you know, and they would have to hatch a new scheme or give up their secret minting. What should it be? At last they hit upon the idea of opening a Kelsey cure, and you see the rest. It was their intention to prove that the house was not haunted, and never really had been, and, under its made-up appearance, they would be able to carry on the minting indefinitely. But we have brought it all to a round turn now, and they are prisoners."

At length, then, he went over the whole ground, and when he had done this he opened the secret and said: "The whole crowd was in on it, and none of the most perfect for counterfeiting."

Then, the other secrets of the house were laid bare, and the prisoners were eventually forced to surrender, though, for a time, they were defiant. Dick arrested them, and they got what they deserved, every one.

It was shown, too, that Tom Godwin himself was the much-wanted Tiger Joe! Knowing Deadwood Dick, the scoundrel had accused him of being Tiger Joe partly to disconcert his father that Deadwood Dick was in town, and partly with the hope that the crowd would make short work of the notorious as a rascal as Joe was known to be. But it did not work according to programme, as we have seen.

The ghost broken up, the town took on a natural growth, supported by the numerous outlying camps, and there was one— if it has not retained— the Gold Dust. So pronounced had been the cure in the cases of Joyhhie Jimmie and Felix Sheas that others sought it, and the professor did a good business eventually. The two mentioned were terribly sick for a time, but when they recovered they could not be induced to touch liquor on any consideration. And, when they became used to it, they were thankful men, for they soon had good clothes upon their backs and money in their pockets—a state of things they had never known before, with recollection—especially of Jimmie. His nickname was still clung to him, and was inappropriate, for he was joyous now in another sense.

END.

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