OUT OF THE WRECK

By EDGAR WELTON COOLEY

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Valentine leaned back in his chair, shoved his hands into his trousers pockets and contemplated, with a suddenly awakened savageness, the unfinished letter before him.

Again and again he read the carefully written lines, the frown on his face deepening with each perusal. One sentence particularly displeased him.

"Looking back with a judgment sobered by the intervening three years," this sentence ran, "I realize that my impetuosity misconstrued your display of just indignation at my unfounded charge of duplicity, and that my temper, always too hasty, forced my lying lips to utter those foolish and heartless words of farewell—words I would give my soul, almost, to recall."

For the twentieth time Valentine read that sentence over. Then he drew the point of his stubby pencil through the words and jumped to his feet. For many moments he paced the floor of his cabin, his eyes cast down, his lips compressed, his hands in his pockets.

And finally he paused at the table and again read the letter slowly, carefully. Then he laid his broad, brown hand upon the sheet, and hesitated, looking out the door at the gathering dusk and thinking, thinking, thinking.

Suddenly his hand closed angrily upon the paper, crumpling, crushing it between his fingers. Silently he scowled at the wall, the letter clutched in his tightly closed fist, a steely glitter in his cold, gray eyes. Then the paper dropped to the floor, and walking to the door, the man gazed meditatively across the plain.

And after awhile he groped his way back into his cabin until he came to the table. Then he struck a match and searched upon the floor until he found the letter he had written. Picking it up by a corner, he touched the burning match to it and held it between his fingers until the flame almost licked his hand; then he dropped it and watched it burn—watched it, until it was all consumed.

"Never!" he cried aloud, again pacing the cabin floor. "No, by h—l! I'll never write her. I'll die right here before I'll let her hear from me again. I'll die and rot—rot like a dead coyote in a gulch.

"What if it is lonely here in this d—d country; what if I do go loco—who in h—l cares? She? Ha! ha! Why, she—she'd laugh if she knew I was as crazy as a thirst-maddened bronco—she'd laugh and make her yellow curls and go dancing away with some of those Rock Lick fellows.

"I loved her—God knows I loved her. Who wouldn't love her? Who doesn't love the sunshine and the blue sky and the wild birds? Everybody loves those things, and she is all of them together. Nina is—all of them; the sunshine and the blue sky and the wild birds. But she's a flirt, and—and—d—n her!

"Write to her? I write to her? Ha! ha! No! No, I say. I'll go out there on the prairie and let the d—d coyotes gnaw at my worthless old carcass before I'll write to her. I told her when I left that I would never let her know where I was, and I won't—so help me God, I won't. I'll stay right here in this God-forsaken country and turn into a dog-eating Indian before I'll write to her. I hate her—God, how I hate her!—and I never want to see her again—never!"

He gritted his teeth and clinched his fists in his rage and his slow pacing increased to a savage stride, and suddenly he took his hat from a peg and dashed out into the night.

* * * * * * * * *

When the two red-eyed engines came together on the curve, awful was the crash. For miles around the impact shook the earth like the rumbling of a volcano, and the cattlemen, awakened, dashed out of their cabins into the night, their nerves tingling with a nameless fear.

Coyotes, dashing from their hiding places, paused a moment in wonder, and with paws uplifted, gazed at the awful scene, then turned and ran, affrighted, into the depths of the friendly shadows. Rabbits scurried from the sage brush, their long ears laid low upon their backs, their bodies quivering with their haste, their eyes shining with the fear that seized them.

He paused at the table.

And the flames of the burning coaches crackled and roared in mad delight, the steam of the shattered engines hissed in hate, and men, women and children, on whose faces but a moment before smiles of happiness had gleamed, now twisted and writhed beneath the heavy timbers, or lay with startled, hopeless faces reflecting the scarlet of the flames, and watched with agony in their hearts and prayers upon their lips the approach of the remorseless, red-tongued messenger of death.

The few who had escaped uninjured or with minor bruises the first awful impact huddled together on the prairie like frightened sheep, their faces pale, emotionless, stricken with the blighting daze of helpless horror.

Like phantoms, through the darkness, came the hurrying forms of the plainsmen—on foot, on horse, from their cabins, came these powerful, fearless, compassionate fellows.

And they fought the fire with strong arms and determined hearts. Beneath their axes' glistening edges timbers snapped in two like twigs, and their rough, brown hands dragged men and matrons and maidens from the wreck, nor paused for thanks or praise.

Swiftly, surely swept the fire onward; sharper, heavier, faster fell the strokes of axes, glistening in the light. But at last the heat became so fierce, so intense, that even the bravest was driven back and forced to listen, helpless and aghast, to the pleadings and the groans of those they could not help.

And so they huddled on the sands, the rescued and the rescuers, weeping, sobbing, praying, pitying, but—helpless.

And above the flames' wild roar; above the groaning of the dying, a woman's piercing cry rang out upon the night.

"God! Save me; oh, some one save me!"

Above the heads of those who huddled round about and through the darkness, over the sage brush and the cactus, the cry sped on its way until at last it fell into the ears of one who lay prone upon the sand—one who had lain for hours, a pain within his heart, his mind oblivious to all surroundings.

Fiercely rose the ax.

He raised his head and listened and in his eyes the vacant stare gave place to the light of reason.

Again the voice came to him: "God! Save me; some one save me!"

He sprang to his feet and with a cry of "Nina! Nina!" he sped like a coyote towards the red glare that seemed beckoning to him through the darkness.

With the woman's name still upon his lips, he sprang into the midst of those huddled upon the sand and seizing an axe, leaped desperately into the burning wreck.

Fiercely rose and fell his axe; the flames lapped his feet and climbing up and up, fed hungrily upon his garments and his eyebrows and his hair. But still he worked; still his axe rose and fell; still the name of "Nina" came from his parching lips.

And then, with his flesh blistering in the fire; with his muscles quivering from the red-hot kisses of the flames, he reached a woman's hand and dragged her from the reach of the devouring element.

Tenderly he lifted her and laid her on the sand, then he reeled and sank upon the ground, a quivering mass of scorched humanity.

With the dawn a relief train came and among those on board was a tall young man who went eagerly from cabin to cabin, where the injured lay, searching for one he loved.

And the woman for whom he searched was sitting beside a rude bunk, on which a man lay dying. The man had hold of her hand and was drinking in the light of the woman's eyes.

"I am glad you were not badly injured, Nina," he whispered, then pressed his lips tightly together to stifle a sob of pain.

The woman smiled faintly and laid her hard upon his pillow, pityingly.

"I thought I—hated—you," he faltered, after a pause. "But God—Nina! I don't—I don't—I can't—I—love——"

"Hush," the woman said, firmly, but kindly lowering her eyes before his gaze. He watched her in silence, and when she raised her face again to his, he said, with a painful effort:

"I was to blame—Nina—I thought—I thought you didn't care for me. But—you did—didn't you—Nina?"

His eyes were fixed upon her with a wild intensity, and she trembled.

"Yes, John, I did care for you," she said, quite low. And the man smiled and closed his eyes.

Then it was that the tall young man came softly into the cabin and saw the woman weeping beside the still, white face of the dead.

He spoke her name and a gleam of joy came into his eyes, but she held up a hand and he paused, wonderingly. For a moment she gazed sadly upon the face of the dead, then reverently she covered it with a sheet, and walked softly out into the sunshine where the tall young man was waiting for her.

"I thank God for sparing my wife to me," the tall young man said, happily, as he stooped and kissed her.

And the woman sighed.

School Children as Gardeners.

Scientific gardening is taught in the national schools of Sweden and in the seminaries for the education of national school teachers. There is a school garden in nearly every rural school district in the kingdom. The garden is placed near the schoolhouse, and the children receive practical instruction in the cultivation of plants, berries, flowers; herbs, and fruits, the management of hotbeds, green houses, etc. The parishes are required to furnish the necessary ground for the gardens, and trees and shrubs are annually given to the children to be planted at their homes.

Some Excuse for the Old Gentleman

The elevated train came to a stop at Scollay Square with such suddenness that an old man with a silk hat and three big bundles was hurled down the aisle as if from a catapult. The bundles and the hat took various directions, and the old man brought up against a stout young woman, who promptly measured her length on the floor.

The young woman picked herself up and gasped: "This is outrageous!" The old man said, as he groped about for his bundles: "I—confound it—know it—confound it—couldn't help myself—confound it." Then as he left the car he glared at the guard and indulged in this final outburst: "Confound it all, I say!"

A man seated in the car said to his neighbor: "The old fellow is a church member." "Perhaps," was the reply, "but he put a good deal of expression into his words."—Boston Herald.

Marlborough Owns World's Finest Picture

The Duke of Marlborough is believed to be the possessor of the costliest painting in the world, which was at one time the property of the first Duke of Marlborough. The picture is known as the "Blenhelm Madonna," painted by Raphael in 1507, and now valued at no less than $350,000. It is eight feet high, and represents the Madonna and Child seated on a throne, with a figure of John the Baptist on the left and that of St. Nicholas of Bari on the right. Its almost fabulous value is due to the fact that it is one of the best preserved of the artist's works in existence.

Portrait of Dandy of Bygone Age

Dandies have flourished in England almost since the conquest, and the picture shows one of the time of good Queen Bess. His title was Lord Russell of Thornhaugh. He was the son of the second Earl of Bedford, and learned the art of foppery as a courtier in Venice, Germany, Italy and Hungary. He fought in Ireland and in the Netherlands, and succeeded his friend, Sir Phillip Sidney, as Governor Flushing. Sidney, in token of his friendship, left Russell his best gilt armor. In September, 1602, he had the honor of entertaining Queen Elizabeth.

Reply Neat and Effective

In the smoking room of a Swiss hotel a discussion recently took place between a German and an American as to the merits of their respective armies. The former believed in discipline and trained troops as he believed in the hereafter. The American believed in training, too, but held that a lot depended upon the material trained. "Given," quoth he, "that brains are lacking, no amount of physical training will make up for them. Take the American troops, comparatively untrained, and see how well they fight. It's because of their brains." "Nonsense," rejoined the aroused German. "Untrained troops can never stand against well-drilled ones. Take your own country, for example, with practically no drilled army. What would you do?" He paused impressively, and then said: "What would you do if Germany landed an army of 250,000 perfectly drilled and perfectly equipped men on your shore?" "Bury them," was the quiet but complete rejoinder.

Voting Made Compulsory.

A bill to make voting at elections compulsory, which is to be introduced into the French chamber by M. Georges Berry, provides that any person abstaining from voting at elections shall have his name displayed on the door of the town hall, pay a fine of from five francs to ten francs, and be disfranchised and rendered ineligible for any public office.

Stations for Wireless Telegraph.

There are now in Europe forty stations equipped for wireless telegraphy and five in America. Each of Lloyd's stations throughout the world will soon have a plant. About sixty vessels have put in the necessary apparatus.

Berlin's Chamber of Commerce.

An order of the Prussian minister of commerce authorizes the establishment from April 1 next of a Chamber of Commerce with thirty-six members, for the city of Berlin and suburbs.

Scots in British Army.

Since the commencement of the war in South Africa Scotland has sent to the front 15,500 noncommissioned officers and men and 330 officers—total, 15,830.

Device for the Automobile.

A new device is a spring in the cushion of the automobile driver's seat, which throws off the power the instant he rises or is thrown from his seat.

Great White Sale of

Muslin Underwear, White Goods, Sheets and Pillow Cases, Cottons, Table Linens, Bed Spreads, Blankets and Comforts; also

Annual Clearing Sale of

Silks, Dress Goods, Housefurnishing Goods, etc., and

January Mark-Down Sale of

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I am moved and settled on Willets Ave., and hope my customers and friends will patronize me just the same as before. I still make shirt waists from 50c to $1, and also skirts from $1.00 to $1.50. Mrs. Lamb. 52tf

FOR RENT—The south part of Mrs. Hemenway's house on the corner of Townsend and Pierce streets. 52tf

WHITE Cross Eczema and Dandruff Cure is sold by Whitehead & Mitchell.

FOR SALE—Some very fine Black Minorca cockerels; also some very fine hens for sale cheap. Brooks Farm, 1½ miles west of Birmingham. 38tf

TO RENT—A very desirable farm of 186 acres, 4 miles from Birmingham. Inquire of Mitchell at the Eccentric office. 41

LOST—A gold bracelet somewhere between the home of Wm Stouts, Sr., and the M. E. church. Finder please leave at postoffice.

FOR SALE—A fine new milch registered Jersey cow, bred by W. H. Elliott, with a fine calf by her side; also a few good big Durham cows ready to calve at any time. Inquire at the Fred Brooks farm, 1½ miles west of Birmingham. 37

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Church Notes.

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL—Rev. Mr. Watson, Rector. Sunday services at 10:30 a. m. All are cordially invited.

METHODIST EPISCOPAL—Rev. M. H. Battani, Pastor. Sabbath services at 10:30 a. m. and 7:00 p. m. Sunday school at 12 m. Epworth League at 6:00 p. m. Prayer meeting on Thursday evening at 7:30 p. m. All are invited.

PRESBYTERIAN—Rev. H. S. Justema, Pastor. Sabbath services at 10:30 a. m. and 7:00 p. m. Sunday school at 12 m. Y. P. S. C. E. meeting at 6:00 p. m. Prayer meeting on Thursday evening at 7:30. Everyone invited.

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN—M. M. Maxwell, Pastor. Sabbath school at 2 p. m. Public worship and sermon at 3 p. m. C. E. P. C. U. each Thursday evening at 7:30. All invited.

BAPTIST—Warren L. Rogers, Pastor. Sabbath services at 10:30 a. m. and 7:00 p. m. Sunday school at 12 m. B. Y. P. U. at 6:00 p. m. Prayer meeting on Thursday evening at 7:30. All are welcome.

STATE OF MICHIGAN, } ss. At a session
COUNTY OF OAKLAND, } of the Probate Court for the county of Oakland, held at the Probate Office in the city of Pontiac, on the 10th day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and two.

Present: Joseph S. Stockwell, Judge of Probate.

In the Matter of the Estate of

Mary S. Park, incompetent.

On reading and filing the petition of Almeron Wilybead, guardian of the estate of said Mary S. Park, incompetent, praying for license to borrow money by mortgaging the real estate of said ward for the purpose of maintaining and caring for said ward.

It is Ordered that Monday, the 10th day of February next, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, at said Probate Office, be appointed for hearing said petition, and that all persons interested in the estate appear at the time and place aforesaid and show cause, if any exists, why said petition should not be granted. And it is further ordered that a copy of this order be published three successive weeks previous to said day of hearing in the BIRMINGHAM ECCENTRIC, a newspaper printed and circulating in said county of Oakland.

JOSEPH S. STOCKWELL,
Jan17-Feb7 Judge of Probate.

Blown to Atoms.

The old idea that the body sometimes needs a powerful, drastic, purgative pill has been exploded; for Dr. King's New Life Pills, which are perfectly harmless, gently stimulate liver and bowels to expel poisonous matter, cleanse the system and absolutely cure Constipation and Sick Headache. Only 25c at Whitehead & Mitchell's.

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STATE OF MICHIGAN, } ss. At a session
COUNTY OF OAKLAND, } of the Probate Court for the county of Oakland, held at the Probate Office in the city of Pontiac, on the 6th day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and two.

Present: Joseph S. Stockwell, Judge of Probate.

In the Matter of the Estate of

Polly Robinson, deceased.

Eugene Brooks, administrator, de bonis non with will annexed of said estate, having filed his final account and made application for the allowance thereof.

It is ordered that

Monday, the 3rd day of February next,

at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, at said Probate Office, be appointed for hearing said application and the examination and allowance of said final account. And it is further ordered that a copy of this order be published three successive weeks previous to said day of hearing in the BIRMINGHAM ECCENTRIC, a newspaper printed and circulating in said county of Oakland.

JOSEPH S. STOCKWELL,
Jan10-31 Judge of Probate.

STATE OF MICHIGAN, } ss. At a session
COUNTY OF OAKLAND, } of the Probate Court for the county of Oakland, held at the Probate Office, in the city of Pontiac, on the 14th day of January, in the year one thousand nine hundred and two.

Present: Joseph S. Stockwell, Judge of Probate.

In the Matter of the Estate of

David John Parks, deceased.

On reading and filing the petition of Chas. G. Parks, praying for the probate of an instrument in writing, heretofore filed in this court, purporting to be the last will and testament of said deceased.

It is ordered that **Saturday, the 8th of February next,** at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, at said Probate Office, be appointed for proving said instrument, and it is further ordered, that a copy of this order be published three successive weeks previous to said day of hearing in the BIRMINGHAM ECCENTRIC, a newspaper printed and circulating in said county of Oakland.

JOSEPH S. STOCKWELL,
[A TRUE COPY.] Judge of Probate.
Patterson & Patterson,
Attys. for Petitioner. Jan17-Feb7

STATE OF MICHIGAN, } ss. At a session of
COUNTY OF OAKLAND, } the Probate Court for the county of Oakland, held at the Probate Office, in the city of Pontiac, on the 13th day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and two.

Present: Joseph S. Stockwell, Judge of Probate.

In the Matter of the Estate of

Anna Bell McKay, Hattie McKay and John McKay, minors.

On reading and filing the petition of Peter McKay, the guardian of said minors, praying for license to sell the real estate of said minors for the purpose of re-investment.

It is ordered that

Saturday, the 15th day of February next,

at ten o'clock in the forenoon, at said Probate Office, be appointed for hearing said petition and that all persons interested in said estate appear at the time and place aforesaid and show cause, if any exists, why said petition should not be granted. And it is further ordered that a copy of this order be published three successive weeks previous to said day of hearing in the BIRMINGHAM ECCENTRIC, a newspaper printed and circulating in said county of Oakland.

JOSEPH S. STOCKWELL,
Jan24 Feb14 Judge of Probate.

STATE OF MICHIGAN, } ss. At a session of
COUNTY OF OAKLAND, } the Probate Court for said county of Oakland, held at the Probate Office, in the city of Pontiac, on the 20th day of January, in the year one thousand nine hundred and two.

Present, Joseph S. Stockwell, Judge of Probate.

In the Matter of the Estate of

Viola Pickering, deceased.

On reading and filing the petition of Sarah A. Higby, praying for the probate of an instrument in writing, heretofore filed in this court, purporting to be the last will and testament of said deceased.

It is ordered that

Saturday the 15th day of February next,

at ten o'clock in the forenoon, at said Probate Office be appointed for proving said instrument; and it is further ordered that a copy of this order be published three successive weeks previous to said day of hearing in the BIRMINGHAM ECCENTRIC, a newspaper printed and circulating in said county of Oakland.

[A TRUE COPY.] JOSEPH S. STOCKWELL,
Jan24 Feb14 Judge of Probate.

Cut this out and take it to Whitehead & Mitchell's drug store and get a free sample of Chamberlain's Stomach and Liver Tablets, the best physic. They also cure disorders of the stomach, biliousness and headache.

The Queen & Crescent and Southern Railway.

On January 6, 1902, the Chicago & Florida Special will go into service for the season. Magnificent Train, Dining Cars, Composite and Observation Cars, Through Compartment and Open Standard Sleepers from Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Toledo, Pittsburg, Louisville and Cincinnati to St. Augustine without change. Three Trains Daily Cincinnati to Florida Through Sleepers St. Louis to Charleston. Double Daily Service Cincinnati to New Orleans; 24 hour schedules. Winter Tourist Tickets at low rates now on sale. Write for free printed matter.

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