

A DOUBLE HOLD-UP

Down the path toward the barn trudged Uncle Hewitt, his lantern casting splashes of light out into the darkness of that hour which comes just before daybreak.

The wagon had been loaded with produce the night before, so that when he had harnessed old Bets he would be ready to start on his drive of twenty miles to the city. He was congratulating himself upon his early start when the kitchen door opened with a creak, and Aunt Mandy called in cautious tones: 'Hewitt, O Hewitt, you'll be careful on the way home, won't you?'

'Yes, I'll be careful!' he called back cheerily.

'And don't forget to put your money in the sack and pin it inside your vest with that safety pin I gave you.'

'I won't forget,' he answered, still walking on.

The kitchen door closed, then opened quickly with a decided squeak, and Aunt Mandy called, in an exaggerated stage whisper, 'Hewitt, O Hewitt!' and the whisper reached him down the length of the yard. 'What do you want?' he asked, a trifle crossly, for he did not like to be detained.

'Are you sure you've got the pistol?'

'Yes, I'm just as sure of it as I've been every time I've started to the city for the last fifteen years, and just as sure I won't have any use for it, and I'll say right now that this is the last time I ever intend to carry the old thing along.'

He shut the yard gate with a bang that put a stop to all further warnings from the kitchen door.

Out upon the road he started old Bets at a brisk trot, meaning to cover a good part of the drive before the sun came up.

His lantern cast shadows upon each side of the familiar road, making it look strange and ghostly.

'Tain't much wonder Mandy worries and feels uneasy about me,' he mused. 'As many trips as I make before day and after night, it does seem a bit risky, and always coming home with money, too; but as for that highwayman of hers that she's always conjuring up, that's too ridiculous for any use. I guess the day's past for highwaymen in this civilised country, leastways round about here,' and he chuckled as he thought of the many times he had listened to his wife's admonition from the crack of the kitchen door.

The sun rose upon a glorious autumn morning, and Uncle Hewitt jogged along into the city in time for early market. The load of produce sold unusually well, and by a little after noon Uncle Hewitt was ready for the return trip.

After he had passed the city limits, he stopped old Bets by the roadside, and put the proceeds of his sales into the little bag, stitched by Aunt Mandy's careful fingers for this purpose. He pinned the bag inside his vest with a safety pin, and then started again on the homeward trip.

When about half-way home he saw in the road just ahead of him a dapper young man, who walked with a slight limp. As Uncle Hewitt drew up even with him, the stranger looked up and asked, with a pleasant smile, 'Could you give a fellow a lift for a few miles?'

'Well, now, I reckon I can, if you think that riding behind old Bets will be any quicker way of getting over the road than walking,' Uncle Hewitt responded.

'It may not be any quicker, but it will certainly be easier for one who is slightly crippled, and I'm sure I am very grateful to you.'

'This ain't a stylish rig,' Uncle Hewitt said, as he moved over to make room on the seat for his passenger. 'It's just my market wagon, but it's a good one, and has hauled many a paying load for me.'

The young man proved a good listener, and as Uncle Hewitt liked nothing better than a good listener, he waxed eloquent in his descriptions of the market business and the management of a paying truck farm.

The young man asked such very intelligent questions at such opportune times that Uncle Hewitt's heart warmed towards him, and he was soon telling him with the utmost freedom of his successes of the day, of the early selling out, and of the round sum the produce had brought him.

The talk continued on various lines of farm work, until in the midst of a dissertation on the value of rotten wood used as a fertilizer to start sweet potato beds properly, Uncle Hewitt was interrupted by the young man exclaiming, 'Oh, what is that over there, just beyond that big tree? Look quick!'

Uncle Hewitt looked, but saw nothing unusual. When he turned again towards his companion he saw something very unusual—the muzzle of a shining revolver confronting him!

The young man was smiling, and said pleasantly, 'I was out looking for game, and I am very lucky in finding you on one of your most successful days. No, you needn't make any disturbance. I happen to know that the country is not thickly settled just here, and you cannot obtain help. Just hand me the proceeds for to-day, please, and you may keep your watch and other valuables.'

Uncle Hewitt started to open his mouth, but the look in the young man's eyes and a little click near his own eyes caused him to open his vest instead, and hand over the little bag containing the precious funds.

The young man bowed politely; then, as he climbed from the wagon, he said, 'I wish to thank you for your kindness, and in return let me give you a bit of advice. Don't make it a custom to take in strange passengers and give them your confidence. Good-by, Mr. Hayseed!'

And he started back toward the city with no sign of a limp.

That appellation of 'Mr. Hayseed' was the last straw added to Uncle Hewitt's blazing temper. It was bad enough to lose so much of one's hard earnings, but to be ridiculed afterwards was intolerable. He allowed old Bets to plod on, but he reached down, and, groping under the seat, brought out the old horse pistol, and slipping out over the tail board of the wagon, he started in pursuit of his former passenger. The rattle of the wagon and the thud of old Bets' feet drowned the sound of his approach as he agained on the fellow. He came up behind him and shouted suddenly:

(To be concluded next week.)

The Lights of Olden Times

The sconce and the lantern were in general use throughout the Middle Ages, says 'Gas Logic.' The sconce was a light, conveyed and guarded from the wind, lifted down by the handle, and distinct from the lantern, serving somewhat the same purpose, but hung by a chain.

Lanterns in the thirteenth century were made of gold, silver, copper, or iron, according to the means of the owner. The light in the latter was shielded from the wind by thin sheets of horn. Lantern making was an important industry in Paris.

Noblemen and rich merchants took to having luxurious little travelling equipments made for them, and among these were travelling candlesticks and wash basins in fine enamelled work, the secret of which is now lost.

The custom of having servants carry flambeaux at festivals also became general about this time, and a strange and tragic incident is connected with this fashion. At a ball given by Charles VI. the torches carried by some careless servants came too near the heads of certain persons dressed as savages and set them on fire. The unfortunate guests were burned to death, and the King, at the sight, lost his reason, a madness which had a serious effect on the history of France.

Magic lanterns were invented at the time of King Francis I. A device on a somewhat similar plan was used as a sign before shop doors to attract custom.

Lamps fell into disfavor at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and were only used by the poor and in passages and stables where the smoke could evaporate and a great deal of light was needed. Candles then reached their perfection, and candlesticks their most exquisite form. A candlestick of crystal given by Louis XIV. to La Valliere is still in existence, and it was at this time, also, that the crystal pendants came into fashion.

Street illumination was not seriously attempted in Paris until the middle of the seventeenth century. In the first years of that notable century the streets of Paris were dark. The rich were escorted by lackeys bearing torches, the middle-class folks picked their way lantern in hand, while the poor slid along, feeling their way by the walls. In his edict of September, 1667, the King provided that candles inclosed in a cage of glass should be hung by cords at the height of the first story of the house, three lanterns for every street, one at each end and one in the middle. At the sound of a bell, struck by a watchman, they were lighted.