

# Orange County Observer.

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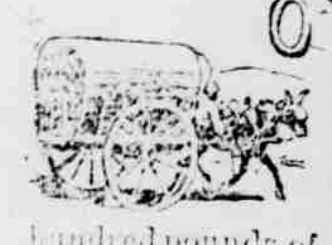
HILLSBORO, N. C. THURSDAY, AUGUST 3, 1899.

NEW SERIES--VOL. XVIII. NO. 29.

## STOLEN GUARDS.

How Two Texas Boys Saved Their Father's Cotton.

BY LEWIS B. MILLER.



NE evening in November, I remember my father, at a supper, remarked: "Jim Williams told me to-day that he's had about four hundred pounds of cotton stolen. Our wagon is in a pretty good place to be robbed, away up there at the back of the field."

My brother Dape suggested that he and I sleep in the wagon, as we had often done earlier in the season, just because we liked it; but this evening another was blowing, and we expected a night of rain and storm. We could, however, be comfortable enough by covering ourselves with cotton.

"That's a good idea," said my father. "But neither laughingly remarked, 'These could steal half the load right out from under you two sleepy-heads, and you wouldn't know it.'"

"No matter how sound they sleep," said father, "snack-thieves would steal the instant they found somebody there."

So, not long after supper, Dape and I went back to the wagon. We found it just as we had left it, packed full of cotton ready to be hauled to town, and covered with the white canvas sheet, which was spread over bows and fastened along the sides of the box, and tied down over the end boards. The two end bows of the cover were missing, and the sheet, there unsupported, slanted down in front and behind.

The night was dark. While not severely cold, the wind, like all Texas winters, had a penetrating chill that made our teeth chatter.

Standing on the brake, I noticed the sheet at the side, then put my hand under it and climbed upon the cotton. Then I crawled up after me, after trying to shake it off.

"Taking off our boots and outer clothes, we put them in the fore end. Then we crawled back and began to follow out a bed, piling the cotton forward. When the bed was deep enough, we got into it side by side, and tucked the cotton back upon ourselves. Lastly, we worked our arms under, and were ready to sleep."

By this time, the wind was driving rain-drops against the wagon-sheet, and soon there was a constant pattering over us. This meant no cotton-picking the next day, and Dape and I felt free to lie awake till late, talking.

The last thing I heard was the wind and rain, which dashed against the wagon so violently that it rocked and rattled as if in motion.

For hours I slept as only a healthy boy can, who has worked from daylight till dark, but again I became fully aware of that rocking and rattling of the wagon. The wind must be violent now; wasn't it lifting the wagon off the ground? I could feel the bumps as the wheels came down.

Obviously I conceived that the wagon might be blown over, and rose up on my elbow, still half-asleep. I was in a gloomy darkness. All I could hear was the beating of the rain and the rattling of the sheet.

Just then came a jolt—another jolt. I knew the wind did not cause rattling. The wagon was moving forward.

I started, I sat up, wide-awake and frightened. What could it mean? I tried to get my feet back to me, and I found to be in the midst of one thing or another. Who had ever heard of a wagon starting off across a field of its own accord—pulling itself forward?

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the dark, reflecting on our strange situation, and wondering what I could do. Where were those fellows taking us? How long had we been traveling, and where were we now?

I raised the sheet again. The wagon was going through flat woods. Now this told something, for we lived in a prairie country, and the nearest flat wood was ten miles to the west. So we were at least ten miles from home, and going farther. Much alarmed, I leaned over Dape again, and whispered in his ear:

"Dape, thieves are running clear off with the cotton, and us, too!"

This I repeated several times, until he sat up suddenly, and his first whispered question showed that he understood the matter. I told him what I had learned.

"We've got to get into our clothes," he said. "Then we'll untie the wagon-sheet at the hind end, drop out and follow the road back to where somebody lives."

"That's easy, but if we do, why, then the thieves get clear away with father's cotton and wagon."

"Well, then, we'll keep in hearing of the wagon till it stops. Let's get dressed right away."

"But the men are on the front end, and they must be sitting on our clothes. You know we put 'em right against the sheet."

Here was a predicament. If we got out into the cold wind and rain, bare-headed, barefooted and in thin shirts, we must suffer fearfully, and might be chilled to death.

What if we should stay in the wagon? We shuddered as we asked each other what would happen then. Murders are often committed to conceal robbery, and if we did not get out, the thieves must find us on stopping.

After discussing various plans, we decided to wait till we came to a house, and then jump out and run to it. So we untied the sheet at the hind end, and kept poking our heads out to look for a house. At this we soon got so cold that we had to bury ourselves partly in the cotton.

Houses were far apart, but at last the wagon came to one. Even before we saw its dim form, we could hear a great barking.

"That sounds like a dozen dogs, doesn't it?" shivered Dape.

"It does," I shivered back. "Big ones, too. Let's not get out. What should we do out there, nearly naked, in the cold and dark, with such a pack?"

"You're right; we're better off in the wagon."

So we got down into the cotton again, and waited for a house with fewer dogs.

The laden wagon moved slowly, for the cotton made a heavy load for the team, and before another house was reached daylight came. We were now more alarmed than ever, for if the thieves should happen to look under the sheet, they could not help discovering us.

Besides, it would be extremely embarrassing to approach a house in broad daylight in our present attire. In fact, when we did come to one, and I tried to get Dape to start first, he said, "Suppose there were women? How'd I look? Not much! You may go if you want to. I'll see this thing out right here." To this resolve I also was forced by the circumstances.

About this time the rain stopped. As soon as the light began to come through the wagon-sheet, we looked eagerly for any chance of getting our clothes, and now saw that only one man was sitting on the edge of the stretched sheet in front. Either the other one had left the wagon, or there had been but one, and the talking we had heard had been his talking to the horses. However, we were sufficiently afraid of that one man, armed, as we felt sure he must be. And he was sitting on our clothes. All that could be seen of them was sleeves and legs.

"Well," said Dape, whose mind was hopeful and fertile, "the man must live somewhere in these woods. When he gets home, he's sure to stop the wagon several yards from the house, and go in to warm up and get his breakfast. That'll be our chance. We'll put on our clothes, jump out, and run for the brush."

"But the man or some of his family will be sure to take a look under the sheet when the wagon stops."

"Well, let us hide in the cotton. No danger of them seeing us if we cover ourselves well."

And that was what we did. We covered ourselves completely, leaving only little holes to breathe through.

In this position we could not hear much, and could not see at all; but it was not long till we felt the wagon stop. Dape punched me, to intimate

that we were now at the thief's home, and that the trying time had come. We lay without moving a muscle.

Just then a dreadful thought came to me. Any one looking under the sheet would be likely to raise it at the fore end. Our clothes would be seen; then we should inevitably be discovered. I sat up in my excitement, throwing off the cotton.

What sound was that? A humming, somewhat like a threshing machine, in the distance. But I had helped unload too much cotton to that music not to recognize it. Uncovering Dape's head, I whispered:

"He's brought us to the gin! Don't you hear it?"

Dape sat up instantly, and made a gesture of delight. "Now we've got him!" said he.

As the gin-yard gate was creaking on its hinges, the man who had come out to open it, the ginmer himself, asked: "How much have you got on there?"

"About eighteen hundred, I guess," replied the man on the wagon.

"Enough for a bale. Can you run it through right away?"

"Think I can get it out by noon. Only one lot ahead of you."

"Can't you give me first show? I'm in an all-fired hurry."

"No, I can't. I've started the other already."

"Oh, well, I s'pose I got to stand it," and in he drove.

"Now's our time!" said Dape.

So I raised the sheet at the back end of the load and beckoned to the ginmer, who was closing the gate after us. He looked surprised, but seeing from my mysterious manner that something was wrong, he soon overtook the wagon.

"This isn't his cotton at all!" I whispered down. "It's my father's. That fellow stole it last night."

"Stole us, too," put in Dape. "He doesn't know anything about that, though. And he's sitting on our clothes."

The ginmer looked incredulous, but soon saw from our manner and dress that we were speaking the truth.

"Keep still till I can send for some guns! We'll arrest the scoundrel!" he said, and hurried on to the gin-house, while the wagon continued its way through the yard among scattering cotton-bales.

This gin-house stood on posts six or eight feet high. At the door was a platform about even with the top of a wagon-bed, where cotton was unloaded. When the wagon was against this platform, our driver stopped and threw on the brake. Then we heard him step off upon the platform.

"Now for our clothes!" whispered Dape.

We began to dress, sitting on the cotton, but I had only jerked on my shirt and pantaloons, and was tugging at a boot, when the sheet, or wagon-cover was suddenly thrown up, and the wind carried it off the bows.

There stood a tall, shaggy-bearded man, in a slouchy black hat and a yellow "slicker," or rain-proof coat, reaching to his heels. The consternation on his face, when he saw what he had stolen, was ludicrous. His mouth flew open, and he stood staring at us stupidly.

"I arrest you!" exclaimed the ginmer, gruffly, as he hurried out and caught the thief by the arm.

"Arrest me?" and the man came to himself suddenly. "Stand back!" he shouted, giving the ginmer a violent push. The next moment he threw off the slicker, snatched a pistol from his pocket, and with an oath and a threat, leaped from the platform.

Out came two bowie-knives, and he tried to cut one of his horses loose; but seeing two gin hands coming with guns, he dashed round the house, sprang over the fence, and fled through the woods, with everybody, including Dape and me, in pursuit. But I don't think anybody was half as eager to overtake him as he was to get away, for he had a very disagreeable manner in flourishing his pistol.

"Now what?" said I.

"Get the cotton ginned," said Dape. "Good enough," said I; and we easily bargained with the ginmer; he keeping out enough, besides his toll, to pay for the bagging and ties to wrap the bale. He also gave us feed for the team.

With the seed and the bale loaded into our wagon, we started for home, sixteen miles away, early in the afternoon, and soon met father and another man on horseback. The disappearance of a wagon-load of cotton and two boys had made a sensation in our neighborhood, and the roads were now being scoured in every direction.

Father was greatly amused with the story of our adventure. "Why," said he, "that man was no thief; he was a regular philanthropist. We couldn't have picked cotton to-day, anyhow. And he's hauled the load for us and made us a present of his horses. Good horses, too. And whenever he comes to my place for his horses, there'll be chunks of fun."

It was after dark when we reached home. The next morning the cotton-thief's horses were turned into the pasture.

"Now if the owner wants them, let him come and prove his property," father remarked, as he put up the bars.

The owner did not come to claim the horses, but they were missing a week later, and found next day at a house in the woods about seven miles

from the gin. The man who lived there was earnestly sought by the sheriff, but could not be found. His wife, when questioned, declared that the horses had returned home, and must have jumped out of the pasture. Not long afterward the family disappeared, going off between two days.

A country neighborhood clings to a joke tenaciously, and Dape and I have not yet heard the last of the night when we went to guard the cotton and were stolen ourselves.—Youth's Companion.

**GOERCING A RELUCTANT HEN.**  
At First She Was Averse to Raising a Brood; Now She's "Settin' All Right."

If a hen lives a boy who likes pets. He began with a pair of pigeons that he got in a trade for a dog that he traded a knife for. His parents allowed him to keep the pigeons until they multiplied so that there were pigeons all over the place. Then he sold the pigeons and bought a goat that ate the clothes off the line every Monday. He was compelled to dispose of it, and traded it for a pair of game chickens. In a week there wasn't a rooster left in the neighborhood; the game rooster had killed them all. His father took the game chickens for a ride one night and lost them three miles out in the country. Three days later he brought them home, but he never told any one how he got them. And so he fought for his pets one by one; his dog was lost, his lamb stolen, his rabbits run away. He has come down to one old hen.

Recently he bought a "settin'" of eggs. A "settin'" of eggs is as many as a mother hen can hatch into chicks. He had made up his mind that his hen was lonely and needed company, and what so companionable as a batch of little chicks to scratch for? The hen, however, had different views, and didn't want to sit on the eggs. But he was not a boy to be stumped by a hen—he had borne too many losses already.

He put the eggs in a box, in which he had made a nest of hay. Then he planted the indignant hen on them, put a board in which he had bored a lot of air holes over her and left her to come to terms. That night his big brother kicked off the box and set the hen free. The next morning the boy put her back, and put some bricks on the board, for he thought she had raised the board and released herself. The brother kicked both bricks and board off that night. The boy replaced hen and board again, and again they were kicked off. Then he got a board and made a hole in it for the hen to poke her head through, and nailed the board to the box. Once a day he takes the board off and chases the hen around the yard for exercise, and twice a day he carries food and water to her.

What's the use of trying to discourage a boy like that?

**The American Honey Exported.**  
The demand for American honey for export is increasing. The exports in 1897 were worth \$100,000. But that year the imports were as large as the exports, while in 1898 the imports were less than in the previous year. England is the chief buyer of American honey; and ships sail from San Francisco, from San Diego, and sometimes from Port Los Angeles, Cal., carrying large cargoes of honey. The United States produces more honey than any other nation. As long as thirty years ago the product was 15,000,000 pounds annually. Twenty years ago it had risen to 25,000,000 pounds, and ten years ago it was 65,000,000 pounds. At the present time Iowa produces 9,000,000 pounds of honey annually, and many States, including California, produce 4,000,000 to 5,000,000 pounds a year.

**Cassini and the Antique Coin.**  
Comte Cassini, Russian Ambassador to the United States, is a brilliant wit and a man of many-sided culture. His peculiarities were brought into prominence in Washington, on one occasion when a banker, more distinguished for commercial genius than for antiquarian knowledge, produced what he claimed were ancient Egyptian coins. He desecrated upon one of them, winding up with the remark: "This was made so long ago that even the place of its creation is forgotten."

Cassini sighed as he remarked, "Yes, I must be getting to be a very old man, for I remember the little shop in Birmingham where the manufacturer used to turn them out at three shillings and sixpence a dozen."—Saturday Evening Post.

**A President's Grave Unmarked.**  
An article in the Ladies' Home Journal, entitled "Where Our Presidents Are Buried," recalls the fact that four of the first five of our Chief Executives sleep in the soil of Old Virginia. The article says that the grave of President John Tyler, at Richmond, Virginia, is absolutely unmarked—even by a small headstone. Visitors to Hollywood Cemetery are shown a scarcely perceptible mound, over which a magnolia tree spreads its shade in summer, as the resting-place of our tenth President. The burial places of all the others are marked with monuments or tombs, except those of the two Adamses, who are buried under the portico of the First Church at Quincy, Mass.

## HORTICULTURE

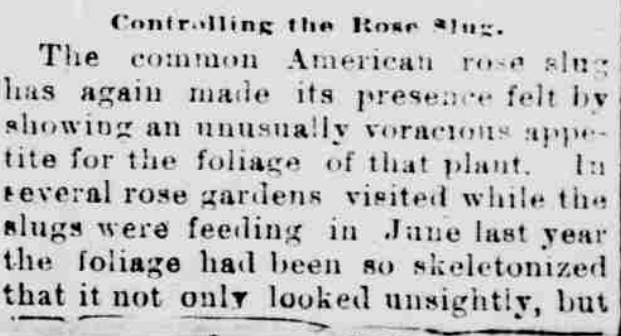


**Fertility of Grapes.**  
It has been found that many varieties of cultivated grapes are self-sterile; others are imperfectly self-sterile; that is to say, when cross-pollination is prevented they form clusters which are more or less imperfect; others are fully self-sterile. The last class includes nearly all the varieties which have proved satisfactory in commercial vineyards.

**Exterminating Weeds.**  
A weed is very properly termed "a plant out of place," but when a good, healthy burdock, nettle, teasel, rag-weed or pig-weed springs up beside a poppy or marigold the order seems to be reversed; the weed seemingly thrives just as well, while the desirable plant becomes decidedly "out of place."

A vigorous use of the hoe at once upon the appearance of the little weed seedlings where a hoe can be used, is the quickest and most effective way to dispose of them; but if they are allowed to grow for a few days they may be easily pulled up root and branch. If a weed has attained any size never cut it off with a hoe, but pull it up, or generally new shoots will quickly come from the old crown. Whatever the way or means, keep the weeds down entirely, at all hazards, for they rob the soil and render otherwise right places decidedly objectionable. A wise gardener is he who never allows a weed of any kind to go to seed; about his place for a considerable distance about the outskirts, thereby saving himself many a backache the following season. When pulled weeds about to seed are pulled up they should be burned, as they might germinate.—Woman's Home Companion.

**Controlling the Rose Slug.**  
The common American rose slug has again made its presence felt by showing an unusually voracious appetite for the foliage of that plant. In several rose gardens visited while the slugs were feeding in June last year the foliage had been so skeletonized that it not only looked unsightly, but



THE ROSE SLUG AND ITS WORK.

its check had also prevented the development of the blooms. This is an old and widely distributed species, and it may always be found where roses are grown to any extent. Fortunately there is but a single brood each year, the sawflies emerging in May, just as the foliage is fully expanded. The eggs are inserted singly near the edge of the under surface of the leaf in a small slit, made by the female fly. When full grown the larva is slightly over one-third of an inch long, slug-like, but lacking the slime which covers many nearly related species, such as the pear slug. The larvae feed only at night and upon the upper side of the leaf, which they completely skeletonize, but leaving the under surface, below which they remain concealed during the day. The larvae become full grown in about two weeks and then descend to the ground into which they burrow for one to three inches and there hollow out small cells. In these they lie dormant until the next spring, when they transform to pupae, from which the adult sawflies emerge in a few days. The time of the appearance of the adults varies considerably, and thus the larvae may be found on the bushes for four or five weeks.

Sprays of powdered hellebore, using two ounces to three gallons of water, or one pound of whale-oil soap to three or four gallons of water will effectively destroy them. If only a few plants are to be treated, the hellebore may be dusted on dry by pepper-can, dust-bag or powder gun, applying it while the plants are still wet with dew in the morning.—E. Dwight Sanderson, in American Agriculturist.

It is asserted that Paris, France, is about to replace four thousand ordinary cabs with electric cabs. Chicago is also to have between one hundred and two hundred of the latter within two months.

## HOUSEHOLD AFFAIRS.

**A Handsome Bedroom Suite.**  
Many of the handsomest bedroom suites now made in England are of olive wood. This ancient and historic wood is of a yellowish brown, often veined with darker lines, affording an exceedingly rich and beautiful effect, while from its hard and close grain it is exceedingly durable and costs no more than ordinary woods. The washstand is usually made with marble top, high tiled back, cupboard and towel rods on top and sides.

**Brush and Comb Cases.**  
The china and silver brush and comb trays are not nearly so desirable or fashionable to-day as the simple silk and satin holders, which can be made at home with ease. They are made in various forms to imitate objects in nature. The most convenient and serviceable shape is that of a melon. Cut out of stiff cardboard the sides of the case, and make them as long as the brush and comb. Cover them first with cheese cloth, and pad them out to the proper roundness with sheet wadding. Then sew together strips of satin and silk ribbons to give the effects of melon-stripes. Line the inside with some plain silk. Each end of the case is then securely sewed together and finished off with bows of ribbon. The case can be made either to stand up on the bureau or to be suspended with fancy cords or ribbons. If carefully made they are distinct ornaments to the bureau, and they are less injurious to the bristles of the brush than the silver and china trays, which do in time bend and loosen these.—The New Voice.

**The Wedding Feast.**  
When formal seating at large tables is not practicable by reason of space, there is always the small-table expedient to which one may resort. These tables, seating four, may be placed in every available nook through the rooms, halls, piazzas; and if there be any overlow, what more delightful than to place them under the trees? By this means a very large company may be comfortably served without great trouble. Each of these small tables must, of course, be covered with a cloth, and since one spares no trouble in wedding preparations, a few flowers should be ready for each, also a pretty little dish of confections. In serving the substantial it is very nice to place on the table a plate of cake. In serving guests at an evening wedding the buffet plan solves the problem of room. This plan prescribes a table of ordinary size (round or square), beautifully laid with finest cloth, and containing the bride's cake, other cut cake, salted almonds, choice confections in pretty holders, and perhaps fruit with a centerpiece of flowers and decorations of ribbons. An appropriate arrangement for a summer wedding feast would be a very tall, slender cut-glass vase holding long-stemmed roses in sufficient quantity to bend in a graceful arch above. Such a centerpiece does not obstruct the view across the table because of its slowness. If any caution is necessary in regard to the use of flowers as a table decoration, it is to avoid overdoing that feature, and never to select those with a heavy odor. Chairs are placed around the four sides of the room, and the guests are served from the pantry and kitchen, only the articles above named being served from the table. The bridal party and as many more as can be seated go in first, all the other guests being seated in succession as space permits.—Woman's Home Companion.

**Recipes.**  
**Asparagus, with Yellow Sauce.**—Wash one large bunch of asparagus, then cook whole in boiling water. Drain off the water and to one cupful add a paste made of a scant tablespoonful of butter and a teaspoonful of flour; beat in the yolks of two eggs, a tablespoonful of salt, a pinch of pepper and cook eight minutes. Make a mound of well-seasoned whipped potatoes, arrange the asparagus as a wheat stack and pour the sauce above and around it.

**Potato à la Maitre d'Hotel.**—Cut three medium sized cold cooked potatoes into cubes, sprinkle them with salt and pepper, put them in the double boiler with one cup of milk, cook ten minutes. Cream one tablespoonful of butter, add one teaspoonful of flour to it, the yolk of one beaten egg, one teaspoonful of lemon juice, and one teaspoonful of chopped parsley and one half teaspoonful of salt; stir this into the potato. Cook five minutes.

**Strawberry Tapioca Cream.**—Soak overnight two tablespoonfuls of tapioca. In the morning pour over it one quart of fresh milk. Beat the yolks of four eggs with a little of the milk. Stir them into the rest of the tapioca and sweeten to taste. Boil for a few minutes only, remove from the fire, and when nearly cold add one pint of fresh strawberries to it. Beat the whites of the eggs to a stiff froth and before adding the strawberries add them to the mixture. Serve with a sauce made by beating two eggs into half a pint of milk or cream and flavor with vanilla. Sweeten to taste.