

**blackouts from
roaring camp**



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original story: Bret Harte cover art: E.K.P. Norman

Here's the story in short. Bret Harte's *The Luck of Roaring Camp* tossed into a bag. Read by the beach. Sandblast, spine suck, pages fallen out. Left to collage. Found. Words circled. Phone in the blackouts. Blackout poetry makes it to the page. Is he drunk? Is she worried? To Miss Mary, apologies. I am sure you were a sweet woman before I cut down your sides. To everyone else. This will be what you make it.

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The Idyl of Red Gulch man in particular was not, I grieve to say novelty in Red Gulch to attract attention. Ear- some local satirist had erected a temporary Sandy's Head, bearing the inscription, "Effec- kle's whiskey-- kills at forty rods, with a ha McCorkle's saloon, But this, I imagine, was, satire, personal, and was a reflection upon of the process farther than a commentary up priety of the result. With this facetious exc had been undisturbed. A wandering mule, his pack, had cropped the scant herbage be sniffed curiously at the prostrate man, a v with that deep sympathy which the species hav men, had licked his dusty books and curled his feet, and lay there, blinking one eye in the a simulation of dissipation that was ingeniou in its implied flattery of the unconscious man

Meanwhile the shadows of the pine-tree swung around until they crossed the road, and barred the open meadow with gigantic para and yellow. Little puffs of red dust, lifted by hoofs of passing teams, dispersed in a grimy the recumbent man. The sun sank lower a still Sandy stirred not. And then the repos losopher was disturbed, as other philosophe by the intrusion of an unphilosophical sex.

"Miss Mary," as she was known to the l she had just dismissed from the log school- ho pines, was taking her afternoon walk. Obs usually fine cluster of blossoms on the azalea

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Su'shine
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then
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the ground kicked
wildly forward, darted
in the direction of the
Heavens!

drunk.

The Idyl of Red Gulch

statement of his inner consciousness. Unf
outward expression was vague, being limited
of the following formula,-- "Su'shine all ri!
ch? Wass up, su'shine?"

Miss Mary stopped, and, taking fresh cou
vantage of distance, asked him if there was an
wanted.

"Wass up? Wasser maar?" continued Sa
high key.

"Get up, you horrid man!" said Miss Ma
oughly incensed, "get up, and go home."

Sandy staggered to his feet. He was six
Miss Mary trembled. He started forward a
then stopped.

"Wass I go home for," he suddenly ask
gravity.

"Go and take a bath," replied Miss M
grimy person with great disfavor.

To her infinite dismay, Sandy suddenly pul
and vest, threw them on the ground; kicked
and, plunging wildly forward, darted head-
hill, in the direction of the river.

"Goodness Heavens!-- the man will be d
Miss Mary; and then, with feminine inconsi
back to the school house, and locked herself i
That night, while seated at supper with h
blacksmith's wife, it came to Miss Mary to
if her husband ever got drunk. "Abner,"

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The Idyl of Red Gulch signs of past dissipation, was amiable-looking kind of blond Samson, whose corn-colored, si-
parently had never yet known the touch of or Delilah's shears. So that the cutting speec-
ered on her ready tongue died upon her lips tented herself with receiving his stammering
supercilious eyelids and the gathered skirts of tion. When she re-entered the school-room,
upon the azaleas with a new sense of revelati she laughed; and the little people all laughed;
all unconsciously very happy.

It was on a hot day-- and not long after t short-legged boys came to grief on the thr
school with a pail of water, which they ha brought from the spring, and that Miss Mar
ately seized the pail and started for the sprin the foot of the hill a shadow crossed her pat
shirted arm dexterously, but gently relieved h den. Miss Mary was both embarrassed and a
carried more of that for yourself" she said the blue arm, without deigning to raise her
owner, "you'd do better." In the submissive s lowed she regretted the speech, and thanked
at the door that he stumbled. Which caused laugh again, -- a laugh in which Miss Mary jo
color came faintly into her pale cheek. The rel was mysteriously placed by the door, a
ously filled with fresh spring-water every mor Nor was this superior young person with

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The Idyl of Red Gulch

caresses, filling the air with their laughter; a Mary herself-- feline fastidious and intrench in the purity of spotless skirts, collar, and cuff and ran like a crested quail at the head of her romping, laughing, and panting, with a loose brown hair, a hat hanging by a knotted ribbon throat, she came suddenly and violently, in the forest, upon-- the luckless Sandy!

The explanations, apologies, and not overwrought that ensued, need not be indicated here. Acquaintance with this ex-drunkard. Enough that he accepted as one of the party; that the child quick intelligence which Providence gives the recognized a friend, and played with his blond and silken mustache, and took other liberties,-- are apt to do. And when he had built a fire and had shown them other mysteries of wonder and admiration knew no bounds. At the close of his idle, happy hours he found himself lying upon the sloping hillside, gazing dreamily in her face upon the weaver, in very much the same attitude as he first they met. Nor was the similitude great. Weakness of an easy, sensuous nature, that dreamy exaltation in liquor, it is to be feared is an equal intoxication in love.

I think that Sandy was dimly conscious of

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The Idyl of Red Gulch which Miss Mary-- I fear, to the danger of discipline-- was lately in the habit of indulging. full of mosses, ferns, and other woodland m was so preoccupied with these and her own th gentle tapping at the door passed unheard, or self into the remembrance of far-off woodpeck last it asserted itself more distinctly, she star flushed cheek and opened the door. On the thr woman; the self-assertion and audacity of wh in singular contrast to her timid, irresolute be Miss Mary recognized at a glance the dubi her anonymous pupil. Perhaps she was disa haps she was only fastidious ; but as she cold to enter, she only half unconsciously settled her w collar, and gathered closer her own chaste perhaps, for this reason that the embarra after a moment's hesitation, left her gorgeou and sticking in the dust beside the door, and at the farther end of a long bench. Her vo as she began:--

"I heerd tell that you were goin' down to th row, and I couldn't let you go until I came to your kindness to my Tommy."

Tommy, Miss Mary said, was a good boy more than the poor attention she could give h

"Thank you, miss; thank you!" cried the st ening even through the color which Red Gu tiously as her "war paint," and striving, in

The Idyl

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cipline-- indulging.

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Thank you thank you!
through the
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Gulch
caught the girl
on her knees
money it's all yours
school, you can go
The worst kindness
is
shame

the casement fixed on the
fading

white hands

I know it takes time to consider.
but I cannot go

The Idyl of Red Gulch

She had risen and caught the young girl
own, and had fallen on her knees beside her.
“I’ve money plenty, and it’s all yours and h
some good school, where you can go and see
him to--to--to forget his mother, Do with
like. The worst you can do will be kindness
learn with me. Only take him out of this w
cruel place, this home of shame and sorrow
know you will-- won’t you? You will, -- you
cannot say no! You will make him as pur
yourself; and when he has grown up, you w
father’s name, -- the name that hasn’t passed
years, -- the name of Alexander Morton, w
here Sandy! Miss Mary!-- do not take yo
Miss Mary, speak to me! You will take my
put your face from me. I know it ought not
as me. Miss Mary!-- my God, be merciful!--
me!”

Miss Mary had risen, and, in the gatherin
felt her way to the open window. She stood
against the casement, her eyes fixed on the
that were fading from the western sky.
some of its light on her pure young forehea
collar, on her clasped white hands, but all
away. The suppliant had dragged herself, st
beside her.

“I know it takes time to consider. I wi
night; but I cannot go until you speak. I
now. You will!-- I see it in your sweet fac