

THE MONKEY WHO WOULDN'T KILL

by Henry Drummond

Henry Drummond's comprehensive work on fundamental Christian theology and spiritual discipline.

13 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. The Monkey who Wouldn't Kill
1. CHAPTER I: THERE is no such thing as an immortal monkey, but this monkey was as
2. CHAPTER II: THE day was not yet broken when the watch' of the ship Vulcan, lying
3. CHAPTER III: THE island on which the Captain of the Vulcan exiled Tricky was mar...
4. CHAPTER IV: FOR three days after the monkey had been hanged' it did not come nea...
5. CHAPTER V: IF the shepherd had stood looking over the cliff for one moment longe...
6. CHAPTER I: I SUPPOSE you thought the monkey I told you about before was dead. Bu...
7. CHAPTER II: MR. DONALD MACALSH, gold-miner from Silver Creek, California, happen...
8. CHAPTER III: NEXT morning Donald and Gum started from San Francisco by an early
9. CHAPTER V: AFTER a long journey over the mountains Donald reached his log cabin ...
10. CHAPTER VI: Two nights after the wheel of fortune gave an unlooked-for turn.
11. CHAPTER VII: WHEN the thieves reached home, after a hasty breakfast, they contin...
12. CHAPTER VIII: LATE that afternoon the monkey turned up at his old home. Donald f...

The Monkey who Wouldn't Kill

CHAPTER I: THERE is no such thing as an immortal monkey, but this monkey was as

THERE is no such thing as an immortal monkey, but this monkey was as near it as possible. Talk of a cat's nine lives--this monkey had ninety! A monkey's business in the world is usually to make everybody merry, but the special mission of this one, I fear, was to make everybody as angry as ever they could be. In wrath-producing power, in fact, this monkey positively shone.

How many escapes the monkey had before the runaway slave presented it to the missionary--from whom I first heard of it--no one knows. It certainly had not much hair on when it arrived, and there was an ominous scar on its head, and its ears were not wholly symmetrical. But the children were vastly delighted with it, and after much kind treatment the creature was restored to rude health, and, I must confess, to quite too rude spirits. The children wanted him baptized by the time-honoured title of Jacko'; but by a series of exploits in which the monkey distinguished himself at the expense of every member of the household in turn, it became evident that only one name would fit a quadruped of his peculiar disposition; and that was Tricky.' Tricky, therefore, he was called, and as Tricky he lived and--did not die.

picture

Tricky Upset Everything

There was no peace in the home after Tricky came. He ate everything, upset everything, broke everything, stole everything, did everything that the average monkey ought not to do. If they shut him up in a room, Tricky got out by the chimney. If they put him out of the room, Tricky came in by the chimney. What could you do with such a creature? He

could not be kept in, and he could not be kept out; so a court-martial was held, and Tricky was sentenced to be given away.

But by this time the whole place knew Tricky, and no one would have him. Such an unusual refusal of a present was never known before. Even the runaway slave smiled sweetly when his old friend was offered to him, and protested that, to his deep regret, he was unable to buy nuts enough to keep him.

The idea of wandering' Tricky in the woods, of course, occurred to the genius of the village, and a detachment of boys set off one Saturday to carry it into effect. But you might as well have tried to wander a carrier pigeon. Like Mary's little lamb, everywhere these boys went, that monkey went. When they ran, it ran; when they doubled back, it doubled back; and when they got home, dead tired, it was only to find Tricky laughing at them from the church roof.

That night the worst happened. When the people assembled for the weekly meeting, there was not found in that church one whole hymn-book. Some one, apparently, had been pelting the pulpit with them. The cushions were torn; the blinds were a wreck; two stops in the harmonium were pulled out bodily. After the service the missionary was solemnly waited on by a deputation. They were closeted for an hour and a half, but no one, except themselves, ever knew what was said or done. The only circumstances that one could in any way connect with this mysterious council was that about midnight a small boat was seen stealthily putting out to sea. It contained two figures--one, who rowed, was the senior elder; the other, who sat in the stern, looked like a very small boy.

CHAPTER II: THE day was not yet broken when the watch' of the ship Vulcan, lying

THE day was not yet broken when the watch' of the ship Vulcan, lying becalmed off the--coast, was roused by a peculiar noise aft. Going to the spot he was surprised to find a much-bedraggled monkey rubbing itself on a pile of sail-cloth. The creature had evidently swum or drifted a long distance, and was now endeavouring to restore circulation. Jerry, being a humane man, got it some biscuit, and a saucer of grog, and waited developments. These were not slow to show themselves; within twenty-four hours the commander of the ship Vulcan, 740 tons register, was a monkey named Tricky.

Time would fail me to tell of the life that monkey led them all on board the Vulcan. After the first week only two things lay between him and death at any moment. One was his inventiveness. Tricky's wickedness was nothing if not original. Every day he was at some new villainy; and anything new on board ship is sacred. There is no Punch published on board ship; but Tricky was all the comic papers rolled into one. But that was not the main reason. There is a good deal of quiet quarrelling on board ship. The mate spared Tricky because he thought he would some day give the Captain a turn'; the Captain let him live, hoping he would do something dreadful to the mate. Everybody waited to see Tricky do something to somebody else. So he rose to the highest rank in the merchant-marine, and was respected almost to idolatry by all on board the Vulcan.

One day Tricky was hanged--formally, deliberately, and judicially hanged. What had he done? He had killed the ship cat. It was a deliberate murder, with no extenuating circumstances, and a rope, with

a noose, was swung over the yard-arm, and Tricky run up in the presence of all the crew. This happened about eight bells, and at dusk Tricky was still hanging there, very quiet and motionless. Next morning Tricky was still there--as live as you are. Tricky was not hanged, he was only hanging; and, as everybody knows, monkeys rather like hanging. In fact, though Tricky was still up there, he had got his hands well round the rope, and was, on the whole, fairly at home. The rope round a neck like Tricky's was a mere boa.

picture

Next Morning Tricky Was Still There

The executioners were rather ashamed of themselves when they saw how matters stood; but instead of softening them, this dangling mockery of a dead monkey still further roused their wrath, and the boatswain was told off to end the drama by tossing Tricky into the sea. The boatswain was up the shrouds in a moment, and loosening the rope with one hand, and catching the monkey by the tail with the other, he swung poor Tricky a good yard over the ship's side into the Atlantic.

picture

It Was Only Tricky Shaking the Salt-Water Off

When the boatswain descended upon the deck he was greeted with a sudden deluge of rain. It was only Tricky shaking the salt-water off. The monkey had climbed up the stern rope, and reached the deck before him. What would have happened next is hard to predict, but at this point the Captain, attracted by the scream of laughter which greeted the drenching of the boatswain, came up and was told the sequel to the hanging. Now the Captain was a blunt, good-natured man, and he avowed that neither man nor monkey who had ever been hanged on board his ship should ever be put to death again. This was the law on shore, he said, and he would see fair-play. So Tricky received another lease of life,

and thus the ship Vulcan was kept in hot water for two months more. About the end of that period there came a crisis. The ship was nearing port, and a heavy cleaning was in progress. Among other things the ship's boats had to be painted. In an evil hour one of the men went below to dinner, and left his paint-pot standing on the deck. If Tricky had lost a chance he would not have been a monkey at all. Needless to say, he rose to the occasion. That his supreme hour was come was quite evident from the way he set to work at once. He began with the parrot, which he painted vermillion; then he passed the brush gaily along the newly varnished woodwork--daubed the masts and shrouds all over, obliterated the name on the life-buoys, and wound up a somewhat successful performance by emptying the pot over the Captain's best coat, which was laid in the sun to get the creases out.

picture

He Began with the Parrot

I draw a veil over what happened on the Vulcan during the next quarter of an hour. There was never such a muster of the crew since they left port. Everybody seemed to have business on deck. When the Captain came up you could have heard a pin drop. I shall not repeat his language, nor try to compare with anything earthly the voice with which he ordered every man below. All I will record is--and it is to his everlasting honour--that in that awful hour the Captain was true to his vow. 'Do you see land?' he roared to the steersman. 'Ay, ay, sir,' said the man, 'land on the larboard bow.' Then, 'said the Captain, put her head to it.'

That night, late, the ship stood close in to a small island on the north coast of Scotland and a boat was solemnly sent ashore, and after that Tricky was no more seen by any of the crew of the Vulcan.

CHAPTER III: THE island on which the Captain of the Vulcan exiled Tricky was marked

THE island on which the Captain of the Vulcan exiled Tricky was marked on the chart uninhabited.' But the chart was wrong. Ten years before, a shepherd had come there, and now lived with his wife and family near the top of the great sea-cliff. You may judge of the sensation when a real live monkey appeared in the early morning in this remote and lonely spot. The shepherd was watching his sheep when the apparition rose, as it were, from the ground. He had never seen a monkey before, any more than the sheep; and sheep and shepherd bolted like wildfire. Tricky, of course, followed the biped, for he had always been accustomed to human society; and as the shepherd fled towards the hut, he saw the monkey close at his heels. So he made a rush at the open door, and pulled it after him with a bang which almost brought down the house.

picture

The Shpeherd Bolted Like Wildfire

The fugitive had just got inside when, in a moment, he felt himself seized from behind. It seemed as if a powerful hand was dragging him backward, and he threw himself down on the ground, and roared with fear. What had happened was that the flying end of his plaid had got jammed in the door, but he felt sure the evil spirit was holding him in its clutches, and it was some time before his startled wife could convince him that there was nothing there. The good woman gathered him up, and soothed him; and as soon as he could speak he told her in a shivering voice about the awful monster which had come to slay them all. He had scarcely got out the word monster,' when there was a

scurrying in the chimney, and the monster presented himself before them, and calmly sat down on the meal-barrel. It's just a puggy!' cried the shepherd's wife (she had been to Inverness), and began to stroke Tricky on the back. As she did so, she noticed that the creature had a strand of an old ship's rope round its neck, and to this was attached a small piece of paper. She opened it and read four words, scrawled in a hasty hand:--

WON'T HANG.

WON'T DROWN.'

The shepherd seemed more frightened than ever at this revelation. Won't hang, won't drown,' he muttered. Then, we'll see if it won't shoot,' and he reached over the fireplace for the gun which he killed the rabbits with. As he loaded it, it seemed to the shepherd's wife as if all the powder and shot in the house was being poured into the barrel. She pleaded with her husband to spare Tricky's life, and it almost looked as if she had succeeded, for the shepherd lowered the gun from his shoulder and stood for a moment as if in doubt. But it was not because of his wife he stopped. It was partly because he was quite too shaky to aim straight, and partly because he was too much of a sportsman to shoot off-hand a thing which was sitting quiet and still on his own meal-barrel; but the main reason was that he was afraid to shoot the baby, whose crib was just beside it. So he gave the meal barrel a kick with his foot to dislodge the monkey. He thought it would make for the door, and there, in the open air, he would shoot it fair and square.

But the monkey had other views. What it wanted was something to eat; and the children's porridge being handy, it put its paw in and began breakfast. The shepherd was too much petrified to interfere, and it was only when Tricky next spilt the milk-jug over the baby that he roused

himself to do his duty to his family. He raised the gun once more, and, watching his chance when Tricky was exactly opposite the door, aimed straight at its heart and pulled the trigger. Now, the next moment that monkey ought to have been scattered all over the hillside in multitudinous fragments. On the contrary, it was up on the table, imitating the click of the gun with a spoon. Not that the shepherd missed. For the first time in its life the rusty lock had struck, and the dazed shepherd was more than ever confirmed in his belief that the monkey was a witch.

Won't shoot,' he muttered to himself, won't hang, won't drown. I have tried the first; I'll prove the next.' So, as he was too superstitious to try to shoot it again, he went out to hang the monkey.

But there was no tree on the island. All day the shepherd searched for a place to hang Tricky, but in vain. That night he lay thinking, hour after hour, where he would hang it, and in the early morning an inspiration came to him--he would try the pump! So he rose softly and fixed the handle of the pump high in the air, so that it stuck out like a gallows, and tied a rope with a noose to the end of it. Then he got Tricky to perch on the top of the pump, tied the rope round his neck, and all was ready. The shepherd had heard that the object of hanging was to break the neck of the criminal by a sudden drop,' but as he could not give Tricky a long enough drop he determined to make up for it in another way. So he gathered all his strength, and with a tremendous sweep of his arms sent Tricky flying into space. Of course you know what happened. The rope--it was quite rotten--broke, and Tricky landed on his four paws, and stood grinning at his executioner as if he would like it all over again.

picture

All Was Ready

That whole day the sheep and lambs on the Island of ---- were neglected. All day long you might have seen the shepherd sitting by the marsh-side plaiting something with his fingers. Round him, the ground was strewn with rushes, some loose, and some in bundles, but for every one the workman chose he threw away a hundred, because they were not tough and strong. And as he plaited, and twisted, and knotted, and tested, there was fire in the shepherd's eye, and thunder all over his face.

At daybreak next morning the shepherd and the monkey once more formed in procession and wended their way to the old pump. The new rope could hang an elephant. It was thick as a boa-constrictor, and the shepherd took a full hour to adjust the noose and get the gallows into working order. Then the fatal moment came. With a mightier shove than before the monkey was launched into the air, and the rope stiffened and held like a ship's hawser. But the executioner had not calculated everything. The rope and the drop' were all right, but when the gallows felt the shock, the pump-handle cracked off like a match, and the old moss-covered tube gave two rocks and reeled from its moorings, and lay split in pieces on the ground. Jagged and needlelike splinters at the same moment scraped and pierced and gouged at the shepherd's shins, and tore his nether garments, and made him dance with pain and rage. If anything could have added more agony to the next few minutes it was the sight of Tricky. That ever gay animal was careering down the hill straight towards the feeding sheep. The pump-handle was still tied to its neck, and it clattered over the stones with a noise weird enough to drive the whole flock into the sea. The shepherd knew there must be a catastrophe, but he was powerless to avert it. He was too sore to follow, so he slowly limped towards the hut, to nurse his wrath and his wounds.



CHAPTER IV: FOR three days after the monkey had been hanged' it did not come near

FOR three days after the monkey had been hanged' it did not come near the shepherd or his house. A monkey has feelings. To be nearly hanged is bad enough, but to have a boa-constrictor and a pump-handle tied to your neck is more than any self-respecting animal would stand. So Tricky devoted himself exclusively to the sheep. For the space of three days, with the invaluable aid of the pump-handle, Tricky shepherded that flock. Not a blade of grass was nibbled during this period; one prolonged stampede was kept up night and day. The lambs dropped with hunger. The old sheep tottered with fatigue. The whole flock was demoralised. In fact, when the Reign of Terror' closed there was not a pound of sound mutton left on the island.

Why did not the shepherd interfere? Because, as we shall see, for these three days he had more urgent work to do. When the shepherd's wife went out to the pump that morning for water to make the porridge with, she found it a heap of ruins. She came back and broke the tidings to the shepherd, and said she believed it had been struck with lightning. The shepherd discreetly said nothing, but presently stole sullenly out to inspect the damage once more. It was worse than he thought. A pump must hold in both air and water; this pump was rent and split in a dozen places. There was no water either to drink or make the porridge with till the tube was mended. So all that day the shepherd was splicing, and hammering, and glueing, and bandaging. All the next day he was doing the same. He got nothing to eat or drink; nobody got anything to eat or drink. The poor children were kept alive on a single bowlful, which happened to be in the house, but this was now finished, and they

were crying out from want. Positively, if this drought and famine had been kept up for a few days more the island would certainly have been restored to the condition described on the chart-- uninhabited.'

On the morning of the fourth day the pump stood erect, and wind and water-tight once more. Only one thing was wanting--there was no handle. The only thing left was to try to catch Tricky, for there was nothing else on the island which would make a handle. But just then Tricky required no catching. At that moment he was sitting on the doorstep contemplating the group round the pump. Everybody being out, he had seized the opportunity to have a good breakfast--consisting of every particle of meal in the barrel--and was now enjoying a period of repose before recommencing hostilities. The shepherd made a rush at him, but, alas! what he wanted was no longer there. A piece of frayed rope dangled on its neck, but the pump-handle was gone.

It took two days more to find it. Every inch of the island was patiently examined. Even the child next the baby had to join in the search. Night and day they were all at it; and at last it was found by the shepherd's wife--stuck in a rabbit-hole. All this time no one had leisure to kill Tricky. But on the seventh day the shepherd rose with murder written on his brow. The monkey would not shoot, and he would not hang; it remained to try what drowning would do. So he tied a large stone round the monkey's neck, and led him forth to the edge of the great sea-cliff.

A hundred feet below, the sea lay like a mirror; and the shepherd, as he looked over for a deep place, saw the great fronds of the sea-weeds and the jelly-fish and the anemones lying motionless in the crystal waters. Then he took the monkey and the stone in his great hands, examined the knots hastily, and, with one sudden swing, heaved them over the cliff.

picture

He Took the Monkey and Stone and Heaved Them Over the Cliff

The shepherd would much rather at this point have retired from the scene. But he dared not. He could not trust that monkey. An actual certificate of death was due to himself and to his family. So he peered over the cliff and saw the splash in the sea, and watched the ripples clearing off till the sea-bottom stood out again with every shell distinct. And there, sure enough, was Tricky, down among the star-fish, safely moored to his gravestone, and the yard of good rope holding like a chain-cable. The shepherd rose for the first time since that monkey set foot upon the island and breathed freely. Then he slowly went back to the house and told the tale of the end of Tricky.

It was not till midnight that Tricky came back. Of course you knew Tricky would come back. You knew the rope would slip over the stone, or break, or be eaten through by a great fish, or something, and, though none of these things happened, it is certainly true that that night at midnight Tricky did turn up. Perhaps I should say turn down, for he came in, as usual, by the chimney. But the exact way in which this singular creature escaped from its watery grave must be reserved for another chapter.

picture

With the Stone in His Arms He Walked Calmly Towards the Shore

CHAPTER V: IF the shepherd had stood looking over the cliff for one moment longer,

IF the shepherd had stood looking over the cliff for one moment longer, he would have witnessed a curious scene. Every schoolboy knows that a stone is lighter in water than in air. How the monkey knew this, or whether he did or did not, it is impossible to say, but his actions were certainly those of a philosopher. For, instead of resigning himself to his fate, he bent down and grasped the stone which held him to his watery grave, picked it up in his arms, and walked calmly along the bottom towards the shore. With a supreme effort he next got the stone edged on to a half-submerged ledge; but now that it was half out of the water it was once more too heavy to lift, and Tricky lay in great perplexity in the shallow water, wondering how ever he was to get out of this fresh dilemma. There appeared nothing for it but to attack the rope with his teeth, and for an hour Tricky worked at the tough strands, but without almost any success. After another hour's work the monkey made an appalling discovery. When he began work, the water was only up to his knees; and to his consternation, it now covered him up to his middle. In a short time more it came up to his neck, and it was clear to Tricky that if the ledge went on sinking at this rate he was a dead monkey. Tricky thought he knew all about the sea, but in the foreign sea, where he had lived with the missionary, there were no tides, and this creeping in of the water greatly disturbed his peace of mind. To his great joy, however, he found that the stone, now wholly covered with water, was once more light enough to lift, and he trundled it along the ledge till the water became too shallow to move it further. Just above this point was another ledge, high and dry above

tide-mark, and the yard of rope was just long enough to allow the monkey to take up his position there, and shake himself dry in the sun. Now, this shaking process suggested an idea to Tricky--a very obvious one to you or me, but a real inspiration to a monkey. Tricky noticed that the very part of the rope where he had been gnawing rested against the sharp edge of the rocky ledge, and that one frayed strand had suddenly parted while he was shaking himself. The rock-edge, in fact, was a regular knife, and after much and hard rubbing, and many rests, Tricky found himself within three or four strands of freedom. It was all but midnight when the last strand parted, and in a few minutes more the gallant monkey crawled up the cliff and stood once more at the door of his executioner's house.

I am afraid you will be as much surprised as Tricky was at the startling discovery he made when he got there. The cottage was on fire! For days, you will remember, there had been no food in the shepherd's home. But that day the family had celebrated the mending of the pump by a great banquet, and a washing. Such a fire was lit as had not blazed on the hearth for years, and when it grew dark the red sparks flew into the air and fell in dangerous showers upon the dry thatched roof. The wind, too, rose about nightfall, and fanned one smouldering square of turf into life; and when Tricky reached the spot at least half the roof was already in a blaze. But Tricky was hungry after his day's adventures, and the chimney end of the roof being still untouched by the fire, he jumped on to the roof and down into the kitchen with a bound. The baby's cradle lay, as usual, close to the side of the fire, and the monkey, in passing, must have swished it with his tail, for the infant broke into a sudden yell, which rang through the room, and woke the shepherd with a start. The good man was awake not a moment too soon. Had the monkey arrived five minutes later the whole family must

have perished; the smoke had already filled the other room, and was pouring in, in rolling clouds, below the kitchen door. With one thunderstruck glare at the night-watchman who had wakened him so opportunely--and who now occupied his usual throne on the meal-barrel, violently sneezing out smoke, and wondering whether it was not better to be drowned--the shepherd rushed towards the door to save the two elder children who lay locked in slumber in the burning room beyond. Seizing them in his arms, he bore them safely to the open air, and then returned for his wife and the other children. Tricky followed at their heels; and the next moment the rescued family stood in a shivering group, helplessly watching the flames. The roof soon fell in, and in the morning all that remained of the shepherd's house was a few charred rafters.

On the spot where the shepherd's cottage was burned now stands a noble lighthouse. It was put up a few months after the fire, and one of the three lighthouse-keepers is the shepherd. The second is a man who is fond of telling tales of the sea, and how he was once mate of a ship called the Vulcan. The third keeper of the lighthouse is a quadruped called Tricky. The affection between him and the ex-shepherd is peculiar. Other people think there is some history connected with it, but the shepherd never says much. When asked if it is really true that the monkey cannot be killed, he always replies, 'Yes; but that is not why it is alive.' Only on one occasion was the shepherd known to add anything to that remark. It was one night when Tricky had held back the baby--it had just learned to creep--from tumbling over the cliff. Then the shepherd smiled as he threw Tricky a whole bagful of nuts, and said, 'That monkey won't kill--nor let anybody else kill.'

picture

Tricky Held Back the Baby

GUM

CHAPTER I: I SUPPOSE you thought the monkey I told you about before was dead. But

I SUPPOSE you thought the monkey I told you about before was dead. But my opinion is that he is still alive. At least, I am pretty sure it is the same monkey that I have now to tell you about, though I cannot be quite sure. In the first place this new monkey was very like Tricky, and in the second place it was a monkey that would not kill. Now, I never heard before of any monkey that would not kill except one, and that was Tricky.

Another thing that makes me think it is the same monkey is that Tricky disappeared from the island where we saw him last. No one knows how it happened, but there was a coincidence about the time which I must relate. One morning a boat's crew landed on the island where Tricky lived with the lighthouse-keeper, to fill their water-kegs. The lighthouse keeper was kind to them, for they were foreigners, and showed them all over the lighthouse, and when they got to the very top they found the monkey dusting the lamps just like a human being. The sailors were much astonished, and one of them, who could speak a little English, wanted to buy Tricky for two pounds. When the lighthouse-keeper heard this he was very angry, and ordered them all down the ladder. This made the men angry in turn, for they did not know the reason why the lighthouse-keeper loved the monkey, and they told him they would not forget the way he had insulted them. Of course he had not insulted them at all, but foreign sailors are sometimes quick-tempered, and these men came from a country where slights are easily felt. The sailors spent the whole day on shore, as the wind was unfavourable for getting out to sea, but no one saw them enter the

lighthouse again. Next morning, all that the lighthouse-keeper saw of the sailors and their ship was the tips of their top-gallants dipping over the horizon edge. And all that he saw of the monkey that--would--not--kill, after searching night and day for a week was--nothing.

CHAPTER II: MR. DONALD MACALSH, gold-miner from Silver Creek, California, happening

MR. DONALD MACALSH, gold-miner from Silver Creek, California, happening to be in San Francisco, read one morning the following paragraph in the San Francisco Herald:--

CURIOUS TALE OF THE SEA.--Captain J. E. Dawkins, of the Mermaid, which has just arrived in this port from Liverpool, reports a singular occurrence. About ten days' out from home the look-out observed what he took to be a great sea-serpent, but which, on further inspection, turned out to be a quantity of wreckage. On approaching the spot the figure of a boy was distinctly observed clinging to the broken portion of a mast, and obviously still alive. A small boat was instantly lowered, the ship's crew meantime making signals to the boy to inform him that he was being rescued. After a suspense of some half-hour the boat returned with the extraordinary intelligence that the figure seen was not that of a boy, but of a monkey. Search among the wreckage for human remains proved unavailing, and it is feared that a serious catastrophe has occurred. The only clue to the nationality of the vessel, which, it is only too plain, has met with a disastrous fate, are the letters "vorni" on a portion of what had evidently formed the bow of one of the life-boats. Possibly these letters are part of "Livorni," the Italian word for Leghorn, and the list of recent sailings from that port is now being scrutinised with some anxiety.'

picture

The Monkey's Rescue

Now what interested Donald--'Big Donald' he was always called--in this story was not the monkey, but the arrival of the Mermaid. For the

captain was a friend of his, and was bringing him some tools from home in this very ship. Though Big Donald' was now a gold-miner, he came out from Scotland when quite a lad. His father was a small farmer in Skye, and, dying early, the family emigrated to America. As it was to get these tools that Donald came in to San Francisco, he soon found his way to the harbour, and, finding out the Mermaid, walked on board. No one was visible on deck, so Donald sat down on a coil of rope to wait. He had not been there three minutes when a matted head and two very brilliant eyes suddenly shot up the companion, and a full-grown monkey sprang in front of him and stared into his face. Donald, much startled by this apparition, called out in a loud voice for the creature to go away; but the moment the words were spoken the monkey sprang on his back and clasped its long hairy arms about his neck. The miner shook it off in terror and tried to run ashore, but the monkey followed, frisking and gambolling round him, and chasing him all over the quay. Donald soon discovered, however, that the monkey meant no harm, and a few days later an explanation of this sudden outburst of interest in a stranger--the Captain told Donald that the monkey had never been known to behave like this before--broke in upon the miner's mind. He remembered that when he suddenly spoke to the monkey he had called to it in Gaelic. Under the impulse of a sudden fear, I suppose, the language of his boyhood had started to his lips, and the words came out unconsciously *Imich air falbh,* which means *Go away.* What made Donald remember the circumstance was this, that whenever afterwards he used the Highland tongue the monkey manifested peculiar signs of joy. The only way the miner could account for this singular fact was to suppose that somehow or other this monkey had once belonged to some one who used the Gaelic language--a suggestion, however, which people generally laughed at. The miner always maintained, nevertheless, that the monkey

really knew Gaelic, and he seldom spoke to it in any other language. Of course, people said this was simply to show off that he knew two languages.

I do not know whether the miner bought the monkey, or whether the Captain give it to him, or whether it ran away, but it is certain that from this hour it belonged to Donald. When he left the ship with his tools, the monkey followed, trotting after him like a dog all the way till he reached his lodgings. The miner then went into the house and shut the door, leaving the monkey outside. In ten minutes it seemed as if all the boys in San Francisco had gathered in that street. They formed a crowd round the door which almost stopped the traffic; and when the policeman shortly appeared, he was rather disgusted to find that it was only a monkey performing gymnastic exercises on a door-knocker.

picture

A Monkey Performing Gymnastic Exercises

Roughly ringing the bell, he ordered Donald to take in his monkey. Donald replied meekly that he was not responsible for the monkey, but the officer said he would be summoned for obstructing the thoroughfare and causing a breach of the peace' if he did not take in his guest at once. So Donald had to submit, for he saw there would be no rest in San Francisco till this wayward creature had its will and was safe inside. That night Donald had a serious talk with the monkey as it sat upright in its chair at supper. He told it that if it would behave itself he would take it up to the Rocky Mountains to the gold diggings. The monkey seemed to understand, for it put down a lump of cheese it was about to eat, skipped off its chair, and nestled against Big Donald's side. Only one other thing happened that night: Donald gave the monkey its name. He called it Gum'--because it stuck to him.



CHAPTER III: NEXT morning Donald and Gum started from San Francisco by an early

NEXT morning Donald and Gum started from San Francisco by an early train on their way to Silver Creek. The appearance of the monkey in the railway carriage created much amusement among the passengers, and Donald had to stand a running fire of questions as to whether it belonged to his great-grandfather or to a barrel-organ. The fun was stopped in a little while by the entrance of the conductor, who demanded Gum's ticket. Gum not having a ticket, an angry discussion arose on the subject of fare; but Donald said he would only pay when the conductor showed him the correct price for a monkey printed in black and white in the official books. There being no special mention in these volumes of monkeys on tour, Donald declined to pay a cent, and the conductor departed, vowing he would put Gum out of the train at the next station. When the next station came, however, Donald and the monkey were entrenched in a corner, the latter tightly grasped in the miner's great arms, and the conductor, after a glance at the situation, decided to wait for a more convenient season. In America the conductor, instead of entering the carriages only when the train stops, moves about all the time from one carriage to another, so that as the station for Silver Creek was still eleven hours' distant, he had little doubt his chance would come.

And come it did. It was a piping hot day, even for California, and late in the afternoon Donald fell asleep. His arms were still clasped round the monkey, and the conductor would never have succeeded in his object but for an accident. It happened that about that time the train was approaching an important junction, and part of every ticket had to be

given up at that point. In America a railway ticket is sometimes half a yard in length, and pieces have to be torn off from point to point. To avoid the disturbance caused by this operation, miners, cowboys, and others are in the habit of wearing their tickets slipped into the band of their great wide-awake hats, and Donald was in this inviting position when the conductor came round. He snatched it out of the hat to tear off the necessary piece, when the monkey, thinking a theft was meant, sprang at the man and buried his teeth in his wrist. Roaring with pain, the conductor seized his assailant by the throat, and, before Donald could come to the rescue, tossed him out of the window. The train was dashing round a curve at thirty miles an hour, and when Donald stretched out his neck to find out whether Gum was killed, it was with small hope of ever seeing him more. For two minutes the miner gazed at the receding distance, then, without uttering a word, turned round and felled the conductor to the floor.

picture

Buried His Teeth in the Conductor's Wrist

CHAPTER V: AFTER a long journey over the mountains Donald reached his log cabin on

WHEN the train rolled into the junction, about an hour after, Donald went into the refreshment-room to quiet his nerves with a cup of cocoa. He was about to take his seat again in the carriage when he observed a crowd on the platform opposite the brake-van at the rear end of the train. Making his way to the spot and looking over the heads of the crowd, what was his amazement to see Gum seated on the coupling apparatus, and looking about him with perfect serenity. One hand held an iron rod, and with the other he scratched his head; and, but for a great splash of brown earth on one side, the monkey seemed wholly untouched by his adventure. A single word in Gaelic from Donald made the monkey spring from its perch, and over the heads of the people into his arms, and in a few minutes the strange friends were pursuing their journey again as if nothing had happened. A new conductor was now on the train, and Donald made friends with him by reciting the whole adventure, so that they were allowed to end the day in peace. About midnight the two got out at a roadside station, where they spent the night, and in the grey of the morning set out by coach for Silver Creek. From Silver Creek Donald's cabin was still thirty miles' walk over the mountains, and after another day's hard toiling they reached the spot.

AFTER a long journey over the mountains Donald reached his log cabin on the Silver Creek. The monkey, however, did not find quite so immediate a welcome as himself from Donald's wife. The only pet her children had ever seen before was a baby puma, which the miner had picked out of the

stream one day in a half-drowned state. Donald had mistaken it for a kitten of some new brand, and it was not until some weeks later, when it sprang upon his little girl and buried his claws in her neck, that he realised what sort of plaything--the puma is the lion of the Rocky Mountains--he had introduced into his family. So Donald's wife was suspicious of pets, and when she saw the monkey she was sure it was another lion, and would not allow it to enter the door. But Gum had other ways of entering houses than by doors, and finally he was received as a lawful member of the family, for the simple reason that he could not be kept out. The new guest gave little trouble. Most of the day the monkey spent with Donald at the mine. He went off with him when he went to work in the morning, and gambolled round him till he came home for supper. And very soon an incident happened which more than reconciled Donald's wife to her strange visitor. Donald's gold-mine was a poor one. He had to work very hard to get enough of the precious dust to keep his family in food, but his spirits were kept up by the constant hope that he would strike a richer bed and make his fortune. The way he got the gold was to take the sand and gravel from the banks of the river and wash it about in a pan till all the lighter particles passed off with the water, leaving the little spangles of gold at the bottom. Sometimes a week would pass without the miner getting more than a thimbleful, but occasionally he would find a few lumps as big as a pea. One day, however just as Donald was getting discouraged, a piece of great good-luck befell him. He had been particularly depressed that day, for no gold at all had rewarded his search for a week, and the family were already in debt for flour and clothes. But, thanks to the monkey, he was able to go home to his wife with the largest gold nugget that had been seen in that valley for many years. Gum had been skirmishing about as usual on the gravel-heaps,

when some loose pebbles were dislodged by his paws, and, as they rolled down, he must have been attracted by the yellow glitter in one large lump, for the next moment he had picked up the nugget and laid it, with a wag of his tail, at Donald's feet. The miner almost wept for gladness, and, taking Gum up in his arms as if he were a child, hurried home to proclaim his fortune. That night the family had a great feast, and Gum's health was drunk in the strongest tea the mining camp could furnish. Perhaps if they had known what was shortly to happen they would not have slept quite so soundly.

picture

The Nugget of Gold

CHAPTER VI: Two nights after the wheel of fortune gave an unlooked-for turn.

Two nights after the wheel of fortune gave an unlooked-for turn.

Donald's wife was so proud of the nugget that she could not keep the news to herself, and, next morning, although Donald had carefully told her to keep it quiet, confided his good-luck to another miner's wife, who lived a few hundred yards off. This worthy woman told another, and in twenty-four hours the fame of Donald's nugget was spread from end to end of the valley. This would not have mattered in most places, but mining districts are peopled by criminals and adventurers of all kinds, and among these were some lawless characters whose chief business was to get gold in some other way than by working for it. Two of these men, brothers, who lived with their families at the lower end of the valley, determined that they should possess themselves of Donald's nugget. Covering their faces with black masks, and armed with revolvers, they set off about midnight for the miner's cabin. The family were fast asleep, and the robbers noiselessly pushed up the window and entered the room where Donald slept. Pointing a loaded revolver at his head, one of the men roughly awoke him, and told him if he moved or cried out he would blow out his brains and murder every one in the house. Donald was too familiar with stories of camp crime to resist an attack so sudden, and, though a loaded revolver was under his own pillow, he saw his disadvantage, and, for the sake of his wife and children, controlled himself with a great effort.

picture

Pointing a Loaded Revolver at His Head

I want that little bit of metal of yours,' said the robber. Donald lay

perfectly quiet. Do you hear?' exclaimed the man, I want that gold.'

Then you won't get it,' said Donald quietly.

I believe he has sent it to the bank,' whispered the other man. Kill him if he has.'

Look here!' thundered the first, do you mean to say that nugget is gone?'

Donald made no reply. If he said it was gone, the robbers would simply have sneaked home, for Donald was known in these parts as a man who never told a lie. Once more the robber asked him, but Donald remained silent. This was enough. If it had really been gone Donald would certainly have said so. So, while the first man stood with a revolver at his ear, the second proceeded to search the house. Drawers, boxes, and cupboards were opened and ransacked in quick succession; every corner of the two rooms was examined; the very dishes on the shelf were turned upside down, and the sugar-basin smashed to pieces with a blow, in case it should have been hidden there.

Let me try,' said the man with the revolver; you watch the old bear, and see if I can't find it.'

Once more the house was ransacked from top to bottom, and the robber was about to abandon the search, when a sudden thought occurred to him.

On the mantel-piece ticked a wooden American clock, about two feet high. The man opened the door in the case, and fumbled about with his finger. Next moment he had drawn out the nugget. He bent over the fire to get a better look at it, and then proceeded to weigh it in the palm of his hand, to see how much it was worth. The other robber, unable to restrain his curiosity, moved likewise toward the fire, when the first checked him with an angry cry, and sent him back to his victim's side to continue his guard. Another moment, and Donald would have had his revolver out, and the nugget would have been saved. But there was

another spectator of this scene on whom the thieves had scarcely reckoned. In his usual berth, crouched at the side of the fireplace, sat Gum. The robber was weighing the gold in his hand, turning it round and round, and gloating over it, when the glitter from the precious metal attracted the monkey's eye. It seemed to feel some sense of property in this gold, for, quick as lightning, one hairy paw brushed the robber's hand, and the next moment the nugget was gone. With a great oath the robber turned on Gum, and dealt it a blow on the head which knocked it senseless to the other side of the room. But before that blow fell two things happened. With one hand held out to protect itself against this sudden onslaught, the monkey made a grab at its assailant's face and tore off the black mask, so that Donald instantly recognised the man, in the glow of the firelight; with the other hand, which held the gold, the monkey swiftly transferred the nugget to its mouth.

The robber's eye followed this last movement, however, and he picked up Gum roughly, and proceeded to wrench open its jaws. He felt all round his mouth, but the nugget was not there. He held the senseless body up by the tail and shook it, but no gold appeared. He took his head between his knees, and sounded all over its throat, but the nugget was not to be found. As a matter of fact it was not there. The blow which had fallen upon the monkey's head had knocked it down its throat. Gum had swallowed the nugget!

What was to be done now? If the robber had had a knife in his pocket, Gum would have been a dead monkey in two seconds. But while he was unsuccessfully feeling for his knife, Gum suddenly came to, and with one violent wriggle shook itself free, and sprang on the highest shelf. The robber gave chase Then followed the most comical hunt you ever saw. The robber's face being now exposed (he had no idea that Donald had

already recognised him), he was afraid to turn round, and he had to keep up the hunt without once facing in the direction where Donald lay, with the result that he was fairly baffled, and, after a quarter of an hour's hard work, gave up the chase. All that remained now was to blind Donald. Roughly approaching the bed, the robber drew the blankets over Donald's face, and told him he would shoot him if he dared to stir. As an extra precaution, the miner's revolver was taken out of reach, and then, both men started, with a piece of rope, to secure the monkey. Clever as Gum was, he was scarcely a match for two men, who, as noted horse-thieves, were experts with the lasso, and in a short time the monkey was ignominiously driven from his perch on a rafter, tied up in Donald's pillow-case, and swung over the shoulder of one of the men. Then the robbers wished Donald a grim good-night, and marched off with their purse.' As they were going out of the door Donald called after them, Good-night, ye blackguards, and mark my words, if ye lay a hand on that monkey ye'll regret it as long as ye live!

This made the men a little frightened; for although they did not like to confess it to one another, there was something about Gum that was not canny.' Anyhow, whether it was fear of the monkey, or of their own consciences, instead of killing Gum as soon as they left the house they carried it all the way home with them, discussing which of them was to kill it, and how it was to be done.

CHAPTER VII: WHEN the thieves reached home, after a hasty breakfast, they continued

WHEN the thieves reached home, after a hasty breakfast, they continued the discussion as to how the purse was to be opened and the nugget secured. Unfortunately for them the monkey had struggled out of the pillow-case, as soon as it reached the house, and the robbers' children at once seized upon it, and claimed it as their pet. When they were told it would have to be killed, the youngest child, a little girl so lovely that even a bad father could not help loving her, burst into tears, and, putting her arms round the robber's neck, prayed and entreated him to spare its life, and let her play with it. Now, wicked as this man was, this child had a mysterious influence over him; and though he was resolved to kill Gum, and that immediately, he determined that she should not see it done, nor even know that he had done it. Besides this, it would never do to let the people in the valley know that they had killed the monkey, for Donald would surely go in search of it; so after consulting together for some time, the robbers decided on a plan for killing Gum without anybody being any the wiser. They knew that if they shot it, or drowned it, or slew it with a knife, the children would be angry, and the story would certainly be told to their playmates and passed on in time to Donald's family. So a very diabolical scheme was hatched. The only way they could think of for killing Gum without any one seeing, or without either of them being actually present at the death, was to blow it up with gunpowder. This method had another advantage, which neither of the men liked to confess weighed with them, but in reality it was this more than anything else that made them think of the gunpowder. At the bottom of their hearts

these men were cowards, and after the strange threat Donald had uttered as they were leaving his house, they were secretly afraid to lay hand upon Gum. A monkey was a very mysterious creature. They had never had anything to do with one before. Gum's face had a curious human look, and to murder it in cold blood was almost like murdering a man. So the gunpowder idea seemed the very solution that was needed, and they set about their preparations at once. While one of the men remained at the kitchen fire with the family to allay suspicion, the other, after pocketing a little can of miners' blasting-powder, two feet of fuse, and a piece of string, strolled out to the wood behind the cabin on the pretence of giving the monkey a walk. As soon as a low thicket screened the pair from view, the robber tied the monkey to the trunk of a tree. Then he lashed the can of gunpowder tightly to the monkey's tail, passed one end of the fuse into it through a small hole, struck a match, and lighted the other end. As soon as he saw the fuse was fairly lit, and the red fire slowly creeping upwards, he ran back as fast as he could to the house.

picture

The Can of Gunpowder Tied to His Tail

Meantime the other man had got a concertina from the shelf, and was playing with all his might to drown the sound of the explosion. When the executioner arrived, out of breath though he was, he joined noisily in the dance which the children had set up the moment the concertina began to play, and presently such a stamping and shouting was going on in the cottage that the sound of an earthquake would have been quenched. Suddenly an awful interruption occurred. Through the open door the monkey bounded in, and, taking up its place in the midst of the circle, joined in the dance. From its neck dangled a piece of string, burnt at the point; but what made the children shriek with

laughter was a small tin can tied to its tail, which clattered about with every turn of the body, and, strange to say, had a sort of little tail of its own which appeared to be on fire, for little puffs of smoke were coming from it, and a red colour glowed at the tip. The moment the robbers caught sight of this apparition there was a yell of fear which paralysed the children into rigid statues. The men's faces were livid with terror, and some seconds passed before either had recovered his senses sufficiently to act. Then one man, with a great sweep of his arms, caught up all the children into one tumble bunch, and flung them screaming with pain and surprise under the bed of the adjoining room. The other, who was directly responsible for the mischief, seeing that the only chance to save his house and himself was to get Gum outside, clutched the smoking monkey in his arms and rushed to the door. Quick as the movement was, it was not quick enough. Those inside heard a deafening report; the house was filled with smoke; the doorway became a heap of fallen timber, and the blackened body of a man lay groaning among the charred ruins. One of the robbers, their wives, and all the children were safe. But when the smoke cleared away, and the body by the door was examined, life was all but extinct. For weeks the robber hung between life and death. It forms no part of this story to tell what pains he suffered, or what agonies of mind he passed through, or how, when months after he was able to crawl from his bed and go out into the air it was to see nevermore the sunlight or the flowers with his sightless eyes. Certainly Donald's words had come true. When the miner heard that evening what had happened, although he had already sent off word to the nearest police-station with the names of the guilty men, he took no further action in the matter. God's punishment was quicker than man's.

CHAPTER VIII: LATE that afternoon the monkey turned up at his old home. Donald found

LATE that afternoon the monkey turned up at his old home. Donald found him lying at the door, an almost unrecognisable object. Thanks to the way the robber had carried him, one half of his body was untouched, but the other half was a pitiable spectacle, and the long curly tail, Gum's great ornament and plaything, was blown off by the root. The poor creature had swooned, but that he had lain there an hour or two in great pain was plain from the way the gravel was tossed about in all directions round him. Donald was greatly touched, and lifting him up in his arms as tenderly as if he were a child, placed him in his own bed and dressed his burns. After a long sleep it awoke, and Donald, who had sat silently by his side, bent over to allow it to lick his face. The moment it opened its mouth the miner sprang from his chair as if he had been shot. For there, between his teeth, the monkey held the nugget!

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Five years have passed. Donald is the richest man in Silver Creek County, and his great mines are worked by hundreds of men. He lives in a great house, sumptuously furnished and full of precious things, which he delights to show to the many visitors who flock to see his mine. But of all these precious things, by far the most precious is Gum, the monkey without a tail, the finder of his first nugget, and the founder of his fortunes,' as he says to everybody. Then he tells how Gum found the nugget, and how it was stolen and once more brought back; and how when Gum got better, the two went back to the spot where the big lump was found, and searched and searched, and found lump after lump and

nugget after nugget, until, in a few months, more gold was hidden below Donald's bed than had come from all the mines put together since they first were opened. Then the good man calls out a word in Gaelic, and the monkey without a tail jumps into his arms to be caressed, and Donald asks his guests to read the inscription on the golden collar round its neck:--

TO

FAITHFUL GUM

FROM

HIS GRATEFUL MASTER.

Made out of the first nugget--August 2nd, 1888.

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