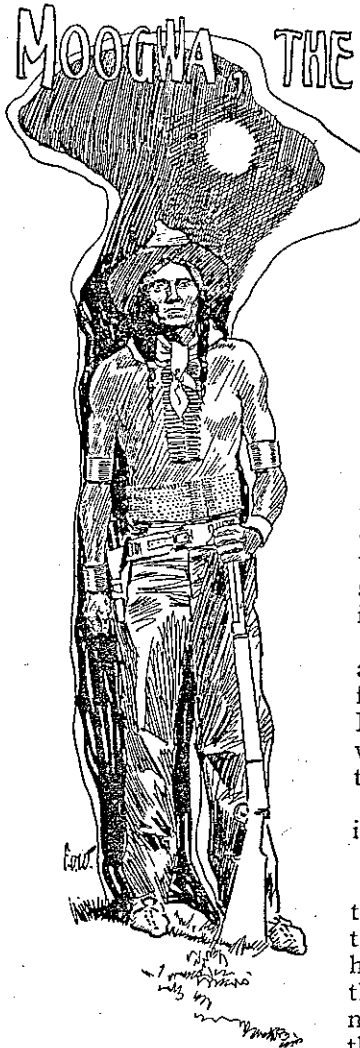


Notice: This material may be protected by copyright law. (Title 17 U.S. Code)

# MOOGWA, THE THREE THIEVES AND THE MAN-SQUAW.

BY J. OLIVIER CURWOOD.



Moogwa had come down that day from Gay-She-Gwon-Ay-Yosh's tepees on the Cimarron, with the news that the "man-squaw" was to be married at sunrise, according to the custom of her tribe.

"Wich ain't no custom at all," growled Sarah Orne. "It's a dam' shame!"

The three thieves agreed.

Moogwa remembered the legend that had come down with Geronimo. Because he was one of those outlaw Apaches the three thieves fostered him, and with their associations had sprung up a rough but splendid brotherhood. The love of proscribed men is not like that of others.

Moogwa reared himself until his six feet of flesh and blood stood out like a tattered sphinx in the face of the big moon. It was a majestic pose with Moogwa when he thought of Geronimo and his words that had grown to be history in the mountains.

"The sun rises and shines for a time, and then it goes down, sinking out of sight, and is lost."

The three thieves stared like beasts.

"When I was a boy my old father told me that the Indians were as many as the leaves on the trees, and that 'way off in the North they had many horses and furs. I never saw them, but I hear that there and for hundreds of miles beyond the white men are as many as the blades of grass. I thought that the Great Spirit would be with us, and that after we had killed the white men the buffalo, deer,

and antelope would come back. It is better for me over there—in the mountains!"

Moogwa turned and stalked away like a specter, his blanket neither fluttering to the right nor to the left as his silhouette grew smaller and smaller against the moon.

"It's a dam' shame!" thundered Sarah.

For a while the three leaned back and smoked. Up across the sage-bush the moon was coming, throbbing and palpitating red, with the whole plain turning crimson and yellow by turns under it. Back of them, where the shadows still played in the sage, they could hear the twisting of tethers and the cropping of horses. The bit of fire had smothered and died away.

"It's a dam' shame, boys!" Sarah doubled up his lank legs viciously and swore at the moon. "It's wuss'n hoss-stealin', by a long shot. We're double-barrel' rascals 'n' Moogwa's a angel beside us. He must 'ave a heart 'n' a power o' feelin' or 'e wouldn't mind that!"

"What's a... the thieves.

"A Injun... times not. S... people wi' the... son of 'em, '... Ducky, dam'... over it. He's... doing, 'n' the... She's as pritt... her fr a year... did with ole... a white gal, t...

"Tut, tut, '... the thieves, '... direction of... He's a power...

"I tell you... shouted Sar... his feet with... 'n' murder '... necks! Thar... fr Ducky we...

"Most tin... thieves, thun... ened pipe in... it wasn't fr... take what... Bober—"

Sarah sent... little heap... The others... selves besid... black and su...

"Never r... Moogwa's to... the desert... hosses 'n' B... Bober's thin... fr Ducky, d... She'll be the... slowly by th...

"Fr Gawe... Agent, Sary... us!"

"Naw, bu... Ducky. Ho... wa!"

Sarah's ve... faded across... night for ri... work, with... and bigger... Creek count... ning away... it. But Sa...

"What's a man-squaw?" asked one of the thieves.

"A Injun widdy sometimes—sometimes not. She ain't. She lost all her people wi' the small-pox, every mother's son of 'em, 'n' tha's it, I guess. It's Ducky, dam' 'im, 'n' Moogwa's dying over it. He's forcin' her, tha's what he's doing, 'n' the Gover-ment's behind 'im. She's as pritty as a picter 'n' he wants her f'r a year or so. Ain't that what he did with ole man Tuttle's Betty, 'n' she a white gal, too, da—"

"Tut, tut, Sarah," admonished one of the thieves, peering cautiously in the direction of the contiguous sage-bush. He's a power, 'n' no tellin' about ears!"

"I tell you it's wuss'n hoss-stealin'!" shouted Sarah, swinging himself to his feet with a loud oath. "It's steal 'n' murder 'n' then divvy to save our necks! Thanks f'r that, eh? If it wasn't f'r Ducky we wouldn't kill—sometimes."

"Most times," growled one of the thieves, thumping the bowl of his blackened pipe in the palm of his hand. "If it wasn't f'r Ducky we'd live white 'n' take what comes easy. Look at Bober—"

Sarah sent his foot with a crash in the little heap of dead, half-burned sage. The others rose and stretched themselves beside him, their rough faces black and sullen in the moonlight.

"Never mind Bober! You take Moogwa's trail and bring Moogwa to the desert off there. Take Bober's hosses, 'n' Bober's guns an' the rest of Bober's things—understand? I'll stand f'r Ducky, dam' 'im, 'n' the man-squaw. She'll be there"—he measured his time slowly by the moon—"at sunrise."

"F'r Gawd, ye ain't goin' to pinch th' Agent, Sary? Ye ain't goin' to string us!"

"Naw, but ten t' one the devil gets Ducky. Ho, Moo-oo-g-wa! Moo-oo-g-wa!"

Sarah's voice died away as his figure faded across the sage. It was a pleasant night for riding after a hard, hot day's work, with the moon coming up bigger and bigger every minute across the Creek country, and the whole plain running away in a cool, yellow light under it. But Sarah Orne's eyes shot in a



"THE OTHERS ROSE AND STRETCHED THEMSELVES"

most unsentimental stare over the rustling sea of bush and strained for a glimpse of the Cimarron where the moonlight was lost in distance and darkness. His horse was reeking when they paused for a breathing-spell where the river winds like a serpent across the boundary into the sweeping sage-plains of the Outlet, and up a little higher he could see that the Agency was sleeping or deserted. In that time he mopped his face and thought more or less of his comrades a dozen miles back. The murder in his heart was stirred by a memory of the way they had done for Bober and the woman he called his wife, and he clattered savagely up across the dust-beaten quarters to the Agent's door with a curse at every breath. There were only three men in the reservation who dared to ride into the Government's life like that, and at such hours, and two of those were back in the sage-bush and the other was Sarah Orne.

"Ho, Ducky!"

It was the same hard, vindictive shout that had echoed over the plain on Moogwa's trail, and when the Agent awakened to a sense of his duty and a shrewd guess as to his visitor he shambled good-naturedly to the window, and took a look at Sarah Orne sitting as rigid and as white as a ghost out in the moonlight.

"We've done f'r Bober, Ducky!"

When the Agent met him at the door he held a smoking, stinking oil lamp close up to Sarah's blackened face and chuckled gleefully at the sullen lines settling gloomily across it.

"We've done f'r Bober," repeated the thief, bringing his jaws together with a snap.

"Bober! Who the devil said Bober?" The Agent's slippers beat a tattoo across to his stool behind the Government's ledger and paused there with a wicked clatter.

"Who told you Bober?" he asked aggressively.

"No, you ain't to blame, Ducky." Sarah Orne's voice was as quiet as a child's. "I thought, we thought, I'd better come over and tell you that. You see you didn't know anything about Bober so we didn't think it was the

square deal to divvy up. I jes' come up, too, as a sort o' delegation to let you know Moogwa's got a fust claim on the man-squaw 'n' we're back there in the Cimarron sage to put flowers on Betty's grave 'n' see fair play. They're wanting each other bad, Ducky, 'n' you ain't th' heart to stop 'em—you 'n' the Government. Savvy?"

The Agent smiled innocently up into the grizzled, grinning face and pointed with the tooth-pocked stub of a pen out through the open door into the night. "Didn't you see 'em, Sary? I should have sent word to you in the morning. The cusses over the Divide have sent a dozen troopers, police, no better, to dig graves f'r the chimpanzees who

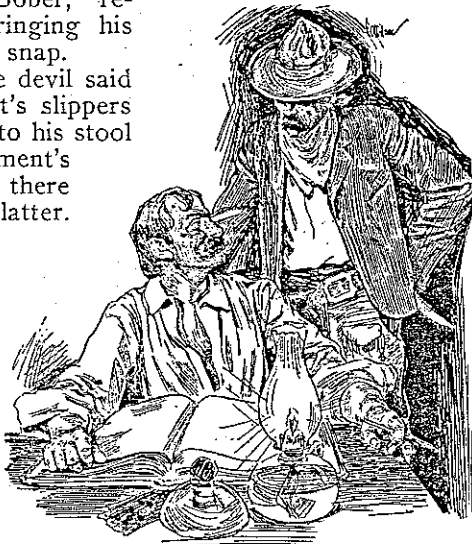
rubbed it into the Goverment's dago f'r a lame mare 'n' a sick calf. He! He! He! Yes, I'm going to have the man-squaw, Sary, 'n' as f'r Bober—"

The thief interrupted him with a cheerful, wholesome laugh. The light fluttered under it, sickened, and went out. Something came up under the Agent's ribs with a dull, splitting thud, and the Agent's face turned with open mouth to the bit of moonlit sky. But a great, hot, clammy palm slipped over it, and a moment later the Agent's head lay on the table, sobbing and coughing like an animal that has had its throat cut.

"You've been a good rascal in your time, Ducky," whispered Sarah.

Sarah Orne had never felt so free of sin since he had first come up over the Divide behind the big Conestoga wagons and Wyandots, many years ago. He was unaccountably stirred with the same hot, feverish buoyancy that had led him barefoot and mad with boyish delight in more than one fruitless pursuit over these same prairies when

he had a strong-souled father to fight for him against besetting sins of evil men, and the best mother in the world to teach him that they had been driven to the West by poverty and that in other worlds men were better and stronger in their convictions of a God. He suspected that something bad had happened to the slippered man back in the dead gloom of the room, and with the thought came a ray of hope and gladness to his crime calloused heart. Unconsciously he loosened the tough thongs that laced his boots, and stood out free and glad in the moonlight, his naked chest bared to the faint breeze that came up over the tents of the police from beyond the Divide and his bare



"THE AGENT SMILED INNOCENTLY UP INTO THE GRIZZLED, GRINNING FACE"

feet digging the sand. I of a wolf he had coughed Ducky had lying three d edge of the and went t Sarah had n this, but he back and list

"Oh, Ducl

His bare rough board of the Age bronze chest his heart. I it lay beside His foot slip thing warm rible fascina mess out wi wolf could n lived! He man's shoulc

"Good-by, pretty rascal

When he c again he gro into the san with neither breath that ecstasy of j once or twic the mare's again, darke higher, and urely canter Cimarron.



"SARAH

feet digging and groveling gleefully in the sand. He caught himself thinking of a wolf he had shot when a boy. It had coughed and died, as he knew Ducky had coughed and died, but after lying three days and three nights on the edge of the desert it came to life again and went back to the prairie pack. Sarah had never heard of a man doing this, but he was suspicious, and went back and listened.

"Oh, Ducky!"

His bare feet made no noise on the rough boards, but a wholesome horror of the Agent's spirit made Sarah's bronze chest throb with the beating of his heart. He touched the head where it lay beside the ledger, and listened. His foot slipped in the edge of something warm and nasty, and with a horrible fascination he traced the sticky mess out with the end of his toe. The wolf could not have lost that blood and lived! He rested his chin on the dead man's shoulder and whispered in his ear.

"Good-by, Ducky. You've been a pretty rascal in your day, dam' you!"

When he came out into the moonlight again he ground the blood from his foot into the sand, and leapt into his saddle with neither boots nor hat, but with breath that came and went in an ecstasy of joy that a man knows only once or twice in a lifetime. He turned the mare's head into the yellow sage again, darkening now as the moon rose higher, and threaded his way in a leisurely canter up the narrow trail of the Cimarron. Suddenly, rounding out full



"HIS BARE FEET MADE NO NOISE"

into the heart of the whole glowing plain, with the black Agency sentineled like an evil omen against the backward sky, Sarah Orne's great voice burst forth in hoarse snatches of a childish song he had remembered almost from infancy, and the innocent lullaby of a mother to her babe floated back to the police from over the Divide in a fierce, vindictive shout, half song and half the wild rejoicing of a freed man's soul.

It reached the man-squaw, away down in the shimmering hollow where Gay-She-Gwon-Ay-Yosh and his people lay sleeping; floated afar, wafted this way and that on the uncertain night wind, until the whole plain, and every living thing on it as far as the yellow gloom could be discerned against the ebon blackness beyond, quieted and fell listening to the weird carnival of a strange spirit passing over it. When it had died away a coyote made a sickly attempt to pass the note on to his brethren, but in a new tongue it ended in a dis-



"SARAH DISMOUNTED AND CALLED SOFTLY THROUGH THE DOOR OF THE HUT"

graceful, snarling yelp. In the gloom of the place where the man-squaw lived, away back from the snarling and fighting of the dogs and the evil smell of the camp, Sarah dismounted and called softly through the door of the hut and beat upon it until the woman quieted her fears and joined him. He spoke to her for a few moments in Moogwa's tongue, told her how the agent had died, and then lifted her like a child into the saddle, her black hair tumbling in a glistening cloud over the horse's belly.

"Ride like hell," he said, and intoxicated by the wild beauty of the moonlight in her hair and eyes took her face between his hands and kissed it. "Tha's good luck f'r you 'n' Moogwa, 'n' tell 'im Sarah Orne'll never kill ag'in, dam' 'im if 'e will!"

Toward the peep of dawn Sarah stole a horse from the tethers of Gay-She-Gwon-Ay-Yosh and rode fast and furious back into the country of his boyhood.



### Rondeau in Ratio

Alas for me! I'm fancy free.  
I say "alas!" because, you see,  
The while some chaps their freedom prize,  
I know a pair of hazel eyes  
That always seem to smile at me.

I cannot make a fervent plea,  
Nor woo upon a bended knee.  
She laughs at me until she cries.  
Alas for me!

Another chap there is, and he  
Has fortune and a pedigree,  
And armed with these he vainly tries  
To win her love; but she replies:  
"I'll wait awhile." Now, can she be  
A lass for me?

S. SCOTT STINSON.

Authc

At Shady I before the war. Bu back from the war would seem to hav people meet Mr. A her home Mrs. Bri Tomlin, her sweet deserter from the C the scene, also a M tion begins, and A politics. Bethune family influence ov urges the negroes sold into slavery. in the closet of the retainer, have with after some inflam servant of the best Billy Sanders hears son Paul, whom his told by Silas that a fright and to flight his head under his window of the neg of the idea of soci organized "Ku-Kl disturbers, proves the safety of their v pretty wife; the dy and arrested, to be

CH

MR. :

"I tell you ders: "the ric to Gabriel. I to take it, bu much as he matter, so w overcrapped. gone over th ef you can c down thar m could I git to briel? I recl

The remar and was addi who made a think the sch