

TROLLEY FOLLY

man will accompany us for an hour or so. Good night, and pleasant dreams! Try and control your humorous propensities. Charmed to have met you, I'm sure—and I hope to meet you Hereafter (with a capital H)—boys—not before! Good night!"

And they went out the door with their hostages.

VIII

BLESSED BE THE PEACEMAKERS

THE QUEST FOR QUIET ON THE PART OF THE HUMAN CONCERTINA

"THE peaceful season has come around again," said Mr. Scraggs. "It does that every year. It is a good thing to have a certain date to be peaceful on; you prepare for it, put all troublesome things away, and wind up, as I usually do, with four friends trying to hold me down because I feel so light in the head.

"Peace is one of the finest things on earth, but the makin' of it will never be confined to one of these here monopolies. Listen! What better could a man do than go into a home being tore wide open by the dissensions and discussions of one husband and one wife,

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using such domestic articles as flat-irons, coal-scuttles, brooms and the like of that, upon each other, and extract from the dust one large, smooth, round, white hunk of peace? It is nice to think of.

"I remember Long John. He was a feller built on the concertina plan. When he sat down in a chair he didn't look like a man more'n seven feet high, but when he got up, and up, and more up, he was that kind of build that made little Bill holler, the first time he saw the ack, 'How much more of you is there down cellar?' And Bill said to me on the quiet: 'Old Gabe will have to play an oncore if he expects John to get up before the resurrection is all over.'

"But John had a disposition that couldn't be beat. He was for peace all the time. Bits of men that wouldn't more'n come up to his waist used to talk to him as rough as they liked

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and John wouldn't give them one word back. He simply hit them a slam, and then there was peace, you bet your life.

"But it was done out of pure good-natur. 'They got no business to talk like that to nobody,' says John, 'and I can correc' them without it looking anything like a fight. Ain't you noticed that that stops 'em from being sassy?' It sure did, but I lived in fear and tremblin' some feller would be an inch nearer than John cal'lated and would remain quiet for several million years. That would have broke his heart.

"Well, John put in a solid eight months without ever pinting a foot toward town. Then he collected and went off for a little quiet trip on his own hook. He said that nobody could ask for a better people than we were, yet we was kind of rough in our ways, and he wanted to see domestic felicity, and the soothing infloence of Woman. That there

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was a strain in his ideas that made him need kind and gentle treatment oncet in so often.

"It ain't, perhaps, necessary for me to say that I have been exposed to the infloence of seventy or eighty Mrs. Scraggs for enough number of years to heave a sigh on what was comin' to John; but I never guessed how complete his whole idea of the way this universe runs would be ruined.

"Off goes Johnny Boy, dressed up in his best black suit, that looked as if it had been made for a statue of a life-sized giant. The sleeves hung down to the middle of his fingers, the pants rolled up six inches at the bottom, and, as he was a ga'nt critter, there was enough stuff in them clothes to make it look as if he could turn right around inside them without attracting attention.

"And he come back.

"This is what happened. He come into the bull-pen slower than usual. He sat down on

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the bunk, with his face completely surrounded by hands, and he never opened his yorp till long after we'd et our supper. Then he took me by the arm, and says, 'Scraggsy, you been my friend for a long time. Come out till I tell you something.'

"I went out and he smoked his cigareet for another half-hour until I had to say: 'If you have got anything real to tell me, John, why don't you do it to-night, while we're sitting out here so comfortable in the frost?'

"Says he: 'I got up there all right. It was a nice town. There was swimming. There was peace. There was sidewalks, and fellers wearing strange hats. Everything was there, and I think,' he says, 'I was more scared of the things I didn't know whether they could happen or not than I was of the things I knew could happen.'

"'My soul had all the fuz roped off of it. I was positive I would never more take two

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wraps around a cayuse with them legs of mine, and chase a skitty steer some more. "No," says I, "cow-punching is a lost art." A feller gets all broke up and tackled with rheumatism before he's—he's—well, I ain't sixty yet, by a durn sight. Anyhow, a feller gets broke up any time, and I think of those lovely homes and nice beds, and it seemed great.

"The gent behind the counter of the hotel shoved a book and a pen at me. I looked at 'em, wonderin' if it was an autograft album. The little gals uster have 'em when I was young, and you put your John Hancock down and then something about the rose is red and the violets blue—I forget the rest.

"I felt queer. It didn't seem like a man of my size oughter be writing sich sentiments in a large book with lots of people looking on.

"Howsumever, I done it, and the clerk says to me, "You come from the playful districts, just outlying the land of fun, don't you?" and

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he added that too much gayety weren't a good thing.

"He came to about ten words about it, when I took the flat of my hand and patted him on the back of his head. His nose bled all over the book, and everybody seemed to think there was a kick comin'.

"At last they showed me where I was wrong, and instead of fussing around that pesky hotel, I spent the night in a calaboose. It was one of the pleasantest little jails I ever inhabited—airy, kind of roomy, when I lay on the floor with my head in one corner and my feet in the other—but, toward morning, I got restless and horrible hungry. I hadn't et the night before, forgetting my supper in the fuss they made about that autograft album, so I shoved my bird-cage door off its hinges and started for grub.

"I come upon the jailer eating his midnight meal—pie, cake, eggs—everything. He

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looked at me and reached for his gun. I took hold of him and reached for his lunch. I et that lunch and gave him one iron dollar, handed him the door, and said, "You keep this, so you don't work any racket on me stealing your property; or, if you like, I will walk around town with it and you can swear your affidavit that I am still behind the jail door—if you only stand in front of me and look."

"He was a nervous kind of critter that wasn't fit to take care of a bunch of sheep, let alone running a jail. Couldn't get anything out of him. He was excited, so I spread them bars on the door apart, stuck his head in, let them snap back on his neck and sung him, *Come, Birdie, Come and Live With Me!*

"He certainly was a comic-looking jailer, sitting back there with his head peeking through the door. The other fellers in there laughed to beat anything, and wanted me to

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cut 'em loose, but I couldn't do that—havin' come to the town for peace and quiet.

"Howsumever, I recovered the goods they took from me, and fed the boys a little out of the thimbleful of high jumps I carried in my behind pocket, until everybody was singing, dancing jigs, and so happy that it did sure look like a little bird-cage filled with the merriest chirpers that ever teetered on a limb.

"Come daybreak, I says good-by to the crowd and started out to see the city. I turned into the business district, but the stores wasn't open yet, so I naturally meandered anywheres my fancy led me.

"Some of them nice houses were sending up a curl of smoke for early breakfast, and some of them was tight shut, where the fellers that led easy lives weren't up yet, but was sleeping peacefully in security, and I felt over-lonesome. Seemed like I hadn't got what was coming to me, that I couldn't have a little

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shack with red roses on it, and some nice, kind woman—that would think a darn sight more of me than I was wuth—to keep my feet out of the drafts for the rest of my days.

“It was a purty sunrise. It ketched holt of the trees, it scattered red on the window-panes. The chickens was crowin’ and cacklin’ around. The dogs come out and give me a wet wallop on the back of my hand, or chased after me till I had to send them home. And the cats was sitting up on top of the fence-posts waiting for a friendly scratch on the back, and I did feel my life was wasted.

“So I hiked out of that to a hill I see in the distance to think things over, and they was more’n plenty. Shaking my head to myself and thinking of what I had lost, I happened to look at my watch and found out I had near lost my lunch, for one thing; so I did the turn back to town at a good, easy lope.

“Them young ladies that waited on the

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table took care of me in good shape. They called me “Grandpaw,” but it weren’t in no way sassy, and I give ’em a five-dollar gold-piece to get some of the green, blue, red and yeller flyabout things that gals like; and the men they was nice and polite to me, too, till, by and by, here comes a committee of five to wait on me, and explain I should oughter go back to jail.

“Again it looked as if I should have to subdue some trouble, but only a minute. I showed them that the finish of their jail was ineveetible, if they kept sticking a man in who was bound and determined to carry off a hunk of their jail every time he wanted to come out again; and, more’n that, would feel it his bounden duty to shoot, and would shoot, and, as a matter of fact, *did* shoot a hole through the hat of the most pushin’ of the crowd; and I simply says: “Instead of all this fuss and fiddle about nothing except them sentiments I

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wrote in your hotel-book, which seem to displease you, let us have a little treat."

"It is no use talking, there is plenty of good in everybody. We had that little treat, and they found out who I was, and, by-and-by, one feller says: "We have got you noosed as an inhabitant of this here town. Don't you try to break away, but remember you have got your picket-pin in your own hands. Turn yourself loose, and please us all the more." So that day was right pleasant and cheerful.

"The town paper come out with a notice that the eminent citizen, "Long John," alias "Texas Brown," alias "Whipsaw Brown," alias "Johnny-on-the-seven-spot Brown," had been overtaken by the town of Abraham Lincoln, and that for the present the map of said town contained him as its most important business center.

"The shops all shut up, and that town and me had a fly through space together that the

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citizens won't forget for several weeks. But when I woke next morning, I says to myself: "This looks like the same old thing, whilst I came here hunting for peaceful domestic joys."

"So I got up in the cool of the morning with scarcely a pain in my head, and sails out to more retiring districts.

"I saw before me the nicest little house you ever did see. There was all kinds of posies in front of it; its fence was as shiny as a set of false teeth; the grass was cut short and tidy. It weren't painted too many colors. In fact, it was just right, and feelin' poetic, I said aloud: "O happiness, here's where thou hast planted thy stakes. Inside this small claim, with all its tips, spurs, angles and variations, there sure runs a pasture of high-grade, free millin'"—but I got no further, for from out that shell that looked so good to me there come a yell like as if a mounting-lion had switched

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his tail into a wolf-trap. A sound of breaking furniture come to my ears. Also, something as if a man was cussin' from the very inside of his heart outward, and I gathered that a lady was either being beat by her husband, or else was beating her husband. Of course, in the former case, I was bound to interfere, not knowin' the rules of married life.

"I waved my right foot in the air and slipped the door off its hinges, and there appeared before me sich a scene as I never would suppose could appear before anybody in a house with posies in front of it, and vines crawling over it, and sich nice, clean winders.

"The lady, who was a stout-built female something under six feet, had a little dark-complected man under the crook of her arm, and whilst she spanked him with the stove-lid she hollered "Help!" and "Murder!" That poor little—I mean to say, that scoundrel—had kicked over most of the truck that was

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movable, the cat and dog was gobblin' what would have been breakfast if this unhappy dispute hadn't come about, and they was growling and snapping and spitting, too.

"There weren't no peace about it.

"Just as my eyes got used to this, the little man made a violent effort, caught the lady by one foot, and pushed. She lost her balance and fell agin the crockery-box. That lost its balance and fell on both of them. All I could see was two pair of feet. Nothing could be more painful than to see a lady covered with crockery and a large closet.

"I got in front to straighten things up again, and the gentleman bit me in the leg. I called "Peace!" to him, but he didn't care. Then I got the thing half-straightened up—you will notice by this lump under my right ear where the lady took me one with the stove-lid.

"I kept right on with the good work, and,

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although it seems onreasonable to the untutored, and yet absolutely necessary under the conditions, I put one foot on the lady and pulled as much as I could of the gent away from her.

“Something whizzed over my head and took my brand-new Stetson right along with it into the fire that the upset cook-stove had started. My foot slipped on a piece of per-tater, and I come down right in the middle of domestic bliss. The lady wrapped one hand in my hair, and hit me with the other fair hand that weighed about eight pounds.

““Don’t you dast touch my husband!” says she. “You big brute, what do you mean?”

““Ma’am,” says I, kind of jerky—for the little dark-complected feller had squirmed loose and was basting me with a section of stove-pipe, accusing me of striking his wife—“ma’am,” I says, “I don’t hardly reckon you are doing the right thing by me. I only

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wanted to keep you from harm”—and them was my last words.

“My good intentions had soured on their stomachs. The pair of them done more things with me in one-half minute than a monkey could think of in one-half a month. Most of my scratches and eighty per cent. of the cuts is healed. They spoiled that bed of posies by dragging me over them, and I put the fence a little out of plumb by trying to regain some of the dignity that ought naturally to belong to a man. That is to say, I took hold of the fence and tried to stand up, but me and two of the pickets hit the middle of the road. I carried those pickets with me just because I was dazed.

“I turned up at the hotel still holdin’ ’em, and all the male citizens there assembled expressed their surprise in one voice. Them nice waiter-ladies got rags and things, and patched me up the best they could. The hotel

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man loaned me two drinks, and it seemed as if somewhere in the back part of me, where the real "Long John Brown" had took to the brush during the scrimmage, there was a stir, and by-and-by I come to.

"'Immejitely I whooped up them steps to my room, packed my grip and come down front again. I ain't braggarty a bit when I say them people was sorry to see me go, and coaxed me to try another whirl.

"They almost had me, when down the street in the distance here come that fine-built, up-standing female and the little dark-complected man, and I heard the woman holler to a neighbor that they was out to catch an eight-foot-high, bow-legged critter, with hair and whiskers like a billy-goat, that had broke into their house without cause or reason, smashed all the crockery, knocked the stove into junk and inflicted upon their persons some injuries they could show, and some they wouldn't.

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"I turned to the crowd at the bar, and says, "That is the piece of beautiful domestic life I tried to help. Are you fellers now goin' to stand for me?"—and them fellers put down their glasses, and walked so fast they got jabbed in the doorway, lightin' out of that.

"One lad says to me, "You know I'm your friend, but—"

" "Yes," I says, "I know you are my friend, and you know that nothing could hurt my feelings worse than to see a friend of mine get hurt, so you are putting out where it ain't likely to happen."

" "Yes," he says, kind of hurried. "That's it. That lady's run for mayor of this town twice without anybody asking her, or saying anything about it. She's elected herself twice, only casting one vote. We keep the City Hall doors locked all the time. I meant to tell you that the town wasn't really run. She is, you

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might say, a determined character," and, he says, in a greater hurry yet, "Good-by."

"The barkeeper had took down cellar, so I says "Good-by" to my reflection in the look-in'-glass and skipped out the back way, behind barns and sheds and barrels, so that lady couldn't see me, and hid in an empty coal-bin at the station until it come time for my train, and here I be,' says John. 'Here I be, Scraggsy, old man; and, while I ain't in no way convinced but what domestic felicity is the one thing on earth, yet I wish I hadn't been so biggoty, and had asked you a few facts concerning the female species before I started to put my notions into practice.'

"'Goin' to stay quiet on the ranch now?' I asked him.

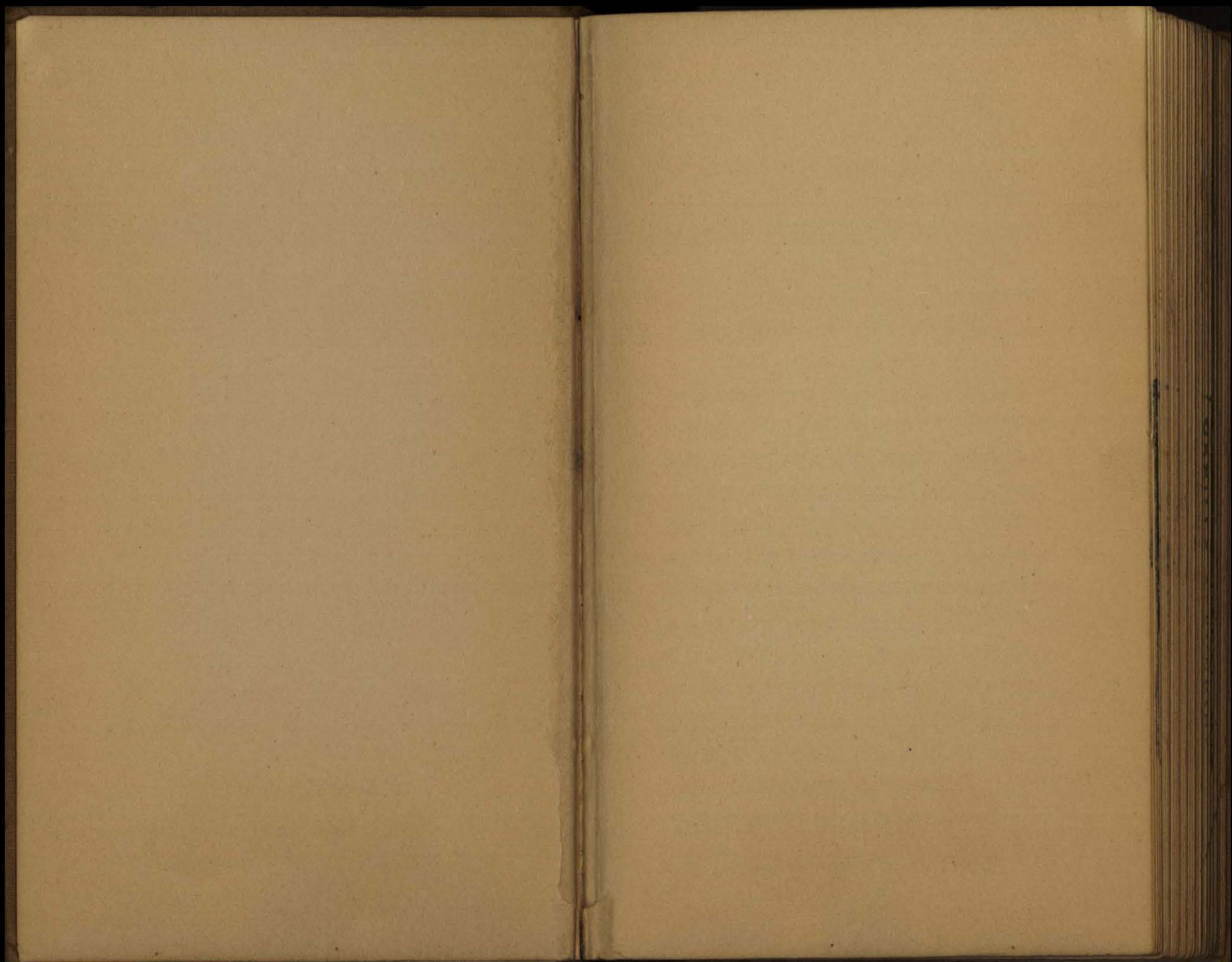
"He rolled a cigareet with determination, and he answers, 'Mebbe,' and the only other words I heard from him was when he stepped

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on a shoe in his bare feet and come down on some place that was sore from the kind attentions of his lady friend, and he strangled for three minutes, gritting his teeth so I could hear 'em squeak in the darkness, and then he says:

"'Blessed be the peacemakers!'"

THE END



CAPILLA ALFONSINA
U. A. N. L.

Esta publicación deberá ser devuelta
antes de la última fecha abajo indi-
cada.

PS3531

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FL

127504

AUTOR

PHILLIPS, Henry Wallace.

TITULO

