

**"THE WAIF OF THE  
WRECK" AND  
JOE GAINS**

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"The Waif of the Wreck" and Joe Gains by C. M. Van Curen

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**C. M. VAN CUREN**

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Joe Gains

BY  
C. <sup>Charles</sup> M. <sup>Melvin</sup> VAN CUREN

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## INTRODUCTION.

The Mahoning River is one of the beauty spots of the old Keystone State. When Autumn time comes the banks of foliage upon either side of the valley, with its variety of colors, different shades and shadows, together with the sunshine upon the silvery waters of the river, all combine to attract the thought, mind and eye of the traveler. Such beautiful coloring has to be seen to be appreciated; no artist can convey it to canvas. Such is the scene in the valley in which my story opens, where the hero learned to use the revolver and wrestle with men.

C. M. VANCUREN.

## CHAPTER I.

### *A Private Funeral.*

"Jim Stewter, get up quick, if you are sober enough to get up! Something terrible has done gone and happened!"

The noise sounded as if a mountain of barrels of crockery had all tumbled off a big hill on to a stone pile.

"You filled me up on that gin last night, Jim, and I can't stand up."

"Well, you seemed to like it. You took to it like a duck to water."

"It's daylight, and I must get up, anyway. Listen—what is that?" And as they listened the sound like steam escaping under enormous pressure came to their ears. Yes, and cries for help could now be heard.

"Good Lord, Jim, get my shoes; I will try to get out of here. I think likely the world has come to an end."

"Come to an end, eh? You will smell sulphur when that comes off. There is a fire—see the flames? Sure, it is something happened on the railroad." And Jim Stewter staggered



across the room in the rude hovel that he and his wife, Ann, lived in, on the high bank of the Pennsylvania Railroad, that ran like a ribbon down the old Mahoning Valley, ending at the great metropolis of New York, three hundred miles east.

Jim Stewter and Ann had seen better days when they came to the little home some fifteen years before. Jim came and secured a position on the railroad. Ann kept the little home neat spick and span. Pretty flower beds surrounded the pathway to the main road; little shade trees also were planted, and the spot was a pretty little oasis. Two children came to bless the home—a boy and a girl. They both died with diphtheria, and a little plot above the house was made for their resting place.

Jim was soon tipping at the Inn, in the town of Kingsley, some ten miles down the valley. He soon began to bring bottles of red stuff home. Ann soon got to tasting of the contents, with the ensuing consequence that she gradually became a confirmed drinker. The shade trees were neglected, the flowers soon forgotten, the homey little house soon became a hovel and Jim lost his job on the railroad. Then it was odd jobs, and Jim got to be a tough-looking

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character, and whenever he got any money most of it went for booze. While under the influence of liquor Jim would have a mania to pick up things, small articles, and put them in his pocket. Such were the conditions in the home on the morning of that awful wreck on the Pennsy, in the old Mahoning Valley, when so many were killed and so many burned up in the wreckage.

It was in November and the air was quite cold. A heavy fog had settled down into the valley, hiding the wreck, as if nature itself was loath to display to the eyes of mankind such a terrible picture as was portrayed on the curve at Walnut Bend, where men, women and children were mashed up in the wreck with the timber and iron from the coaches.

As Jim left the house he nearly ran into a couple of people who were staggering and stumbling up the path toward the house. The man was carrying a baby and supporting a woman as best he could. He asked Jim to please lend a hand to get his wife into the house as quickly as possible, saying:

"I will pay you well, sir, for your trouble. We are both badly hurt. The baby is all safe, though. As soon as possible hurry to the wreck

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and lend a hand to the other victims. We will get along as soon as we can get on to a chair or bed."

They were soon in the rude house, and with a sigh of relief the man laid his wife upon the bed, saying:

"Darling, you must get well for baby's sake; but, precious one, I am surely slipping away. Here, man, take this," as he pulled a roll of bills from his pocket. "Do all you can for these. I feel that I am soon going to leave them. Oh, my loved ones, it is hard to go like this! But God's will be done. The precious baby's heritage is in that little box. When he is old enough, give them to him. Oh, my loved ones, God will be good to you! I leave you both in His care. Good-bye. The curtain is being lowered. I am being shut out from this view, but I can see beautiful scenes beyond. Oh, precious loved ones, I am gone." And the big, strong man fell to the floor. He had been bleeding internally and was smothered.

With a heart-broken wail the wife tried to put her hand to his brow, but she fainted, and only Jim, Ann and the little baby saw now the moving of the curtain of life between their past and the future. For once Jim and Ann were sober, and Jim said: