

**THE JERICHO
ROAD; A STORY OF
WESTERN LIFE**

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The Jericho Road; A Story of Western Life by John Habberton

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JOHN HABBERTON

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WESTERN LIFE**

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OF

WESTERN LIFE.

By *John Habberton*

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead."

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1877.

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PREFACE.

WHILE reading of the poor fellow who had so hard a time on the road to Jericho, two thousand years ago, I have often wondered what would *have* happened had not the Good Samaritan come along. Similar accidents have occurred when the Good Samaritan was longed for, but failed to put in an appearance; when priests and Levites passed by in unending procession; when the thieves had such an air of respectability that the victim naturally wondered if a reputation for honesty did not depend more upon profession than upon practice, and where the needed relief came finally from people as low morally as the Samaritan was socially. The true career of the person whom I have called Lem Pankett would be scouted as improbable if I told it as it occurred. It has therefore been relieved of some of its rougher corners and darker shadows; but I believe enough remains to show the risk which society runs in allowing the vicious to take care of the weak. I do not attempt to prove that the weak naturally fall into the hands of the wicked, for every observing person already knows that this is the rule.

If the religion of some of my characters seems of doubtful quality,

the discredit belongs to the persons themselves, and not to their beliefs. There are few rascals, excepting those of the highest culture, who are entirely without religious sentiments, and who do not bend their best logical powers to the task of reconciling their practices with their beliefs. Possibly some of my readers—when they examine their neighbor's hearts—may admit that this habit is not entirely confined to scamps.

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THE JERICHO ROAD.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH THE HERO IS INTRODUCED.

"LIVELY, boys, lively! Trot along! 'Taint no time to try the turtle-step. While you're a-creepin' along like an angle-worm funeral, the Wabash is a-fallin', and if we get stuck way up the river, so 's we have to lay up all summer, and you have to hoof it to deep water, you can blame your own lazy legs for it."

The speaker was Captain Sam Bates, of the river packet "Helen Douglas," and his hearers were the deck hands, or "roustabouts," who were engaged in the operation of "wooding up." To the passengers, the men seemed to move with great alacrity, and the large pile of wood on the bank appeared literally to melt under their touch, but to the captain, anxious to get up the Wabash for a load of freight, and to get out again before the river, tempo-

rarily swollen by the "June freshet," should fall, the men seemed to move as if going to church. Besides, the captain had to say *something*—no western steamboatman in good standing ever imagined that a steamboat *could* be wooded up unless some one stood at the rail and roared encouragingly and cursorily throughout the operation.

Again the captain raised his voice. "Come, come—nobody asked you to go back in the country and cut down trees and split them up before you brought wood aboard. By thunder, I believe some of you are waiting to have the wood grow before you pack it in. I wish I'd have wooded down at Carrollton—there's a big cemetery there, and I might have hired a few corpses to tote in wood, just to show you fellows how business is done. Here! you slim fellow ashore there (this to a wretched looking specimen of humanity, who, bent half double, and with hands in pockets, was looking on), freeze in, and show them snails how to travel!"

The person addressed undoubled himself, scrambled up the bank, seized several sticks of wood, and hurried up the "return" plank and aboard the boat so rapidly and recklessly as to strike one man between the shoulders with