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GONE TO TEXAS



LETTERS

FROM OUR BOYS

EDITED BY

THOMAS HUGHES

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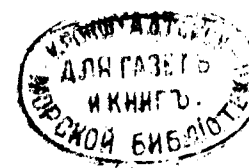


London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1884



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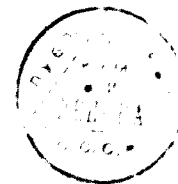
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PREFACE.

"Well! Well!! Well!!!" (crescendo) was the long-drawn-out exclamation of a Northern friend of ours, when more than four years ago a younger brother of mine told him that he was just allowing his eldest son, a boy of eighteen, to start alone for Texas, there to seek his fortune. Our friend's eyes opened wider and wider, and filled with pity not untouched by scorn, as he added—"and you call yourself sane—for an Englishman!"

My brother could only reply by a look of enquiry and an interrogative "Well?"

"G—T—T," replied our friend, severely emphasising each letter, "stands for Gone to Texas. When we want to say shortly that it's all up with a fellow, we just say, 'G. T. T.,' just as you'd say gone to the devil, or the dogs, over here."

My brother could only suggest that our friend must be thinking of the "Lone Star" State, in the palmy times of slavery and filibustering, before the Mexican war; but his kindly soul refused to be appeased.

"And then to let the poor boy go in the steerage," he remonstrated, in a tone of real pity, somewhat modified when he was assured that the "poor

Oxford

PRINTED BY E. PICKARD HALL, M.A., AND HORACE HART
PRINTERS TO THE UNIVERSITY

boy" had insisted on taking his own passage and going in the steerage to save his money; being of opinion that as he was deliberately going in for a hard rough life the sooner he began it the better, and that as for the people in the steerage, "they didn't bite."

So my eldest nephew, Willy, sailed for New York in the steerage of a Cunard packet, and on landing went to see our friend Mr. A. Hewitt, M.C. for that city, as he had been told to do. That old and valued friend, struck by his youthful appearance, did all in his power to dissuade him; or at any rate to keep him in New York till there had been time to hear from his cousin, who had been driving cattle in those parts for some years. Master Willy was however too resolutely bent on making his plunge to brook any delay, and so started for the south-west within twenty-four hours. He meant to win off his own bat, and was impatient to be "facing the music."

The opening letter of this volume takes up the story from the day of his landing in America. It will however, I think, make what follows a little clearer, as well as possibly more useful, if I add a few more words of introduction.

Two years before, in consequence of very serious losses, my brother had broken up his establishment, and gone with his three boys into a small four-roomed house in one of the suburbs of London, sending his only daughter (the writer of Part V)

to live with her grandmother. In this tiny lodging they had to do everything for themselves, including cooking; and the boys, on being told frankly that their prospects in life were changed, took to their new surroundings cheerfully, and with zest. All three were then at public schools; the two elder at Marlborough and Cheltenham, the youngest at Westminster, where he was allowed to remain, having good hope of a scholarship, which he gained soon afterwards. The two elder left their schools at once, and, learned professions being now out of the question for them, openings of another kind had to be sought. Willy was taken as his junior clerk by Mr. Allender, the Managing Director of the Aylesbury Dairy Co., in which post he got a thorough grounding and drilling in office and administrative work on a large scale, and a salary of £50 a-year to start with. In this capacity he worked hard and well; his salary was twice raised in the eighteen months of his service. During that time he kept his own counsel; never spent a penny more than he could help; and by the end of it had saved £130. Then, after consulting his father, he sent in his resignation, having obtained leave to carry out the purpose he had quietly formed, of going out to the West to seek his fortune.

I must own myself to having done what I could to dissuade him, as I found that his employer was thoroughly satisfied with, and sorry to lose him;

