

Albany Register.

"Little Blue Eyes,"

And How She Helped Me Out of It.

BY M. QUAD.

"Can I sit with you?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Nice weather?"

"Splendid, indeed."

"Crops growing finely?"

"Yes—couldn't do better."

I was sitting in a passenger coach, on a Wisconsin railroad, one day, years ago, when a good looking, pleasant-spoken man came along, stopped at my seat, and the above conversation took place, the latter part of it after I had given him part of my seat.

Now, I am regarded as a sociable man. I like a joke; a good hit, and I think a sour, morose man, who uses his tongue only when forced to, is bound to die of some terrible disease and go to some place of red hot punishment.

On entering a railroad car, I always look about for a talkative man, and then I get as close to him as possible, and draw him dry if the journey is long enough.

And I want to state one thing more: Let an orphan before I could realize the sad event which made me one; I got kicked here and culled there, and "grew up between folks," as they say. I ought to have had at the time of my birth, a pretty thorough knowledge of human nature, and have been enabled to read evil in a man's face if he intended me evil. I did not pride myself on being overkeen or sharp, but the knocking around among strangers ought to have given any one a good experience.

Well, the stranger and I fell into an easy strain of conversation as we rode together, and in ten minutes I began to enjoy his company. He was a well made fellow, finely dressed, and he wore a fine watch and a Simon-pure diamond ring. I never saw a man who could talk so easily and pleasantly. It seemed that he had but to open his mouth, and the words fell right out.

I had traveled in the South, so had he. I had heard the loud roar of the Pacific, he knew all about it. I had been up in a balloon, down in a mine, been blown up, smashed up, smashed up and repaired again and again, my new friend had experienced all these things and was wishing for something of a more startling nature. We agreed on politics; neither had any religion, and I had never met such a railroad companion.

Did you ever meet a man, who, though a stranger to you ten minutes before, could wrest from you secrets which you had sworn to yourself not to reveal? Well, he was such a man. It was not long before he commenced asking me questions. He did not seem trying to quiz or draw me out, but he asked me questions in such a sly, round about way that before I knew it I was giving him my whole history.

I was at that time just on the point of being admitted to the bar of Wisconsin as a student of Law & Law, of Briceville. The firm were old lawyers, with a lucrative practice, and it had been talked over that in about a month I should be the "Co." of the firm. A year before, a farmer named Preston, down about four miles from Grafton, had died, and his matters had been put into the hands of Law & Law for settlement. Preston had died rich, he had money in the bank, railroad stock, mortgages, etc., and everything was settled up to the satisfaction of the relatives and fatherless.

About a year before his death, being pinched for money, and not wishing to sell anything at a sacrifice, Preston had given a mortgage on his farm for three thousand dollars. While the papers read "for one year from date," there was a verbal agreement that it should be lifted any day when Preston desired. A month after, when having the funds to clear off the paper, the old money-bags holding it refused to discharge, wishing to secure his interest for a year.

I was now on my way to ascertain the date of expiration. A fire among our office papers had destroyed the memoranda, and I must go down and get the date from old Schj, who lived south of Grafton about five miles. The stranger pumped all this out of me in ten minutes, and yet I never once suspected that he was receiving any information.

"I am not positive," I added, "but I am pretty sure that the time is the thirteenth, which would be Tuesday next."

"And then your folks will send down the money and discharge the mortgage of course," he queried.

"Oh, yes. I shall most likely bring it down," I replied, and it never occurred to me how imprudent I was.

He turned the conversation into other channels, and did not once attempt to pump me further. We got to Grafton at 10:50, and to my great surprise he announced that he was to stop in the town on business for a few days. I had not asked his name or avocation, while he knew everything about me.

We went to the hotel, had dinner, and then I secured a livery team and drove

out, getting through with business, so that I was back to take the 3:30 express east. My friend was on the porch of the hotel as I drove up, carrying that same honest, disguised face.

"Well, did you find out?" he enquired, in his pleasant way.

"Yes: it is on the thirteenth, as I expected," I replied.

We had lunch together, and when we shook hands and parted, I had no more idea of ever meeting him again than I have of knowing you. In fact, he told me that he should sail for England within a week or ten days, and should not return to America. At parting, he gave me his card. It was a modest bit of pasteboard, and bore the name, "George Raleigh," in old English script.

Everything at the office went on as usual, and the thirteenth came at length. Law & Law had arranged for me to go down with the money, and I looked upon it as a business of no special importance.

"We know you are all right," remarked the senior partner, as I was about to go; "but I won't give you a word of warning nevertheless. Don't take any strangers into your confidence until you have passed out the money, and look out who sits next to you."

It was something new for him to caution me, and I could not help but wonder at it; but in the bustle of getting aboard the train I forgot what he had said. Ordinary prudence had induced me to place the money, which was all in bank bills, and divided into three packages, under my shirt and next my skin, where the deft hand of a pick-pocket could not reach it.

Interested in a newspaper, time flew by as the train flew west, and at length the hoarse voice of the brakeman warned me that I had reached Grafton. I had leaped down and was making for the livery stable, when I heard a familiar voice, and looked up to see Raleigh. He was seated in a buggy, and had seemingly waited for me to come up.

"Don't express your surprise," he began, as I stopped at the wheel. "I did intend to go away, but I changed my mind, and like this section so well that I am going out to-day to look at a farm, with a view of purchasing. Come, ride up to the hotel."

We rode up, ordered lunch, and while we were discussing it, Mr. Raleigh discovered that the farm he was going to see was just beyond that of old Grip's.

"How fortunate! I could ride out with him, see the farm, return in his company," and he was greatly pleased.

I was also pleased. If any one had told me, as we got into the buggy, that George Raleigh meant to return with my money in his pocket and my blood upon his hands, I should have believed him a lunatic. And yet Geo. Raleigh had planned to do that very thing.

It was a lovely day in June, and the cool breeze and the sight of meadows and green groves made my heart grow larger. My companion was very talkative, but he didn't even hint at my errand. He talked as far away as he could.

"O! excuse me!" he exclaimed, after we had passed a mile beyond the village, and were among the farm-houses. "I should have offered you this before."

He drew from his pocket a small flask of wine and handed it to me. Now, I was temperate in regard to drinks. In fact I detested the sight and smell of anything intoxicating; but I had not the moral courage to tell him so, and to hand back the flask undisturbed. I feared to offend him, and so I drank perhaps three good swallows. He called my attention to the woods on the left as he received back the flask, and when I looked around again he was just removing it from his mouth, as if he had drunk hearty.

In about five minutes I began to feel queer. The fences along the road seemed to grow higher and the trees to grow larger; something got into my ears so that the rattle of the buggy sounded a long way off.

"How strange! Why, I believe I am going to be sick!" I exclaimed, holding on to the seat with all my might.

"You do look strange," he replied, a snaky smile stealing over his face; "I shouldn't wonder if it was apoplexy."

I did not suspect the game he had played. His words were like an echo, and his face seemed twice as large as it was. My head began to spin and my brain to snap and crack, and I was greatly frightened.

"You are bad off," he continued, looking into my face. "I will drive as fast as possible and get a doctor."

My tongue was so heavy that I could not reply. I clutched the seat, shut my eyes, and he put the horse at its best pace. We met a farmer's team, and I can remember that one of the occupants of the wagon yelled out to know what ailed that man. Raleigh did not reply, but urged the horse forward. About three miles from Grafton was a long stretch of forest, and this we soon reached. The pain in my head was not so violent, and I was not so badly affected when opening my eyes. I had settled into a sort of dumb stupor, with a brain so benumbed that I had to say to myself:

"This is a tree, that is a stump," etc., before I could make sure that I was not wrong. Half a mile down the road, after we struck the forest, and then Raleigh turned the horse into a blind road leading back into the woods. I could not understand what he intended. I tried to grapple with the question, but could not solve it.

"Well, here we are!" exclaimed Raleigh, when we had reached a point forty rods from the main road.

He stopped the horse, got out and hitched him, and then came around to the wheel.

"You don't feel just right, but I guess you will be better soon," he remarked. "Come let me help you down."

He reached up his arms, and I let go the seat and fell into them. It seemed to me as if I weighed a ton, but he carried me along without an effort, and laid me down within about a rod of a fence which ran along one side of an old pasture. Just now I began to get a little better. The effects of the drug were wearing off, and I got a faint suspicion that something unusual had happened. But I was powerless to move a limb; the sensation was like that when your foot goes to sleep.

"Can you speak?" inquired Raleigh, bending over me; "because if you can't I will save me some trouble? I want to know just where you have stowed away that money."

Now I began to realize my situation. His face looked natural again, and the lead was off my tongue. I also felt that I could move my fingers a little.

"George Raleigh! are you going to rob me?" I asked, finding my voice at last.

"Well, some folks might call it 'robbing,' but we dress up the term a little by calling it the only correct financial way of equalizing the floating currency, so that each one is provided for, and no one left out."

"You shan't have the money, I will die first!" I yelled, raising up a little.

"Ah, I see—didn't take quite enough! he coolly remarked. "Well, I had provided for this."

He went to the buggy, procured ropes and a gag, and knelt down beside me. I had but little strength yet, and he conquered me in a moment. Lying on my right side, looking toward the fence, he tied my hands behind me, and then forced the gag into my mouth.

"There, now! You see you are nicely fixed up, and all because you acted like a fool, instead of a sensible young lawyer, soon to be admitted to the bar."

While he was speaking—indeed while he was tying me, I had caught sight of the white face of a little girl looking at us from between the rails of the fence. I could see her great blue eyes, and knew that she was frightened. There were red stains around her mouth, and on the little hand resting on the rail, and I knew that she was some farmer's child, searching for strawberries. I could not warn her of her danger, and I feared that she would be seen or heard. While Raleigh was tying the last knot, I winked at the little girl as hard as I could, hoping that she would move away. But she did not go.

"Well, now for the money!" said Raleigh, and he began searching my pockets. He went from one to the other, removing all articles, felt down my boot-leg and then finally passed his hand over my bosom and found the money.

"Ha! here it is!" he exclaimed, drawing out the packages. "I don't hardly believe that old Grip will see any of this to-day."

He sat down near my head, undid the packages, and was cool enough to go at it to count the money. As he commenced, the little girl waved her hand at me. My heart went thumping, for I expected she would utter a word or a shout, but she sank down from sight, and I caught a gleam of her frock as she crawled through the grass.

"You see, my young friend," remarked Raleigh, as he drew off one of his boots and deposited some of the bills in it, "there's nothing like transacting business as it should be transacted. Some men would have shot or stabbed you, but it is only the apprentices who do such work. All the real gentlemen of our calling do business as gentlemen should."

He drew off the other boot, placed some fifties and twenties in it, and then continued:

"I have it all planned out how to deal with you as soon as I get this money disposed of around my person. I shall lay you on your back and pour the balance of this wine down your throat. There's enough of it to make you sleep until to-morrow night, and by that time I shall be hundreds of miles away. As soon as I see that the drug has taken effect, I shall untie your hands, and remove the gag. When you come out of your sleep—if you ever do—you had better crawl out to the road, where you will most likely meet some traveler soon. I want to use the horse and buggy, otherwise I would leave them for you."

How cool he talked! He treated the matter as if it were a regular transaction in which I fully acquiesced. He

had me a fast prisoner, and I felt that he could do just as he pleased. While I was thinking, I saw the little white face appear between the rails again, but in a moment it faded away, and its place was taken by the sunburned phiz of a farmer. He looked from me to Raleigh and back again, and I winked at him in a way which he readily understood. His face disappeared, and I felt that I should be saved.

"No, old Grip won't get his tin to-day," mused Raleigh, storing away the bills in his pockets. "You will go back to Law & Law feeling put out and cut up, but they shouldn't blame you, it is not your fault at all. True, had you minded your own business on the cars, and not been so free with a stranger, this would not have happened. I was on my way to Milwaukee, and had no thought of such rich pickings here."

I saw nothing of the farmer, Raleigh finished his counting, and I made up my mind that the farmer was afraid to interfere, and had run away. My heart went down as Raleigh got up, for I saw that he was about to carry out his plan of further drugging me. He turned me on my back, sat down astride of me, and then pulled out the flask.

"Now, in just about a minute we'll be through with this business," he remarked, trying to put the mouth of the flask between my jaws.

I rolled my head to one side, and he did not succeed. He was jamming the flask against my teeth, when I caught the sound of a soft step, the crash of a club, and Raleigh rolled off my body. He tried to leap up, but three or four farmers struck him down, and one of the blows rendered him senseless. Before he came to I was free of ropes and gags, and we had him nicely bound.

Over beyond the pasture a farmer and his hands were raking up hay. "Little Blue Eyes," only eight years old, had wandered off after strawberries and had fortunately witnessed part of Raleigh's proceedings. She had hurried back to her father and told him that "a man was all tied up out there," and he had returned with her to the fence. Understanding the situation, he and his men had moved around so as to secure an advantage, and Raleigh's capture was the result.

When the rascal found his senses he was terribly taken back, and cursed enough for a whole Flanders' army. We took him back to Grafton, and when I last saw him he was on his way to the penitentiary to serve a sentence of fifteen years.

The mortgage was lifted, after all, and the gift which Law & Law sent little Katie Gray kept her in dresses for many a year.—Our *Fireside Friend*.

Condition of Ireland.

Probably no country in Europe has advanced so rapidly in the last ten years as Ireland, and this is seen in the tone of general cheerfulness in the dwellings, dress, and general condition of the people. Industrial habits have sprung up, the spirit of progress in the industries is more active than at any time in the century; there has been an increase of material comforts for the poor, and the practice of early marriages has been checked. Ireland is not rich compared with England, or even Scotland, but its poverty consists in the absence of great wealth rather than in the presence of great misery. While paupers in England are as one to twenty-three, they are in Ireland only as one to seventy-four.

Nor are the Irish ignorant. The system of national education is bearing fruit, and the level of knowledge is quite as high as it is in England. Indeed, Mr. Lecky thinks that one of the most alarming features of disloyalty is its close connection with education. Cheap publications go everywhere. There has been a marked decline in out-door sports, fairs, and other boisterous gatherings, a great change in public amusements; those who once sought their pleasure in the excitements of the fair and the market, now gather in groups at the public houses and listen to the reading of Fenian newspapers. Mr. Thackeray would now find less of those ragged and devil-may-care groups of independent beggars, who footed it lightly on the turf to the cry of a cracked violin and the encouragement of "Step out, Miss Judy."

The local government of Ireland presents a marked contrast to the political condition of the country. Public institutions are nowhere better managed: the police and the poor-law administration are very efficient; and this is shown by the decrease in pauperism. By a wise enforcement of the law for vaccination, Ireland has escaped the small-pox epidemic of England. In the matter of prison-reform, Ireland leads the world, and England is only meeting with any success in the treatment of criminals as she adopts the Irish methods. The reformatory system established in Ireland reforms the greater portion of convicts, and it has had a marked influence in the diminution of crime, and the security of life and property.

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