

THE FAMILY STORY

A MAN'S VENGEANCE.

IT was a stiff climb from Pengelly and the basket of fish Isaac Hocken carried was heavy. At the top of the hill he was fain to stretch himself on the turf and rest his bent old back against the low stone wall which inclosed John Tregon's field.

"No use going up to the house; John's at market and the misses'll be turning the place topsy-turvy," he reflected. "What with spring cleanin's all the year round and the drivin', Bertha has had a terrible hard time. And they do say in the village—Well, well," he muttered, checking himself, "it wasn't to be expected with her pretty face that Jim's her first sweetheart. And if Will Carter derelived her, mebbe she'll think the more of him. Jim just dotes on her. More fule, he! Bad wives are of no account whattver, and supposin' you do hap on a good woman and it pleases the Lord to take her, the year won't fill the emptiness in you she leaves behind. I ought to know," and Isaac heaved a mighty sigh. "I've buried wives of both sorts—three of 'em."

Not a breeze stirred the lifeless calm; and the midday sun poured fiercely down. Presently he sought the shade of a spreading tree which overhung the wall a few paces from him. But he was no longer solitary. Voices fell on his ear—Bertha Tregon's and that of the man who report said had jilted her.

"My poor Bertha! You've no cause to fear me. I know exactly how it was you forsook me for James Hocken. But I wrote whenever I had the chance."

"Not a single letter reached me."

"Because your mother waylaid the postman."

Despite the heat, Isaac shivered. Will's insight was making clear much that had puzzled him.

"Perhaps. What matters now?" asked Bertha in forlorn tones. "You should have kept away. It would have been kinder."

"And let you continue to think that I was false. Lookee here, Bertha, you promised to be my wife before ever Hocken courted you. And now you know I've been faithful to you—"

"I durstn't break with Jim. Mother is set on him. Oh, why did you come? You'll get a fresh sweetheart, but Jim won't. I feel he won't. And I shall keep my promise to him."

But Bertha's love was unchanged, and to the breathless listener on the thither side of the wall, Will's tender pleadings were the knell of his son's hopes.

What girl who loved him could resist handsome Will Carter?

Gaunt and grizzled, with weather-beaten, strongly marked features, he had always known that Jim wasn't one that a girl would fancy. And Bertha had only accepted him at her mother's bidding, believing that Will was untrue to her. It was all so plain to him now. Poor Jim! Even a flower that Bertha had plucked was precious to him. Hadn't he found a rose withered and dead in his pocket? And all his love in vain! Isaac whipped out his handkerchief and mopped his face. Yet, if Will hadn't returned—

But, contrary to his expectations, the girl was firm in her resolve.

"I won't listen to you," she said at last, raised by Will's upbraidings. "Jim isn't to blame—he knew nothing of our sweetheating—nor am I. It didn't enter my mind that mother might've got your letters. How should it? As if you alone suffered!" she faltered. "Let us part friends."

"Sweethearts or nothing," said Will, gruffly.

With the swish, swish of feet through the long grass, crawling to his knees, old Isaac peered cautiously over the wall. Bertha was running toward the house and Will Carter, with his head thrown back, striding in an opposite direction.

"Bless the little maid!" he ejaculated. "One time I was afeared for Jim. But she's got a good grip of things. Yes, plenty more sweethearts for Will," he chuckled, observant of the pose of his head. "And there's but one in the world for my lad—Bertha Tregon. May my tongue be slit if I let out to him."

Rising, Isaac shouldered his basket and proceeded on his round.

The old fisherman had been somewhat rash, however, in his conclusions. By her own admission, Bertha's decision had been prompted solely by fear of her mother and consideration for James Hocken. But if on reflection she were still willing to sacrifice her happiness, Will Carter certainly had no intention of yielding to her weakness.

A fine seaman, of whom Pengelly was proud, for the last year Will had been on board a yacht cruising in the Mediterranean. But for reasons best known to herself, Mrs. Tregon had discountenanced his suit, and, although he had every confidence in her, Bertha's si-

lence had inspired misgivings not easy to allay. Once more free, he had returned at the earliest date to England, and at Plymouth, where he landed, had met a friend, who, among other items of Pengelly news, informed him of her desertion, adding:

"And she'll be Mrs. Hocken in a fortnight."

Determined to demand a full explanation from Bertha herself, Will made no comment, but his laugh was un-mirthful. And with rage in his heart he had hailed a passing cab, driven to the railway station and taken the train for Wadobridge. Thence he could walk to the Tregons'.

But the house in view, in crossing the field, Will had espied Bertha in the garden and, with a muffled shout, sped to the tree that sheltered old Isaac. She had swiftly joined him. Nevertheless, the shock of his return was visible in her white face, and her trembling lips would frame no welcome. Looking at him imploringly, her blue eyes filled. And, longing to clasp her in his arms, the reassuring words which, whilst enlightening him, had chilled Jim's father, did duty for the reproaches he had come primed with.

But Will had taken Bertha by surprise, and between her dread of him and terror of her mother, who ruled the Tregon household with a rod of iron, he rightly divined that she had caught at the readiest means of escape which in her distraction had presented itself to her. Yet his faith in her firmness was limited; the revival of fond memories would tend to lessen her mother's influence. And cunningly calculating that apparent indifference would further incline her to be guided by his counsels later, he devoted a week to his friends and generally enjoying himself. His disappointment treated thus lightly, he succeeded in deluding everybody, including Bertha, who shed bitter tears in secret that he should be so easily consoled for her loss. The bare sight of James Hocken almost maddened her, and she had to hide her aversion to him and listen evening after evening to his dull talk. And in another week she would be his wife.

The tree beneath which she and Will had parted became her favorite resort. Here she could indulge in the luxury of a "good cry" unrebuked, and, grown desperate with the nearer approach of the wedding day, sitting on the gnarled roots one afternoon, she burst into a very passionate grief.

A face—Will's—appeared above the wall.

"Ahay! Whattver's the matter, Miss Tregon?" he gravely inquired. "Shall I fetch Mr. Hocken to 'ee?"

"I hate him! I hate him!" she sobbed hysterically.

"That's bad," said Will sympathizingly. "What's he been up to?"

"Up to! Isn't he old, isn't he ugly, isn't he stupid? And—and—I hate him. Mother may storm, but I don't care."

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On the day appointed for James Hocken's nuptials the whole village flocked betimes to the church. But neither bridegroom nor bride put in an appearance, and by and by it was known that Will Carter and Bertha Tregon were missing, and that there would be no wedding at Pengelly that day.

Weeks and months rolled by, and no tidings could be gleaned of the graceless couple. They had clean vanished, leaving no clew to their whereabouts. Mrs. Tregon's tongue sharpened to a double-edged sword, ready to slay friend and foe alike who alluded to her daughter. And the dumb misery in Jim's plain face was pitiful to see. Old Isaac's heart ached for his son. If he had only prepared him for the blow! To have him so imposed on! And with his experience of womankind.

Curiosity was at length appeased. An acquaintance of the runaways visited London and returned with a woeful story. She had seen Bertha, who had confided to her that after being married at a registry office Will and she had decided to go to America, but while looking in a shop window he had been robbed of his savings, and that subsequently they were reduced to great straits. Then he had brought her the welcome news that he had obtained a berth on a steam launch, and the next morning bade her good-by to go aboard, since when she had never clapped her eyes on him. Mrs. Pegg also said that Bertha had refused to give her address. But Jim ascertained that she had met her at Rotherhithe, and that was enough for him.

"I'm off to London," he announced when he came downstairs, after pacing the floor the livelong night. "I shall never rest until Carter and me are face to face."

"Thee be a fule, Jim," his father, who

had been disturbed by his monotonous tread overhead, said peevishly. "If you must stir in this business, find Bertha. It'd be a charity. For all her sharp temper, her mother's frettin' herself into the grave. Take what money you want out o' my leather bag; only promise, lad," noting the sudden fire in his deep-set eyes, "not to meddle w' Will."

"Trust me to find Bertha! But she would be destitute," he said hoarsely. "And she may have become a shame to her kith and kin. And in that case no promise would bind me, father. I'd've his life if I swung for it."

But Pengelly was convinced that Will had betaken himself to "foreign parts." And, recalling this, old Isaac was encouraged to hope that Jim would be denied the opportunity of vengeance.

Jim had been in London three months; his quest had been unsuccessful; yet he continued to hunt the principal thoroughfares, tramping north, south, east and west in turn.

Big Ben had struck one; he was recrossing Westminster bridge to his lodgings when a woman crouching by a lamp post ahead of him fell forward in a heap and, hastening his steps, he endeavored to raise her. But, with the light falling on the pallid, hunger-pinched face, a groan escaped him. His quest for Bertha Carter had ended.

At that moment a policeman came up. "Poor soul! she's dead," he said at a glance. "Better so than the leap into the water she was bent on. I've had my eye on her since 7 o'clock. She seemed dazed."

The body was conveyed to the mortuary and the verdict at the inquest was in accordance with the medical testimony, that death was due to starvation.

Outwardly calm, his sole thought to avenge Bertha, Jim staggered out of the court.

His inquiries for the man who had robbed him of the one jewel he coveted, to cast it from him, at length elicited that a seaman answering to his description of Carter was homeward bound from Singapore. Thenceforth, knowing neither hunger nor weariness, he was watchful of new arrivals at the docks.

His desire for revenge was by now a monomania. And to-day he had a strange prescience that Will and he were soon to meet. Self-absorbed, in crossing the street, he was knocked down by a dray, and, stunned, conveyed to the hospital.

On recovering consciousness, his first request was for his discharge.

"Not yet awhile," said the nurse. "But you won't be dull. That poor chap yonder," indicating a bandaged object in a distant bed, "has been asking for you. You don't recognize him? No wonder! He was brought in months ago—after the fire in St. Thomas street. He was looking on, and a woman and some children appeared at a top window. The firemen were beaten back by the blaze below, and poor Will—he won't tell us his surname—couldn't withstand their cries, and he climbed up the waterspout on to the roof with a rope, and threw one end to them, and had actually lowered two of the children in safety when the walls collapsed. He was piked up so terribly injured that we had little hope of him. But he has done splendidly. If you—"

But Jim was midway across the ward. Oh, heaven, to think that this poor mangled wretch was "handsome Will!" And so sorely misjudged! Leaning over the brave fellow, Hocken's emotion was hard to restrain.

"Don't give 'em my name," whispered Will. "I'm maimed for life. And wouldn't 've my poor little Bertha saddled with a helpless husband—not likely. To have happened just when the tide had turned!" he groaned. "Where is she?"

"She has reached port before us," said Jim, in a smothered voice. "Don't 'ee take on, Will." His own tears were coursing down his rugged cheeks. "We'll go back to Pengelly. I can work for both."

"You work for me? You—"

"We both loved her," Jim reminded him. "If so be you'll trust yourself to me. You will be doing me a favor."

Feebly pressing the hand that gripped his, Will mumbled indistinctly, and hastily covered his face.—Household Words.

Pathos of Presidential Conventions.

No one can examine the records of Presidential conventions, with their personal successes and failures, and easily escape the conviction that there is far more of tragedy than comedy in our national politics. There are touches of humor here and there, but the dominant note is that of pathos. Behind every great success there is to be seen the somber shadow of bitter disappointment, of wrecked ambition, of lifelong hopes in ruins. As one pursues through biography, autobiography, and memoir, the personal history of the chief figures in the conventions that have been held during the sixty years which have passed since that method of nominating Presidential candidates came into use, he finds it almost invariably ending in sadness and gloom. Not one of those seeking the Presidency with most persistence has succeeded in getting possession of that great office, and few of them, when final failure has come, have shown themselves able to bear the blow with fortitude.—Century.



Tumbling Mustard.

It is said that the tumbling mustard, a weed introduced from Europe about twenty years ago, has become very troublesome in Manitoba and other parts of Northwestern Canada. Prof. Fletcher, of Ottawa, estimates that a single plant bears no less than 1,500,000 seeds!

"Dark Light."

Monsieur Le Bon, a French experimenter, reports that he has obtained outline photographs on a dry plate through a sheet of iron, simply with the aid of an ordinary kerosene lamp. He gets the best effects by backing the iron with a sheet of lead, but the rays do not, like the X-rays, penetrate black paper. He calls the radiation which produces the photographs "dark light."

The Cradle of Mankind.

The recent discovery in Somaliland by Mr. Seton-Karr is regarded as an important contribution to the evidence by means of which men of science hope, eventually, to be able to locate the cradle of the human race. The implements referred to are identical in form with those found in Northwestern Europe and in India, and this fact is thought to be an indication that in the remote prehistoric times called the Palaeolithic age the inhabitants of Asia, Africa and Europe belonged to a single race.

Exterminating Butterflies.

Collectors of butterflies in England are somewhat alarmed at the prospect of the extinction of several localized species, mainly through the effects of overcollection. It appears that three species of butterflies have already been exterminated, at least from their known haunts, and that three other species are in imminent danger of extinction, and the Entomological Society has been requested to take some action for the protection of the insects. Some of the much-hunted species, it is said, will probably take final refuge in the irreclaimable fens of Norfolk.

Valuable Fox-Skins.

The most expensive and beautiful of all fox fur, according to Knowledge, is that of the American silver fox. The color is usually almost entirely black, except the tip of the tail, and certain gray-white markings on the back, thighs and head. Occasionally a completely black specimen is found, and there are also some which are completely gray. The animal was once comparatively abundant, but is now scarce, and about a year ago a single fine skin was sold in London for the surprising sum of \$875. In 1894 many skins were sold for more than \$500 apiece. The cheapest skins are the pale-colored ones, some of which do not command more than \$25.

A Walking Fish.

A queer fish, called the "walking goby," or the "hopping fish," is found in the Indian Ocean as well as along the shores of West Africa. Crowds of these curious creatures, resembling tadpoles in their outlines, bask in the sun on a muddy shore and scamper off on being disturbed. Many of them keep the ends of their long tails dipped in the water, while they lie on the sun-heated mud, or sit on mangrove roots, and Prof. Haddon has suggested that there may be an organ of respiration in the end of the tail, additional to the similar organs in the gills. A more recent investigator, Dr. Forbes, of Liverpool, thinks the fish are able to store a sufficient quantity of water in their gills to maintain aquatic respiration during their prolonged absences on the shore.

Great Tide Waves.

Those who see the rise and fall of the tides in our Atlantic harbors seldom think of the wonderful career of the moon-raised ocean-waves which cause the tidal flux and reflux. Such billows not only cross the sea, but flow from ocean into ocean, and in this way complicated movements are set going. Thus, as Mr. Vaughan Cornish has recently reminded English readers, once in every twelve hours the moon raises a tide billow in the Southern Indian Ocean. When this billow passes the Cape of Good Hope, at noon, its successor is already born, and by the time the first billow has reached the Azores Islands, at midnight, the second is rounding the Cape, and a third has come into existence in the southern ocean. By 4 o'clock in the morning following its passage of the Cape the tide billow reaches the English Channel and there the shallow water delays it so much that it does not arrive at the Straits of Dover until 10 a. m. Here the narrowing Channel causes the tide to rise very high and almost puts an end to the wave. In the meantime an-

other branch of the billow runs around the western side of the British Islands, rounds the north point of Scotland, and moves slowly down the eastern coast of England, until it finally flows up the Thames, and laps the wharves of London.

Tree-Rings.

On May 28 mention was made in this column of a curious theory concerning the history of a very old fir-tree from North America, a section of the lower part of whose trunk is preserved in England. The growth rings in the trunk show that the tree lived for several hundred years, and that when it was about a century old something happened which interfered with and delayed its growth. The effect was to produce a series of rings very narrow and close together, followed by rings of the usual width, indicating that the tree had suddenly regained its vigor. According to the theory mentioned the influence that retarded the growth of the tree was a series of atmospheric disturbances in the Middle Ages which caused widespread epidemics in Europe and Asia, and presumably in North America also. Mr. B. E. Fernow, of Washington, writes to Nature that he thinks this theory is hardly tenable. Zones of narrow rings, he says, are common in all of our trees, and he suggests this explanation: Let a tree, like the fir in question, grow up under favorable conditions for a hundred years, and then let a hurricane break off a large part of its crown. Suddenly, at least within a year, the rings of growth will become narrow. Within about thirty years the crown recuperates, but still the food-material descending from the leaves is scanty for the lower portion of the trunk and narrow rings continue to form there. Higher up the tree, however, the rings will be found widening. Finally, and rather suddenly, the supply becomes normal lower down and the rings resume their regular width. Thus various accidents occurring to a tree record their effects in its rings of growth.

England's Food Supply.

Strong as the English war fleet is, it is very far from being strong enough to successfully engage a possible combination of fleets and at the same time protect our sea borne food supply, says the Nineteenth Century. If the United States and Russia declared war with England there would practically be no food supply left to protect. They would keep the immense supplies we now get from them at home, and the fear of capture or destruction would effectually prevent Argentina and other neutrals from sending food to us in any sufficient quantity.

What is wanted is that, instead of only a precarious week's supply, we should have stored up in this country enough corn to last for at least twelve months. Experts in the corn trade agree that there would be no insuperable difficulty in gradually accumulating this store of corn. It would be for experts to advise as to the best methods and places of storage.

Perhaps the best plan would be to distribute it over the country in magazines at the military depots, giving the military authorities charge of it, but if it was in the country and safe it would not so much matter where it was. Although most of our corn is made into flour at the great ports, it would not be wise, seeing that most of them are so defenseless, to store it there.

The entire control and management of this great national store of corn should be under some permanent government department. Although its existence could not fail to have a steady effect on the corn market, it should be outside all speculative influences, the price at which it would be sold, when necessary to sell it, being fixed by law. It would be no sacrifice, in the long run, for the country to provide such a reserve of food, as it would always be worth its cost.

Other nations accumulate gold for use in war time. We should have a war chest of corn. If we have it, what will it do?

It will give our navy time to devote itself to the crushing of the navy of navies opposed to us. It will give us time, with our great resources, to augment our fighting fleet to almost any extent, and it will give our farmers time to grow three or four times as much corn and breed a much larger quantity of cattle and sheep than they now do.

Protection Against Snorers.

Now a New Jersey justice has passed judgment on a man who was charged with disturbing the neighborhood with his snoring, which the prosecution likened unto the noise from a boiler factory in full operation. The justice advised the man with the wonderful snoring power to move or readjust his breathing apparatus. It was claimed by the neighbors that he could be heard snoring a square or more away. An individual with such lungs would doubtless make a good cornet player. Over in Jersey they do not want to give a man a chance to even sleep without disturbing him.—Harrisburg Patriot.

First American Railway.

The first American railroad was laid in 1830. It was three miles long, from the granite quarries of Quincy, Mass., to Neponset River.