

METHOUGHT THE ROSE WAS FAIR

Methought the rose was fairest when full blown,
I treated its fragrant fragrance with a glad;
By dawn the wind its petals fair had strewn;
I found an uncrowned thistle lone and sad.

Methought that Youth could ne'er exceed its prime;
I joyed to live and with all life was fain;
But creaked care o'er e'en its fleeting time
And in the race I saw the stripping slain.

Methought that Beauty was a joy for aye;
I worshipped at her shrine in homage led;
A non-envious Nemesis swept by
And on mine idol sent her blighting seed.

Methought that Love by tears had been mail'd;
I sanctified give him in my heart;
Erisons the thinnest boy a spot did find
Wherein to lodge his most envenomed dart.

Methought that Life more precious was than gold;
I prized each pregnant hour with sorrow's greed;
But when both Love and Youth escaped my hold,
They left me, plundered miser, poor and dead.

Methought that Death's oblivion ended all;
I recked on future peace, no future pain,
Till one long cherished, gone beyond recall,
At parting whispered, "Friend, we meet again!"
—J. V. Pritchard in Home Journal.

A SOLITARY PASSENGER.

The 10:50 train from White Peak was late that snowy February night. It never was what one would call a painfully prompt train. But to-night it was full fifty minutes behind its usual time, and the telegraph operator had nearly fallen asleep behind the pane of ground glass over which the word "tickets" was inscribed in a half circle, and toward which a most artistically foreshortened hand was depicted as extending a gilt finger for the enlightenment of the general public.

Not that the Big Pine telegraph office was ordinarily open at so late an hour as this. Seven o'clock was the usual period of closing. Nor had Eunice Barlow any official right to the tail wooden stool behind the semicircular gilt legend referring to "Tickets." In a manner she had had greatness thrust upon her. Old Mr. Pettyclove, who represented the majesty of the railway company in this particular spot, had gone home in the early dusk with a raging facial neuralgia, and in common humanity Eunice could not have refused temporarily to assume his position with its duties.

"It will only be another hour of work," she told herself, cheerfully, as she put an additional log of frost fringed wood into the little air tight stove. "When the 10:50 has passed I can shut up the place and go home. There are only two night freights, and the conductors on both of them have keys to the freight house."

lately served Miss Barlow as a throne of office.

"Only about as old as our Victor would have been had he lived," thought Eunice. "Oh, I wonder what sinister influence led him into this terrible mistake! I wonder— You are mistaken sir," she said, aloud, in answer to his reiterated questions. "There are no porters here. There is no hotel nearer than the Pine Barracks, four miles away. The agent is detained at home by sickness, and I am the telegraph operator, on duty in his absence."

The stranger uttered a long, low whistle. "I think," said he, "I must have managed to alight at the jumping-off place of all the world. What's to be done, I wonder?"

He looked so cold, so youthful, so utterly desolate, that Eunice Barlow's heart bled for him in his solitude and peril.

"Even if he has gone wrong, she pondered, with all a young girl's optimism, 'I may do better for him than only get a chance.' After all, I am not the station agent. How can they expect me, a woman, to usurp the place of the officers of the law? I could detain him perfectly well, but—"

"Can you tell me," pleaded the solitary passenger, "where I can get a night's lodging and something to eat? It is six hours since we left the supper station, and I am just recovering from a siege of malarial fever. Surely there must be some one around here who could act as my guide."

"There is no one here but me," said Miss Barlow, locking the cash drawer and preparing to extinguish the one reflector lamp that glowed above the new arrival's head. "But if you choose to go home with me I dare say my mother will give you some supper and a bed. Our house is the nearest to this place. And to-morrow—" with a somewhat significant pause — "you can begin a new career."

"I'm awfully obliged to you," said the gentleman, jumping up with alacrity. "But how many careers per week do these westerners count upon? I've no objection, for my part, to the old one continued."

Miss Barlow's face remained inexorably grave. She considered it no part of her duty to countenance flippancy like this. She locked the station, and hung the key on its hooked nail close within the lattice casement outside, where winds could not hurl it away nor storms disturb it, before she said, quietly: "This way, please. The lantern will light you sufficiently if you are a little careful; otherwise you will find the way rather steep and narrow down the hill. You are perhaps unaware that a telegram describing your personal appearance has just come in from the White Peak office."

"A telegram? By Jove the whole thing is out, then!"

He spoke quickly; there was genuine disgust and dissatisfaction expressed in every feature of his face.

"Yes," responded the telegraph operator, "the whole thing is out. Your conjecture is quite correct."

"Does— I beg your pardon, but really this is a matter of some importance to me— does any one know it besides yourself?"

"No."

"I may depend on you?" with imploring emphasis.

"Yes, you may depend on me."

"Thanks, awfully!" declared the stranger, with fervor. "You see, it makes it very unpleasant to have these things talked about."

"I should think it might"—frigidly.

"And I had counted on remaining strictly incognito."

"So I should imagine."

A brief silence ensued. Eunice was wondering how her strange companion could speak so coolly of "these things."

"Was he utterly dead to all shame?" she thought. "The strange companion, in the meantime, was secretly marveling at the ease and lightness with which this extraordinary girl stepped out through the snow drifts."

"A perfect Amazon," he said to himself, "and a pretty one, too. Why don't she keep talking? I like the timbre of her voice, it's a regular contralto."

At length he broke the silence. "Can't I carry that bag for you?" said he.

"Do you know what is in this bag?" she countered question.

"Haven't the least idea," he responded.

"The money taken in over the ticket desk today, and the keys of the cash drawers. I am responsible for all of it."

"Indeed? But couldn't I carry it, just the same? You have enough to do to manage the lantern."

"Yes," assented Eunice, "you may carry it, if you please; it will certainly give me a better chance with the lantern. You see that I trust you."

"Much obliged, I'm sure. Have we much farther to go?"

"No; you could see the light down in the valley now if your eyes were keen, and if the snow didn't drive so fast."

"It seems to me," observed the young man, after another interval of silence, during which the crunching of their feet in the snow and the persistent howling of the wind was all that broke the spell, "that they put a great deal of responsibility on young women in this part of the world."

"A good deal of it is forced upon them, and a good deal they assume themselves," said Eunice Barlow, composedly. "I am willing to admit that I have taken a heavy responsibility on myself to-night."

"Ah!"

"And I think," she added, turning her calm, gray eyes upon him with a light as steady as that of the lantern, "that you know what it is."

The stranger looked surprised. "I wonder," he said to himself, "if I am all alone upon this midnight road with a mad woman. It begins to look unpleasantly like it."

"Understand," added Miss Barlow, "that if I take you home to-night and shelter you, I must have your promises."

"The deuce you must!" cried the young man, waxing more and more uneasy. "Oh, I say, now, this isn't fair!"

"Never to repeat the offense!"

"I won't if I know myself."

"To turn over a new leaf from this time forward," she pursued, vigorously.

"The new career question again! I'm blessed if I know what all this means," gasped the solitary passenger, breathing hard, as he breast all at once the flying shrouds of snow, the keen tooth of the west wind, and the perplexing problem put forth by the fair guide. For fair she was; he could see as much as that for himself.

"Equivocation is entirely useless," said Eunice, severely. "You know perfectly well what I mean. I have given you a chance for freedom; for what is still better, fame and character. See to it that this chance does not pass unimproved."

"Mad!" muttered the stranger to himself, "very mad! Entirely a hopeless case, I should say. I wonder if there really was a telegram, or if that is merely a part of her brain disorder? I wonder if I'd better keep on with her, nobody knows

whither, or cut and run for it, snow storm and all!"

"There is no retreating your offense," gravely proceeded Miss Barlow. "Mind, I assert that at the very beginning. But, as I said before, I am willing to give you one more chance."

"Very kind of you, I'm sure," she smiled, and murmured the young man. "But would it be considered intrusive if I were to ask what the offense is?"

"You have basely absconded with your employer's money," said Eunice, with the freezing sternness of idealized justice. "In other words, you are a bank defaulter."

"No, I'm not," stoutly asserted the stranger. "I beg pardon for contradicting you, but that's all a mistake from beginning to end. I'll stand a great deal, but I won't stand such names as that."

"This is scarcely a fair return for my treatment of you," said Eunice, with some contempt. "Desist added to crime."

"Oh, come, now, won't you give a fellow a chance?" uttered her companion.

"Let the good books say, Strike, but head I've nobody's money but my own, and not too much of that. I don't know anything about your banks nor their defaulter. I've been only two weeks in your country, and I think it's the snowiest climate going. My name is Ernest Tinsallion, and I was to have been met at the station by Col. Copley, of the Four Hundredth cavalry."

Eunice Barlow gave a little shriek of amazement. "Sir Ernest Tinsallion!" she cried. "The Englishman who was coming out here to hunt buffalo, and follow up the line of the Pine river?" But you have alighted at the wrong station; you should have stopped at Pine Barracks, seven miles beyond here."

"I heard the conductor bawl out something about pine of one sort or another," said the young Briton. "I was dead asleep, and didn't stop to discriminate, and I scrambled off. So I've made a mistake, have I? But, all the same, it's awfully good of you to offer to conduct me to a place of Christian shelter."

"And I have made a mistake too," said Eunice, with a gasp. "Just before our train came in there was a message wired to Big Pine station—a message to detain a bank robber who was said to be on the train. I was all alone, but I could have looked him into the ticket office perfectly well. We western girls are prepared for any emergency (with some pride). But I was so sorry for you, you looked so young and innocent, and I determined to give you one more chance—"

"For a new career," interrupted the stranger, with a gust of laughter.

"The key to the puzzle I see it now. Don't you see?" Eunice stated. "I thought you must be a lunatic. And how disagreeably near I came to being locked up, after all! And the bank fellow, whoever he is, seems to have got off scot free. Really, now, if ever man had a genuine guardian angel, you are one," he added, as Eunice led the way into a pretty little sitting room lit up with the last of the Christmas evergreens, and all aglow with red carpet and curtains, where a fire of logs burned on the open hearth and a cozy meal was spread on the table.

"Sir Ernest Tinsallion, I was in the spare chamber that night, was called by starlight, and breakfasted at 6 o'clock the next morning with the telegraph operator and her mother, and afterward accompanied her to the Big Pine station, plunging through white masses of snow drift, and sliding, school boy fashion, across the mirror like surface of frozen brooks. Mr. Pettyclove was there, with his face tied up in a spotted silk pocket handkerchief. There were also several telegrams awaiting the hand of the operator. One was from the chief of police at White Peak, stating—rather late, perhaps—that the bank defaulter had at the eleventh hour, and on the very step, so to speak, of the train, surrendered himself to the local authorities. There was another, from Col. Copley, of the Four Hundredth cavalry, inquiring if anything had been heard at Big Pine station of the missing English baronet who was overdue at the barracks."

"Only think," said Miss Barlow, with a little shiver, "if I had looked you up in the ticket office all night, what would Col. Copley have said!"

"That, under the circumstances, you had done no more than your country expected of you," returned Sir Ernest. "But, I say, all this thing was awfully plucky of you, Miss Barlow. I don't know of an English girl that would have had the courage to go through with it."

Eunice smiled a little. "Here is your train, Sir Ernest," she said.

"But I haven't thanked you half enough." He stood holding both her hands, his fresh English face all eager-ness.

"It is quite unnecessary to say any more," observed Miss Barlow, quietly. "There is the telegraph. A lamp lighted at my post of duty now. Good-by, Sir Ernest. I wish you a very pleasant journey."

Sir Ernest Tinsallion went on his way into the blue, glittering cold of that peerless winter morning, with the pine trees looking like Druids clad in ermine robes, and the plains all sheeted in level pearl, and Eunice Barlow never saw him more. No, he did not come back to woo and wed her, as the hero of an orthodox love tale should have done. He could not, being already engaged to another young woman in England. But he sent a superb hand-kerchief of mine to Mrs. Barlow, in care of the telegraph operator at Big Pine station; and at many an English dinner table afterward he told the story of his mid-night adventure in the wild west.

"The prettiest girl you ever saw, by Jove!" he reiterated, in that earnest way of his, "and the pluckiest! Jean of Arc was nothing to her. I dreamed of her for a week afterwards, with her swinging lantern and those great gray eyes of hers, and the pretty little speeches about turning over a new leaf that she made to me. Yes, I did, and I'm not ashamed to own it, even before Lady Tinsallion here. Eh, Kate?"

And the English bride laughed good humoredly, and observed that to hear Sir Ernest talk, the American girls must be full fledged heroines.

"She was; I can vouch for that," said Sir Ernest. "Lucy Randall Comfort in Harper's Bazar."

The Young Lapp's Snow Cradle.

The Lapp baby very often has a snow cradle, for when the indulgent mother attends church she makes a hole in the snow outside and deposits the young Lapper therein. It is no uncommon sight to see a circle of these snow cradles in front of a Lapp chapel; and now and then a lot of fierce looking dogs are on guard to keep off the wolves that might meditate a raid on the baby contingent. The Lapp cradle in material differs essentially from that used by the Bushman baby, whose mother digs a hole in the hot sand and checks him therein in the shadow of some lonely bush. Sometimes the cradle is ready to band in the shape of an ostrich, and now and then the same feathered left leg of the mighty bird help to soften the nest of the future Bushman warrior.—*Drake's Magazine.*

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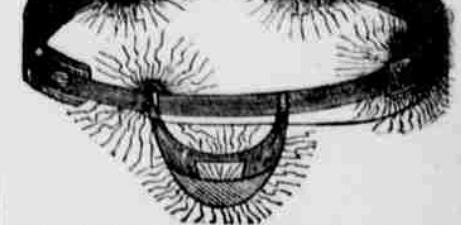
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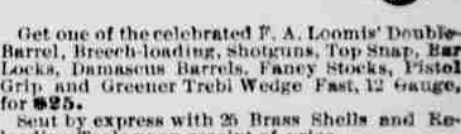
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