THE OLD HULK AT THE BATTERY.

The children played about him; on his knees
A big eyed boy of four sat, in a maze
Of wonder, at the sunlight in the trees
And at the old tar's tales of other days;
The grass glowed 'neath the kiss of ocean sprays,
The swelling buds gave promise to the breeze;
The old man looked across the shining bay
And sighed, and this is what he seemed to say:

If it be pleasant when the winds hold sway,
And waves roll mountain high upon the main
From the firm land to watch the toiling way
Of those who through the storm for harbor strain,
Surely that pleasure furthest were from pain
Which not a pang of others could betray—
In some snug harbor where old wrecks, like me,
Might rest forever from the raging sea!

Into that peaceful haven, after storms
And the scourged ocean's travail, we'd be towed,
Moss covered hulks, now from the sea's alarms
Safe sheltered, and the north wind's cruel goad;
'T'were sweet no more to fear the waves we rode
In peril once, to drink the sunset's charms,
And wait the opening of that western deep
Where Night comes up to soothe the world to sleep!

—New York World.

THE EXPRESS.

There was general astonishment in our little circle of friends when we heard of the approaching marriage of Valentin Sancerre! What! He—the confirmed old bachelor, the skeptic of the boulevards, the scoffer at marriage, the gayest of the men about town, he who had sworn a hundred times that he would have none of it—Valentin, in short, going over to the enemy? And who is he going to marry? A widow! And, what's more, from the country! We couldn't make it out.

So the first time I met him I grabbed him by the collar and demanded an explanation.

"I haven't a minute," he said; "such a lot of things to do. I have just come from the Mairie, and am going to Stern's, the engraver, Passage des Panoramas, for the announcement cards. Come along, won't you?"

"Of course I will," said I.

We were just in front of the Madeleine, and we walked down the boulevard arm in arm.

"It's a short story," said Valentin, "and commonplace to a degree, but since you are bent on knowing it, the fact is I am going to take the fatal plunge."

In February I was on my way to Nice for the carnival. I hate to travel at night, so I took the 8:45 train in the morning, arriving at Marseilles at five minutes after midnight. I was to spend the day at Marseilles with my friends, the Rombauds, who were expecting me to luncheon, and the next morning I was to leave for Nice, to arrive there about 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

At the station at Lyons there was a terrific crush. Thanks to the well known politeness of M. Fregnoul, the station master, I got a carriage facing the engine. I found myself alone except for one other traveler who had a severe executive manner, a decoration, and a portfolio. He had no baggage except this same portfolio, and of course he couldn't be going far, so I should soon be left to myself—alone; the only condition which makes a railway journey endurable.

Everybody was on board and the train was on the point of departure. There was a noise of vehement discussion just outside our door.

"No, monsieur! No!" said a woman's voice, very sweet and fresh, with an almost imperceptible southern accent.

"I ordered a coupelet, and a coupelet I must have."

"But, madame, if we haven't any!"

"Why didn't you pay some attention to my letter?"

"We didn't receive any letter, madame!"

"Put on another carriage, then!"

"Impossible! We have already put on all we are allowed. Come, come, hurry the train is going!"

"I must have a place, at least!"

"But I have just offered you two in the carriage."

"There!"

"Yes, there."

A little dark head peeped in at the door and immediately disappeared—as if in fright.

"But there are two men there."

"Well, madame, I can't give you a carriage all to yourself."

"Very well, then, I won't go."

"As you please—the train is going. I must give the signal."

"Stop, sir, stop. I absolutely must go—and as there is only the carriage will they give me a coupelet at the next station?"

"Yes, madame! Yes, madame!"

"You promise me?"

"Certainly."

"You are sure?"

"Yes. Yes. Yes."

The door opened, the little brown head tumbled in, surrounded by a halo of packages and rugs, a whistle shrieked, and we were off.

The executive gentleman politely seated himself next me, so as to leave all one side for the new arrival. She was flushed and excited, and did not deign to give us a glance, but set to work to arrange her packages in the net above and in the seats about her with the haste that people usually manifest when they have hours before them in a railway carriage. There was one bag—two bags—three bags and a number of rugs.

I watched her arrangements from the corner of my eye and came to the decided conclusion that she was charming. In fact, it is always pleasanter to travel with a pretty woman than with an old Englishman with spectacles. It was bitterly cold. The country, covered with snow and illumined with a pale, cold sunlight, seemed to flee away rapidly on either side of the carriage.

Our little traveler, wrapped to her chin in her rugs, set herself obstinately to looking out of the window at her left. The executive gentleman drew from his portfolio great state papers with seals in all colors of the rainbow—yellow, green, blue and purple—which he read with considerable attention.

As for me, comfortably seated with my feet on the heater, I looked over the pile of papers I had bought at the station to pass away the time.

Twenty-one minutes after 11. "Laroche!" The train stopped. The executive gentleman arranged his papers, got up, took off his hat and left the carriage. He had hardly reached the platform before he was received by the station master, who addressed him as M. l'Inspecteur in a tone of deep respect. Our little passenger rushed to the door.

"Is this the station master?"

"Yes, madame."

"You have received a telegram from Paris for a coupelet?"

"I have, madame, and have sent on the dispatch."

"What, sent it on? I am not to have the coupelet immediately?"

"Impossible, madame, we have no carriages here. You can only get one at Lyons."

"At Lyons—at what time?"

"At five forty-five, madame."

"All day, then. But I can't stay in this carriage until that time. It is impossible. I don't wish to"——

"Take care, madame, the train is leaving!"

And off the train went.

She buried herself in her corner again, in a perfect rage, and did not deign to cast the smallest glance at me.

As for me I set myself to reading assiduously my tenth newspaper.

Shall I confess it? It took me longer to read that tenth paper than it had to read the nine others. I read the same line over twenty times. I believe that half the time I held the paper upside down. But then, after all, a Frenchman's a Frenchman, and you can't expect a man to take a long journey with a distractingly pretty woman and not feel some kind of interest in her. I was dying to talk to her, but I could not find or invent any pretext to begin a conversation.

On account of the cold the old time expedient of raising or lowering the window was of no avail. What was to be done? Make some idiotic remark, apropos of nothing? No, a hundred times rather keep still. I had immediately discovered, with the instinct of the old Parisian, that my companion was a woman of position. To suddenly address her, without an introduction, in any such fashion would have set me down in her eyes as the most contemptible of commercial travelers.

The only way to manage it was to find something magnificently original to say to her. But what? What? I searched in vain.

I was still searching when the train suddenly stopped with that new patented brake so good for accidents and so bad for passengers.

"Tonnere. Twenty-five minutes for refreshments," sang out the conductor as he opened the door.

My neighbor got up, freed herself from her rugs, which she left in the carriage with her three little bags, and got out. It was noon. She was beginning to get hungry. She took her way to the buffet at the left on the other side of the track.

I followed her, admiring at my ease her charming figure, well set off in a long cloak which fitted her to perfection. I noticed also the pretty little dark curls under the knot of hair at the back, a hat of gray felt, and a pair of very little feet.

The proprietor of the restaurant, arrayed in a velvet cap, and who bore a wonderful resemblance to Napoleon III. stood at the door and pointed out with much dignity and a wave of his napkin the long table which the travelers were to take by assault.

I was hustled along with a throng of disheveled and bundled up passengers—the typical crowd of a fast express, essentially grotesque and utterly impossible from the standpoint of beauty—rushing to be fed.

I sat down and hastily devoured the succession of courses which were put before me. As for my fellow traveler she took a cup of bouillon at a table by herself.

I was one of the first to finish, and went out to smoke a cigarette on the platform. The twenty-five minutes, reduced to twenty as usual, would soon be up. The travelers in groups were leaving the restaurant and taking their places in the train. I had resettled myself in mine. My little traveler had not appeared. I could see her at the little bookstand, on the other side of the track, looking at the books spread out in a row. Her hair seemed a little lighter to me than before, but that was doubtless the effect of the distance. Everybody was on board; the guards were slamming the doors.

"Is she going to stay here!" I thought, "she is mad."

"Madame! Madame!" I called out of the door. A shriek of a whistle—the train was going!

What was to be done? A thought struck my brain like a flash of lightning. She was going to be left behind in this frightfully cold weather, without her baggage or her wraps. She might at least have her own belongings, the poor little thing.

I took up in one armful her three bags and her rugs, and, throwing them at a baggage man who happened to be standing on the track next the train.

"To that lady over there," I cried.

The baggage man took the things and started off toward the lady at the book stand.

At the same instant in the other end of the carriage, the side next the platform, the door opened and my fellow traveler appeared—frightened and hustled along by a cross conductor, threw herself into the seat, and the train departed. Horrors! I had mistaken the woman! The lady of the book stand was not she, after all—same cloak, same hat, same way of holding her head—but it was not she.

It was a traveler who was not traveling! How absurd that two women should look so alike! I had made a fine mess of it.

She hardly entered the carriage before she uttered a cry: "My bags, my bags have been stolen!" and for the first time she looked at me; but, good heavens, with what a look! I'll never forget that look, you may be sure.

"No, madame," I stammered, "your bags are not stolen—they are—they are left at Tonnerre!"

"At Tonnerre? How"——

I explained it all to her. Lord! I won't attempt to describe the second look she gave me, but I think I shall remember that longer than the first.

"I am in despair, madame!" I exclaimed, "absolutely in despair, but my motive was a good one, I assure you. I thought you were going to miss the train, that you would catch cold, and I did not want you to catch cold. In fact, if you will pardon my saying so, you need not worry about your bags; they are in safe hands—a baggageman—at the next station you will telegraph—I will telegraph—we will telegraph—they will be sent on immediately. Oh! you will surely have them, I swear, if I have to return to Tonnere myself to recover them."

"Enough, sir," she said. "I know perfectly what to do." And she sank into her corner again, angrily twisting her gloves.

But alas! poor little woman, she had not thought about the cold, and she no longer had her good, warm rugs. Before ten minutes were out she began to shiver. In vain she changed her position and drew cloak closer about her pretty figure; she was positively chattering.

"Madame," I said, "I beg you on my knees take my rug. You will catch cold, which will be my fault, and I shall never forgive myself as long as I live."

"I wish to have nothing to say to you, sir," she said, dryly.

I was nervous and much excited. In the first place I thought her perfectly charming. In the next place I was furious at my idiotic mistake. In short I was ready for the most desperate steps.

"Madame," I said, "take my rug or I swear I will throw myself out on the track," and casting the rug between us I lifted the window and took hold of the outside handle of the door.

Was I really in earnest? Entre nous, not really I suppose, but it seems I must have looked so, for she cried out:

"But you are crazy, monsieur; you are crazy!"

"The rug, or I jump." She took the rug and in a softened tone:

"But you, monsieur, you will die of cold."

"Don't disturb yourself about me, madame. I am not delicate—and even if I do take cold it will only be the just reward of my unpardonable stupidity."

"Say, rather, your haste, for of course, as you say, your motive was good; but how could you have taken that other woman for me?"

"Because she was so pretty!" She smiled, the ice was broken—the ice of conversation, I mean, for otherwise I was chattering with the cold. But how soon I forgot the cold, the journey—everything. She was delicious, exquisite, adorable, a clever mind, bright, gay, original. She was fond of traveling like myself—like myself she had been in Italy, in Spain. She dreamed of going to Egypt just as I did. In literature, music, in everything in fact, the same tastes as mine. And then, only think, a host of mutual friends. She was intimate with the Saint Chames, with the Savonys, particularly with the Mont-Vazins. And to think that I might have seen her twenty times at those houses, and that I had not noticed her. Where were my eyes—I should like to know—where were my eyes?

She spoke freely, pleasantly, with that distinguished simplicity which I always so much admire, with a little, a very little, southern accent—almost imperceptible, rather a lisp—giving a little bird like sound to her voice. It was entrancing.

But, although I did everything to keep from showing it, heavens, how cold I was? At Dijon (2:20 p. m.) my right hand was seized with a cramp. We telegraphed to Tonnerre for the bags. At Macon (4:25 p. m.) the left foot went the same way. A dispatch from Tonnerre saying that the baggage would reach Marseilles the next day. At Lyon-Perrache (5:48 p. m.) my left hand became insensible. She forgot to claim her coupelet. At Valence (9:59 p. m.) my right hand followed the example of the left. I learned she was a widow without incumbrances. My nose turned a brilliant purple. I was given to understand that she had never loved her first husband. At Marseilles, finally (five minutes after midnight), I sneezed three times violently. She handed me my rug and said, graciously, "Au revoir."

"Au revoir!" I was in the seventh heaven!

I passed the night at the hotel at Noailles, a restless night, filled with thoughts of her. The next day when I awoke I had the most terrific cold in the head that you could imagine. Did I dare present myself at the Rombauds' in such a state? Unfortunate, of course, but they knew I was on a journey—they will have to take me as I am, and tomorrow I shall be cured in the sunshine of Nice!

But, my friend, what a surprise awaited me! That good fellow, Rombaud, had asked several friends to meet me, and among these friends was she, my traveling companion, my enchantress.

When I was presented to her an imperceptible smile fluttered over her lips. I bowed.

"And Tonnerre?" I asked very low.

"I have them," she replied in the same tone.

We went into luncheon.

"What a cold you have, old fellow," said my friend Rombaud; "where the devil did you catch it? Traveling, perhaps."

"Perhaps," I replied, "but I really don't regret it." No one understood this curious reply, of course, but my fair fellow traveler sent me a tender and sympathetic glance from across the fragrant fumes of the magnificent ragout which adorned the table and I was content.

What more shall I say, my dear fellow? I did not go to Nice next day, and I am to be married in a fortnight!—Translated from the French of Jacques Normand by Anna Farwell de Koven for Chicago Tribune.

A Question Answered.

"I wonder if I had better go home and get my umbrella."

—Life.

Family Pride.

Grocer—You say that your wife, Uncle Rastus, supports the family by taking in washing?

Uncle Rastus—Yes, sah.

Grocer—Well, don't you feel a little ashamed at times?

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