LOVE AND DEATH.

Earth hath two gifts all other things above,
And both are born within a passing breath,
Yet last throughout all time—the one is Love,
The other—Death!

—*Thos. S. Collier, in Youth's Companion.*

YIK KEE.

BY PATIENCE THORNTON.

After father died, some ten years ago, I found that for three years we had been living on credit. I was eighteen, strong and well, but did not know how to work. In the little back room of the New York tenement (by the way, the landlady seized my clothes for our rent) I considered my future. I had inherited a great faith in relatives from my father, so I wrote to seven. I received six polite notes, telling me to go to work, and the following letter:

JONESBORO, Col., Jackson's Ranch—Dear Nell: I'm your cousin Jack. Your father once gave me money to come West. I've took up land, got a comfortable home, no style or frills, but good folks to live with and healthy grub. I've got the best wife you ever see and seven youngsters. The city ain't no place for a friendless girl. Wife wants you to come. She'll be a mother to you. Come right off. I'll meet you at Denver.

Inclosed was a check sufficient to defray expenses; so I started. Denver was then only a large town, and the depot a barn-like structure. I got out of the cars and stood bewildered among all the emigrants and their bundles. Some one touched me on the shoulder—a roughly dressed, broad shouldered man, with long blonde beard and blue eyes.

"Are you Nell?" he asked.

"Yes; and you are cousin Jack."

"I knew you," he said, as he led the way, "by your black clothes an' sorrerful look, an' them big, blue eyes, like yer father's as two peas. We'll git the shadder outer'm when we git home. Yer father was a mighty good man. Bless yer dear heart, don't let them tears come. This 'ere's a dry country; we don't waste water."

Comforting me in his kind, rough way, he reached his team, a big green wagon, drawn by two wild-looking steeds, which I afterward knew to be bronchos. A fat, blonde boy, about twelve, held the reins.

"That's Ted," said Cousin Jack. "Ted, this is Miss Nell, your cousin; give her a hug." The fat boy solemnly obeyed.

After this he seemed to have a special claim on my affections because he met me first. Jack's wife was a jolly, plump woman, with brown eyes and curly hair. She always had a baby in her arms and another at her heels. She adored Jack. I never knew them to have a quarrel. I soon grew to love the life at the ranch. I liked the big, half-finished house, its untidiness and comfort; its pleasant, healthy atmosphere. I loved the children, the household pets; Shep, the sagacious dog; Thad, the clever cat; the hens and sheep; the horses, Dolly, Dot and Daisy, that did the plowing and the marketing at Denver, twelve miles away, and were so gentle and kind we used to ride them without saddle or bridle. Occasionally Harry White came over to visit us from his ranch, five miles away. He lived with his old mother; he and Jack were dear friends. Harry needed a wife, Jack used to say, winking at me.

One day Jack went to Denver for supplies. He went alone, and coming home later than usual, Ted and I and baby Mame went out to meet him. Jack looked sober and guilty, and seemed ill at ease. If he ever drank I should have thought him intoxicated. In the wagon was a queer-shaped heap under a horse blanket. I was sure it moved. When we got behind the barn Jack said, sheepishly, avoiding my eye:

"Well, Ted, I calkerlate I've got suthin in that there waggin that'ul astonish yer marm."

Little Mame pulled the blanket off the heap; she had been peeping under it all the while she was in the back of the wagon. There lay a human being. Such an object; short and squat, dressed in a queer blue blouse with flowing sleeves, wide trousers and queer wooden shoes. He had small black eyes, a shaven poll, from which depended a long, thin cue. His countenance was battered and bruised, his clothes torn and bloody.

"There was a row down to Denver," said Jack; "the Christian folk stove in these 'ere heathen's winders, tore their houses down, an' killed on 'em. I cleared out as soon as I could. When I got half way home I heard a noise back o' me, and out crawled this thing. I was so dumbfounded I couldn't speak. He thought I was going ter send him back, an' he fell ter cryin' and jabberin' in that yap of his, an' clingin' outer my han' an' kissin' of it. It sorter turned my stomach. I told him ter set down, give him some crackers ter eat, covered him up an' told him he could live with me. What do you s'pose marm 'll say?"

"Oh! cousin Jack," I said, "of course she will not dare. Your home is a refuge for all the wretched and unfortunate."

"Now, don't, Nell," he said, turning as red as a rose, and busying himself about the harness. The Celestial looked at us solemnly; Mame toddled up to him. He looked at her curiously, but did not move.

"Get out, John," said Jack, "you needn't be scared any more; we're at home."

He got out stiffly, and, to my surprise, turned and lifted the baby down. She took his pig-tail and pulled it in wild delight. He seemed grieved when I took her away. When Jack told Mary, the good soul found a thousand reasons why he should stay, and hurried to make him a bed in the attic. The Celestial did not say much, but when Jack called him "John," he smiled a sad smile.

"Melican man callee John. Hump! Yik Kee."

So with due consideration for his feelings we addressed him as Yik Kee. He was of great use. He helped take care of the children, did the washing (Mary did not fancy his method of sprinkling clothes), and helped Jack on the farm. He was always pleasant and smiling, but was a man of few words.

Cousin Jack added much to his income by trading in hides. Ranchmen living at a distance sold their hides to him and Jack sold them to traders, who came around at certain times in the year. Harry White was a partner in the business. He used to go on a sort of round-up and visit the ranches all over the country. The cattle of the ranchmen roamed in vast herds over the plains, protected only by the brand of the owner. Cattle stealing was frequently practiced. Offenders in this respect were shown no mercy. They were convicted, tried, and executed only in the court of judge Lynch. I never blamed the ranchmen for this, it was impossible to guard the herds in the vast area over which they traversed, and the cattle must be protected in some way. Gill Mead was a wealthy ranchman, who lived about ten miles from us. He owned the largest herd of cattle on the plains. They were branded with the vowels of his name, E. A., which could be recognized anywhere. He always shipped his cattle east to his brother in Chicago. I feared the man. He was tall and gaunt, with deep-set black eyes and low forehead. His home was unhappy, his wife cross and ugly, and his children wild and unruly. This made him more than commonly disagreeable.

I think it was in the fall of 1874 that Harry White brought the big load of hides to Jack. Both were much pleased at the bargain they made. Harry gave glowing accounts of a new customer—a ranchman from Chicago, who had taken up an abandoned homestead. He had purchased many cattle from his cousin, Gil Mead, and hoped to rival him in the number and quality of his herd. Jack packed the hides away to keep till December, when he expected the dealer.

One afternoon not long after this Gil Mead rode up to the house looking very agreeable and pleasant. A couple of strangers, also ranchmen, were mith him. They wanted to look at the hides, one of them being a trader, Gil said. Jack was in Denver, so Yik Kee and I went to the barn with them. They looked the hides over carefully and conversed in low tones, Gil with a suppressed oath. Finally they thanked us courteously and took their leave.

"Hump; no goodee," said Yik Kee, but wouldn't say more.

About 5 that evening, when we were at supper, a crowd of twenty-five or thirty men rode up on horseback. Jack came out and met them, inviting them to take supper, in his generous, hospitable way. They wanted him to go to Denver with them; there was to be a meeting there of importance to ranchmen. The meeting would be at 8. They had brought with them an extra horse for Jack. Mary looked around for Yik Kee to help her, but he had mysteriously disappeared. I faintly remembered seeing his white, horrified face peering around the barn at the horses. I noted the visitors ate little—the food seemed to choke them. Some of them watched Mary and the baby in a queer sort of way. When Jack, as was his custom, kissed his wife and babies good-bye, one of the visitors, an oldish man, coughed huskily, and said: "Blest if I kin stan' this." They all rode off, Jack the merriest of them all, waving his hat till he was out of sight.

When we were clearing up the unusual quantity of dishes Yik Kee appeared at the end window and beckoned me. I followed him out. Ted was with him. Behind the barn were the three horses saddled. Shep was with them, released from confinement, where he had been secured from following his master.

"Foller 'em," said Ted, in an excited whisper. Yik's afraid they're up to something."

"What is it, Yik?" I said, sternly. "No fooling, now."

For answer he twisted his long pigtail around his neck, tying it under his left ear in a significant manner.

"Humph, he hangee; stealee cow."

"Oh, Mary," I sobbed, remembering Gil Mead's visit and his strange actions, and dimly seeing what Yik Kee meant, "I must tell Mary," I said, wildly.

"Hump, no," said Yik Kee. "Yellee sick, and he closed his eyes in a dieaway sort of manner. "Go now—too late."

We mounted.

"Mother'll think we're gone to ride," said Ted, as we galloped over the plains. He was deathly pale, poor little fellow, but he sat erect and firm. I saw his father's big Colt's revolver sticking out of his pocket. He was a determined boy. Even in my despair, in my wild hope that I could save Jack by begging on my knees, that I could cling to him, and that they would have to kill me first, I could not help a smile at the comical figure Yik Kee presented on horseback. His loose garments flapped in the wind, his long pigtail flew out behind, and he bobbed up and down like a kernel of corn in a corn-hopper.

It was a soft, warm night, lighted only by the pale young moon and the twinkling stars. We rode as fast as our horses could gallop. Shep was close at our heels. 'Way ahead, when we reached the top of a little hill, we saw the crowd of horsemen. They were riding toward Denver. We galloped on with renewed zeal. They turned into a cross road leading to Mead's ranch. On this road was a bridge over Dry Gulch, which was in the spring a roaring torrent. Beyond the bridge, across the fields, was the haystack of Mead, where was stowed sufficient to feed his domestic cattle through the winter. We at last reached the turn to the road. They were three miles in advance, riding rapidly. Yik Kee stopped at the turn.

"Humph! Can't catchee. Hangee at bridge. You gone!" He turned his horse and sped across the field, deserting us basely.

We rode on, Ted and I. He was pale and still; my cheeks were burning. We neared the bridge. The high mound of earth before us hid them from sight. We stopped our horses and listened. The men had lighted torches, some were preparing a rough gallows under the bridge; two were uncoiling a rope; some held the horses of the others beyond the bridge. The men were masked now, and I could see by the lighted torches that their number was increased. Jack was very white and sad, but he showed no fear.

"I am innocent, gentlemen," he said, slowly, "but I refuse to tell you of whom I bought the hides."

I understood him. Could Harry White be a cattle thief? I felt as if I were growing mad.

"What shall we do?" whispered Ted, cocking his revolver.

Suddenly a bright red light illuminated the heavens, followed by clouds of black smoke and a queer, cracking noise. A yell from the men, Gill Mead's voice above the rest. The haystack was on fire. It seemed to me in the glare around it that I could see a foreign-looking human vanishing across the plain.

The men mounted their horses, Gil Mead at their head, and set off across the fields at a mad gallop. They must save the stack. They left Jack bound hand and foot and guarded by one man.

Shep, the wonderful dog, had kept by us until now, slinking in the dark shadows. Now, gliding sidewise and still, he reached the man on guard, whose back was to us, and with no warning growl caught him by the throat with strong white teeth that could choke a coyote in a second. The man, who was in a sitting posture, fell back with a groan. Ted struck him over the head with the butt of the revolver, and pulled off the dog. I cut Jack's bonds with a knife. He looked at us wonderingly and staggered to his feet.

"Never mind how we came, Jack," I said. "Quick, mount the horse beyond the bridge, and ride to Denver for your life. They will not harm a woman and child."

"Harry White," he muttered, the loyal soul that even could think of another's danger.

"I will tell him."

"No, no; not of this—only say, if he stole the cattle to fly the country. They will find out sooner or later."

He galloped down the road. Ted and I mounted, calling off Shep, who sat on his haunches watching the unconscious man, and then we, too, sped down the road. The haystack was giving out great volumes of black smoke, but the fire was dead.

Ahead of us was a riderless horse, Dolly, who greeted her master with a joyful whinny. Where was Yik Kee? Then Dot, my horse, shied from the road at a recumbent black figure. It was the indomitable Yik Kee, who had crawled all the way from the stack on his stomach, so that he could not be seen, after lying in the ditch until the blaze had faded out. "Humph! no catchee Chinee; heap sore," he said laconically, rubbing his stomach.

He mounted Dolly, and we rode on to White's ranch. Harry rushed out at the sound of horses' feet, at midnight. There, under the twinkling stars, I looked into his eyes, and told him the whole story. He showed no guilt, but only said we must stay the night at his ranch, for the men would come back to Jack's for him, and then mounting his fleet colt rode off down the road. I comforted his mother as best I could. At daybreak we rode home.

Mary was in a wild state of alarm. Where had we been? Where was Jack? and how cruel we were to leave her alone. She said that at one o'clock three masked men had come to the house and searched it and the premises, but had not molested her or the children, only asking where Jack was, very sternly and sharply.

At noon Jack, Harry, the sheriff and a party of armed men from Denver rode up, stopping only a moment to tell me that they would be back at night. I dared not tell Mary, and she worried all the afternoon at their strange conduct. At night Jack and Harry came home, looking tired but happy. Then Jack told Mary and she cried and clung to him as though she could never let him go.

It seemed the pleasing ranchman from Chicago was one of a band of cattle thieves. He sold the hides to Harry, who, honest and open himself, was slow to suspect wrong dealings of others. The sheriff had caught the men skinning a cow that belonged to Mead, and had captured the gang and taken them to Denver.

The men concerned in the attempt to lynch Jack were sincerely sorry. Their regrets would not have availed much, however, if they had succeeded in their purpose. They gave each of the children ten acres of land; they gave Ted sixty-five, and me, whom they pleased to consider very plucky, 150 acres. I felt rich enough, and time has made it very valuable land. The man on guard was our warmest admirer. He thought Ted, Shep and I wonders of courage. He said when I came down on the bridge with the open knife, he thought his last hour had come.

Gil Mead committed suicide not long after this. He was always queer. No one ever knew that Yik Kee set the stack afire. I tell you Jack rewarded the faithful fellow—gave him a good farm, taught him to work it, and built him a house. The funniest thing was Yik Kee had a wife and three queer little children in China, and Jack sent for them, and Yik Kee and his family are as happy as can be. The children play with Jack's (he has twelve now), and get along finely together.

In 1875 I married Harry White, which, I suppose, was forseen from the beginning—at least Jack says anybody could have seen it. The most serene and satisfied face at the wedding was the Celestial's. In my inner consciousness, notwithstanding he is a "heathen Chinee," I have the conviction that as great a hero as is seen in modern times is the man of few words—Yik Kee.—*Our Continent.*

Messengers of the Air.

"I have often watched my birds coming home," said Dr. Clegg, a Baltimore physician to a *Sun* reporter. "They are up in the air until they look about as big as sparrows. About a quarter of a mile off they set their wings, and with a rush they come to the window, never going a foot past it or evincing the slightest uncertainty as to the locality of their home. I have a hundred pair or so now. All around this neighborhood people are breeding and flying homing pigeons. I use mine often to send messages home to my family. I write the message upon tissue paper and roll it up until I can stick it in a quill. This I tie to the leg of the bird, between the foot and knee, with yarn. Thread would cut in and stop the circulation. They never seem to mind the load and never pick it off. If you are going to fly a match a female bird who wants only two days of hatching out her eggs is the quickest. Fly her before 2 o'clock, and she tries to get back in time to go on her nest at 3:30 to relieve the male, which has been on duty since nine o'clock. A male bird flies best when the female is laying her eggs, over which operation he usually exercises the most lofty superintendence. They are loving, jealous birds, and the attachment to the spot of their birth and breeding place is so great that they will rather starve than leave it."

"How can you tell when your pigeon arrives in a match?" was asked.

"By this electric bell," replied Doctor Clegg, stepping to the mantel and touching a tiny striking apparatus, "I have a board on the entrance to the window set on a spring. The weight of a pigeon that alights on it presses it down so that it completes the circuit and rings this bell. The judges and timers then score while I go and catch my pigeon. Sometimes I take a whole basketful of young pigeons up to Havre de Grace for a little afternoon airing. They come back the thirty-five miles under the hour easily."

"What colors are the best?"

"Well, the white, silver and checkered are about the best colored birds."

"Why will not a common blue rock pigeon do just as well to train in this way?" was the query.

"They lack the intelligence and instinct," was the reply.

A Reminiscence of Garfield's Murder.

Curious anecdotes touching the assasination of President Garfield are continually coming to the surface. A gentleman who had a prominent part in the stirring events which followed the shooting told the following to the Washington correspondent of the Boston *Traveler* recently:

The assassin's movements in Washington were pretty well ventilated at the trial, but there was one incident which was very amusing, and which I think has never been published. Some time before he fired the fatal shot he lived in a fashionable boarding house, where a preacher well known in religious circles also had quarters. Guiteau became very familiar with the clergyman, who, in his turn, was somewhat interested in the checkered career which had been followed by the wretch. His impecuniosity aroused the minister's sympathy, and on several occasions he loaned him articles of wearing apparel out of his own wardrobe. On the evening of that Saturday when Guiteau attained the climax of infamy the clergyman came into my office as pale as a sheet, and sat down at my desk in a state of nervous excitement. He asked me if I could gain access to the assassin, and it so happened that I was about to pay a visit to his cell. The minister then told me that Guiteau had on a collar, a pair of cuffs and a pair of socks belonging to him, which he had borrowed, and that on each was written his name. He produced a bundle containing two sets of these articles which he wished me to take to the prison and exchange for those which the assassin was wearing. I did so, and Guiteau was glad enough to get rid of his soiled apparel, for he was not handled very tenderly after he was arrested. That clergyman has been my friend ever since, and he has confessed to me on more than one occasion that at the time he was afraid, in the excited state of the public mind, that some complication might ensue which would bring him into trouble, and possibly disgrace.

Facts About Digestion.

Jessen has carried out a series of experiments to determine the time necessary for the digestion of equal quantities of different meats and of milk. Three different methods were employed in the investigation: 1. Artificial digestion; 2. Introduction of the meats into the stomach of a living dog, by means of a fistula; 3. Upon a healthy man, allowing him to swallow the foods used, and ascertaining the time of digestion by means of a stomach pump. The results obtained by the different methods were, on the whole, uniform, as far as the relative time necessary for digestion in each case was concerned, and may be stated as follows: Raw beef and mutton were digested most quickly; for half-boiled beef and raw veal, a longer time is necessary; thoroughly boiled and half-roasted beef, raw pork and sour cow's milk followed next; fresh cow's milk, skimmed milk and goat's milk were still less easily digested; while the longest time was required for thoroughly roasted meats and boiled milk.

THE FOURTEENTH.

A Writer Describes a Curious Phase of Life in Paris.

Passing one day through the Rue de Lancry, in Paris, my attention was attracted by a large brass plate affixed to the door of one of the houses. It bore the following inscription:

"AMBROISE FORTIN, FOURTEENTH."

A mysterious profession it seemed to be. "Fourteenth!" I repeated to myself: "what can it mean!" And I walked past the house several times, musing on the puzzling inscription; at last curiosity became so ungovernable that I made up my mind to knock at the door, and seek an introduction to M. Ambroise Fortin.

When the servant, in obedience to my summons, opened the door, no better formula of inquiry occurred to me than simply to repeat the words interrogatively:

"MONSIEUR AMBROISE FORTIN, FOURTEENTH?"

"He is at home from 6 o'clock in the evening till 8," replied the man.

"Is he always fourteenth?" I asked, coolly.

"Oh, certainly! Monsieur, always," said the servant, in the tone of a person who repels some injurious doubt.

That evening, at 6 o'clock, I returned to the house in the Rue de Lancry. The servant conducted me into an apartment scantily furnished, but adorned with three fine engravings—one representing the Feast of Belshazzar, another Camacho's wedding, and the third the Prodigal Son at a banquet, ere he wandered forth to feed swine. A side door opened, and I saw enter a very fine young man, elegantly dressed. He was in the act of drawing on a pair of pale kid gloves. Bowing gracefully, he said:

"I am ready, Monsieur, let us set out; let us go to dinner."

I looked at the engravings, and I obeyed almost mechanically, carried away in spite of myself by the fashionable coolness of his tone and manner. As soon as we were outside the door, M. Fortin said: "The weather is beautiful: if we are not going far, we may as well walk. Where are we to dine?"

"At the Cafe de Paris," said I, at random.

"So much the better," was the reply: "I detest a city ordinary."

I hoped that some explanation would follow, but it did not; and, somehow, I did not like to ask for it directly. I therefore contented myself with humming the opera air, "What may this mystery be?"

As we walked along, M. Fortin asked no questions. He spoke of the tax on dogs; of the scarcity of fish since the opening of the Havre railroad; of a late importation of Cape ericas, at the flower market; of M. d'Aliger's will; of a new painting by Couture; of Dumas' or Balzac's last novel. In short, he discussed all the topics of the day, and that in a very lively, gay, and pleasing manner. I was just beginning to think that the mysterious Fourteenth would turn out to be a newspaper reporter, when we entered the Cafe de Paris.

"Monsieur," said I, "allow me to congratulate you on your Parisian erudition: you really speak like a walking journal!"

"Ah!" replied he, "in our profession we must know a little of everything. One could not be a Fourteenth on any other terms."

Entering the first saloon, I selected a table laid with two covers, and asked him to sit down. M. Fortin looked at me with surprise, and said,—

"Where will the other guests sit?"

"There are none that I know of but ourselves," replied I, taking my place.

"Only two!" exclaimed he, drawing back; "then there must be some mistake, and I cannot comprehend the object of eating your dinner."

He condescended to smile, and seated himself opposite to me. The mystery had become really too oppressive; and I boldly sought an explanation, which in the natural course of things, did not seem likely to arise.

"How," said he, laying down his knife and fork, "did you come to me without knowing my profession? And yet it has begun to make some noise in the fashionable world."

"Well! Monsieur, I can only say that this noise has not reached my ears."

"You are not then acquainted with the invention of the Fourteenth?"

"No, Monsieur Fortin."

"The Fourteenth," said he, solemnly, "supplies a desideratum in our social state. A statistical examination proves, that in Paris invitations to dinners are every day given with so little forethought that, in five hundred houses, on an average, guests to the fatal number of thirteen find themselves assembled at six o'clock. What is to be done. Something must be conceded to the prejudices of women; for, let their superstitious fears be once awakened, and adieu to the hilarity of the evening. Well, the Fourteenth is there, always ready to break the ominous number. A knock comes to my door, and I follow whither I am led, without question or delay. For success in this profession, it is necessary, however, that the fourteenth should be talkative and amusing. At present, in Paris, there are but five Fourteens; yet I feel certain our numbers will increase rapidly."

After this satisfactory explanation, M. Fortin and I enjoyed as pleasant an evening as though we had really been Fourteen. At parting, I made him promise that he would often share and enliven my bachelor's dinner in his own independent personality, and not as a mere supplementary unit.

You must not stay in bed until 9 o'clock in the morning upon the excuse that it sleep year.—*Oil City Derrick.*

Cold wether—A dead ram.