

Poetry.

GUILD'S SIGNAL.

BY BRET HARTE.

Two low whistles, quaint and clear, That was the signal the engineer— That was the signal that Guild, 'tis said— Gave to his wife at Providence, As through the sleeping town, and thence Out in the night, On to the light, Down past the farms lying white, he sped.

As a husband's greeting, scant, no doubt. Yet to the woman looking out, Watching and waiting, no serenade, Love song or midnight roundelay, Said what that whistle seemed to say: "To my trust true So love to you! Working or waiting, good night!" it said.

Brisk young bachelors, tourists fine, Old commuters along the line, Brakemen and porters glanced ahead, Smiled as the signal, sharp, intense. Pierced through the shadows of Providence— "Nothing amiss Nothing!—it is Only Guild calling his wife," they said.

Summer and Winter, the old refrain Rang o'er the billows of ripening grain, Pierced through the budding boughs overhead, Flew down the track when the red leaves Like living coals from the engine spurned; Sang as it flew: "To our trust true, First of all Duty—good night," it said.

And then, one night, it was heard no more, From Stonington, over Rhode Island shore. And the folks in Providence smiled and said, As they turned in their beds, "The engineer Has once forgotten his midnight cheer." One only knew To his trust true, Guild lay under his engine, dead.

A GOOD OLD POEM.

Ho! ye that start a noble scheme for general good designed, Ye workers in a cause that tends to benefit your kind, Make but the path, the game you men to play, And if it be an honest one, keep steadfast on your way.

Obstructions too, may crowd your path in threatening stern array; Yet fear not, flinch not—they may prove mere shadows in your way; Although you may not gain at first the point you most desire, Be patient: time can wonders work, plod on, and do not tire.

Then while there's work for you to do, stand not despairing by; Let forward be the move you make, let onward be your cry; And when success has crowned your plans, 'twill all your pains repay, To see the good your labor's done, then pine not on your way.

Tales and Sketches.

THE MISTAKES OF A NIGHT.

In the thriving village of Hollythorn there is (as is common to such places) a church, a post-office, a couple of stores, and a district school; the said school being taught by a young lady who had a widowed mother and brothers and sisters to assist.

For the sake of economy, Miss Eva Stanley "boarded around" among the scholars, and was considered a paragon among teachers.

The last week previous to the holiday vacation she had been boarding with a Mrs. Carpenter, who was making gigantic preparations for guests she expected from New York.

"You never met my brothers, Eva," she said, and then began to give the pretty young teacher a description of them. "There's Sam, George, and Johnny, the youngest; and such times as they have when they get out here to rest and rusticate, as they call it. But, dear me! I don't get much rest or peace, for they are like a lot of boys let out of school. Such tricks and pranks no one ever saw. The last time they visited me all together, John and Sam actually cut a pane of glass from the window and pelted George out of my best room with snow! You see there is always a regular strife for that particular room, for the bed is a spring one, and they say they don't sleep in any other in the city. But they don't get in there this time, that's certain; for I intend to keep you in that room, and so end the controversy. I am so afraid that they will break or ruin something that I am glad you are here. It may keep them in check a little."

"I had just as soon occupy any other room, Mrs. Carpenter, and do not wish to incommode your brothers—have no right to do so." "No, you shan't, Eva," peremptorily exclaimed her hostess; "and what is the use of your going home vacation week? You can stay here just as well as not, and do up your sewing on my machine. Your mother has mouths enough to feed, I guess, and won't miss yours."

The subject was dropped, and the entire household retired early, for on the morrow the brothers, young, ardent and full of life, were to be there. But, without sending any word of their intention, they had concluded to take the evening train, which would land them at Hollythorn about bed-time. George and John did so, and when safely seated in the cars, began to speculate about the absence of Sam.

"No reason upon earth why he should not have been along," said George.

"No, for he told me this morning he would certainly be on hand," said John.

"I can't make it out, unless he has taken the five o'clock train, by mistake."

"Not a bit of it," laughed John, who fancied he understood the entire programme. "It is more likely he took that train to get into Hannah's spare room, and make us take up with straw ticks and feathers."

"I didn't think of that, but I reckon you are right. We must contrive to get him out somehow."

"Bet your life on that."

The brothers put their heads together and laughed merrily over some scheme for outwitting Sam, and accordingly, when the train reached Hollythorn about eleven o'clock, they approached the house of their sister in a very stealthy manner.

Climbing the fence in the rear, they softly opened a window and obtained access to the pantry, where they demolished a mince pie and a quantity of doughnuts. Then, with appetites appeased, they removed their boots and prepared to investigate "the best room"—stole along the hall, which was dimly lighted by the moon, ascended the stairs and reached the door. The faint rays of the moon disclosed a chair piled with clothing, and they could distinctly trace the outlines of a form beneath the bed-clothes, and had not the remotest idea but that Sam was enjoying sweet repose upon Hannah's best bed.

A few whispered words were exchanged, and then as softly and lightly as if shod with down, they drew near.

"All ready," whispered George.

Quick as thought, they seized upon the form of the sleeper, bed-clothes and all, bore it swiftly down the stairs, out into the snow, and were just about to deposit it in a huge snow-drift, when a shrill scream broke the stillness of the night, and O horror!—it was that of a woman! And in their consternation they dropped their burden plump into the middle of the drift.

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed George. "It isn't Sam, but some woman, as I am a sinner, and she has fainted. Run and call Hannah!"

With admirable presence of mind he lifted the limp form of Eva Stanley and carried her into the house. But her cry had already been heard, and the inmates came running into the hall just as he appeared.

"George! John! for goodness' sake what does this mean, and whom have you there?" asked Mrs. Carpenter in a breath.

"Blessed if I know," began George; "thought it was Sam, so we concluded to give him a douse in the snow, for getting into the best bed and trying to enchain us. Quick! I believe she has fainted."

"Just like you!" scolded Hannah, as she assisted in depositing Eva once more upon the bed from which she had been so unceremoniously taken. "Beginning your tricks upon each other before you fairly get into the house. Clear out now!"

Long before she was done with her tirade her discomfited brothers had betaken themselves down stairs, where they almost went into hysterics over the joke.

"A pretty kettle of fish!" said George, rolling over the floor and letting off peal after peal of laughter.

"I should think it was," replied John holding his sides. "Oh my! But what the dickens is to be done about it, and who do you suppose she is, George?"

"Some guest of Hannah's, of course, and young and pretty at that. I don't know how it is with you, but I feel particularly small and extremely cheap—would sell myself at a very low price."

"Cheap!" roared John. "I would actually throw myself away this blessed minute, and throw something into boot. What we are to do, I can't say; but I believe I shall dig out of the place and go back to the city before morning. I haven't got the courage to face the music, so I'll get up and get."

He began hastily putting on his boots, and would have put his throat into execution, but for the appearance of Hannah, who at once asserted her authority.

"You are not going a single step," said she; "but I don't wonder you feel ashamed of yourselves. What on earth possessed you is more than I can tell."

"That's right, Hannah; pitch in, scold away. I'll take any amount just now, for I am as meek as a lamb. But who is it we have played so shabby a trick on?" replied George.

"Trick? I should think it was. Why, it is Eva Stanley, just as nice a young thing as ever lived. She is our school teacher, and this is her week to board here; and I knew well enough you boys would be squabbling over that room as usual, so I put her in there, little thinking you would come here in this stealthy manner."

"Eva Stanley! Whew! A pretty school teacher," and repeating his sister's words, he gave a lugubrious groan.

"Has she recovered?" questioned John,

vainly endeavoring to restrain his laughter at the very faces his brother was making.

"Yes, I soon brought her to; but I don't believe the poor girl will ever get over her fright. She said that the first thing she knew was being lifted up and carried out, and she was so much alarmed that she couldn't utter a sound; but the moment the cold air struck her, she realized that she was being abducted, or something of the kind, and had just time to utter a scream when she fainted. It is too bad, I declare, boys. I shouldn't wonder if she had taken her death, being dragged out of a warm bed this time of night and dropped into a snow-drift in that fashion. No wonder she cried, poor thing."

"Cried, did she?" repeated George with a groan.

"I should think she did. I just took her in my arms and let her have her cry out, while I explained to her how she happened to be mistaken for Sam, and so became the victim of your mad pranks."

"That was neat of you, Hannah. I'm awful glad you hugged the poor little thing. Wishes you had just given her a brotherly squeeze for me—upon my honor I do. Oh dear! I am in sackcloth and ashes from this time, henceforward and forever," replied George, with another dismal groan.

"And how on earth do you expect us to stay and take the consequences?" asked John, beginning to look serious. "I am for taking myself off instant. I had rather faced a masked battery than this pretty teacher, after making such fools of ourselves."

"I don't care if you had," answered his sister, indignantly. "The only way to do is to brave it out, both of you, and apologize for your rudeness. She is not a bit stupid, but pleasant and merry, and no doubt you will have a jolly laugh over the affair."

"But Sam? How the deuce are we to get along with him? You know well enough, Hannah, we shall never hear the last of it from him; that it will be brought up at all times and in all places."

"If you two can keep a secret, I'll find a way to silence Bridget, and it is a subject Eva will not care to have discussed, and fortunately my husband is away from home. So go to bed and rest contented."

She showed them a room she had intended them to occupy, and soon the house was once more hushed in slumber.

Meanwhile their brother Sam had reached the depot a few minutes too late. He found the train he was to have taken gone, but upon consulting a time-table, he ascertained that another started two hours later, and so decided to take it. He figured to himself, as he impatiently flung himself into an empty seat and was being whirled along at a rapid rate, how snugly his brothers had ensconced themselves in the best room, which by right belonged to him, he being the eldest, and consummated a plan to be even with them.

Some time after midnight he was deposited at Hollythorn, and reaching his sister's house, he scouted around until he found a way of entrance into the kitchen, where he deposited his luggage and removed his boots. Then he quietly stole up stairs and opened the door of the best room. "Sure enough," thought he, "my fine chaps, you are in clover!" For there were not to be mistaken signs of the room being occupied. Garments were lying upon chairs, and the bed was pressed by slumbering forms.

To think of coping with their united strength by dragging them forth, was not practicable; but there stood the pitcher of water, and he knew that a good dousing with the icy fluid would bring them out soon enough.

"If I can't have my old quarters," he chuckled, "you shan't," that I am determined on. So here goes."

He lifted the pitcher, approached the bed, raised it high, and suddenly dashed the contents upon the sleeper!

Such a torrent of screams as he never before heard ran through the house, and before Sam could command his scattered senses, door after door opened, and Hannah, George, and John rushed in, clothed in scanty apparel—Hannah with a frightened look on her face, and a lamp in her trembling hand, that revealed the entire scene.

There, sitting up in bed, with her hair dripping like a mermaid, her night-dress deluged, her face colorless, and eyes looking terror, was the young school-mistress, and there was Sam, the very picture of imbecility, staring about like an idiot at Miss Eva and the havoc he had made.

Hannah, George and John instantly comprehended the situation, and the latter, at the command of their sister, dragged Sam away, while she assisted the drenched and terrified girl to dry clothing, and took her in her own room and bed, explaining for the second time the mishaps of the night.

"I'll keep you with me now, my poor child," she said, though with great difficulty keeping back her laughter. "Those boys are nicely come up with, at any rate; and it wasn't for your having been terribly frightened, and the way my best bed has been used, I wouldn't care. They do nothing when they come home but study up some trick to play upon each other; and," continued she, by way of apology, "they are so confined in their offices and stores, during most of the year, that they let entirely loose when they get out here. But you are safe now."

Hannah kissed her charge, and went down to see about the boys, who as soon as they were fairly shut in the region below, began to

thoroughly appreciate the joke; and there sat Sam, looking in confusion at his brothers, who wore rolling and kicking in convulsions of laughter.

"Wait," said George, "until Hannah comes, and see if you don't find out!" And he gave vent to another peal.

Sam had not smiled, and sat looking the very picture of discomfort and perplexity, but answered,—

"For Heaven's sake, hold on, boys!" I am willing to admit that I am badly sold—gone dog cheap to the bidder; but hold up long enough to tell a fellow what it means."

"Means? Of course I will," continued George still holding his sides. "It means that you have stolen like a thief into Miss Eva Stanley's bedroom—who is a young lady teacher and boarding around; that this is her week boarding here; and thinking that it was your humble servant and John snug in bed, you attempted to drown us out, and made a grand mistake. How do you like it, Sam?"

"I confess I see the point, but can't the joke. It is a most outrageous shame."

At this juncture Hannah came in and began rating them soundly, thereby letting out the whole story. It was Sam's turn then to laugh. He struggled manfully to retain his gravity, but the whole thing was so supremely ludicrous that he was compelled to join his brothers.

Miss Eva was not visible at the breakfast table the next morning, and Hannah announced that she was sick with a severe cold; whereupon George called for a handful of peas to put in Sam's shoes, while that gentleman looked very contrite, and John declared he wanted to shoot himself. But Hannah had the unruly crew under her thumb for once in her life, and had the satisfaction, also, of seeing them behave with something of dignity. They appeared to never forget that there was an invalid in the house, and went about on tiptoe; and Sam, who seemed to take the entire responsibility upon his shoulders, set off slyly to New York for choice fruit and flowers, which he induced his sister to convey to the young lady with the most abject apologies and regret.

In a couple of days Eva was able to come down stairs. She was looking very pale, but lovely, and of course blushed divinely when presented by Mrs. Carpenter to her three brothers, who behaved quite well, considering the unpleasantness of their situation.

But Sam, who had broken the ice by means of his presents, was the most at ease, and by virtue of his age and experience, constituted himself the proprietor and was constantly on hand to offer Miss Eva a thousand nameless attentions; and before the week was out John declared in confidence to Hannah that "Sam was done for."

"Gone under completely!" echoed George with one of his dismal groans. "Just think of it, Hannah, if it had not been for that pitcher of water, Sam would have been heart-whole this blessed minute. The fellow meets lots of girls much prettier than she every day, and with lots of stamps, too. They say pity is twin sister to love, and I believe it."

"Sour grapes," whispered John, puckering up his mouth. Hannah sang Eva's praise, and secretly commended Sam's choice. She recommended marriage to all of them as being the only sobering process she was acquainted with. It is a piece of advice, however, they do not appear inclined to follow, notwithstanding Sam's happy lot with the pretty schoolmistress of Hollythorn.

She often reminds her brothers-in-law of her unceremonious introduction to a snow-drift at the dead of night, and they retaliate by the shower bath given her by Sam. And she twines her arms about Sam's neck, and with tears in her sweet, blue eyes, declares that but for that episode she fears she would never have had a husband.

CHARITY'S OWN REWARD.

BY GEO. SCANNING HILL.

A gentleman stood upon the sidewalk and looked leisurely about him. He seemed to be waiting for some one to come up, or he was lost in trying to settle upon one of the many methods of diversion that might just then have offered themselves to his mind.

While he yet stood and looked up and down the thronged street, his eye unconsciously fell upon the figure of a little girl, who was strolling along, apparently as much at leisure as himself. There was nothing in her outward appearance that specially attracted his attention, and her features did not yet present themselves with sufficient clearness to him to merit either his praise or dispraise. Still his eye instinctively rested on her, and followed her closely at every motion.

He was considerably startled, moreover, from the seeming evanescence of his musings, when he saw the girl suddenly snatch an article of food from beside the door of a grocery, conceal it around her side, and hurry away. Twice or thrice she turned half about, and looked to see if she had been observed in the act she had been guilty of; but she saw no signs of having been suspected in any degree. She walked rapidly on, until she came up with the gentleman, when he had an opportunity of scrutinizing her features more closely.

Her face seemed far too innocent, and its expression far too pure, to allow her to be

classed indiscriminately with those whose lives are devoted to crime. Pretty airy ringlets waved gracefully about her neck and shoulders, and from beneath her little hood she displayed a forehead on which sunshine and innocence seemed to have settled. In her twin blue eyes beamed a sweet intelligence, disturbed but temporarily by the consciousness of the wrong of which she had just been guilty. Her dress was neat, well-chosen, and arranged with a grace that at once forbade the thought of her being the offspring of a vicious mother. She walked, too, with such an air such as only sweetest innocents of children know.

The gentleman became doubly interested in her, as she passed him. Without stopping to question the character of his sudden impulse, he hastily followed her.

She led him along for several streets, turning rapidly now here, now there, and occasionally throwing a furtive glance around her. Not finding her suspicions at all excited, and being still unsuspicious that a stranger was sedulously following her, she finally walked with a more free and composed air, and even held the object she had stolen quite boldly before her.

Almost before he had thought of the thing, she slipped out of his sight, and entered a long, narrow and darkened passage. He waited to see at which door she entered, and then sprang in after her. She flew up a flight of wooden stairs, sunk in a darkened casement, then turned and pursued her way as rapidly up another flight, and at last opened a door at the landing and entered. No sooner was the door closed than he was in after her. A sight met his eyes such as he was entirely unprepared for.

The girl had laid the stolen loaf, which was but a baker's loaf, upon a deal table, and while the gentleman still stood regarding them, three younger children had seized upon it and were eagerly—nay, ravenously—devouring it. A pale, thin-faced woman regarded so strange a spectacle from an arm chair in a corner near a window, still holding a piece of sewing in her hands. She sat bolstered up in her chair, and her face was more white than a marble wall. She looked up with an alarmed yet a somewhat abstracted air at the gentleman, and then dropped her eyes again upon the children at the table.

"It's all I could get, mother," said the girl, who had not yet noticed the intrusion of the stranger, and was preparing to throw off her street dress.

"And where did you get that?" interrupted the gentleman, in a serious tone.

"Oh, do not blame me, sir!" she cried, running to her mother's side and clinging, as if for protection, to her.

"What have you done, child? What has she done, sir?" asked the mother, of both her and the stranger.

"I couldn't help it, sir!" cried the child, burying her face in her mother's lap. "Indeed, sir, I couldn't help it! I couldn't get any anywhere else! Oh, do but forgive me, sir! Do pray, sir!"

Thereupon her sobs and convulsions were truly heart-rending.

"Will it please you to tell me all, good sir?" pursued the mother, shielding the child, as it were, with her arms. "What has my little girl been doing, sir?"

"Madam," returned the gentleman, "I can see that you have misery enough here without my coming to add to it. I cannot bear the sight I now behold, without being affected most sensibly. This is not the time, and, be assured, I am not the one, to add to your misery. Here is all I have upon me at the present. Take it, and be perfectly welcome to it. The girl shall confess everything to you the moment I am gone."

As he spoke he drew from his pocket a gold coin of the value of five dollars, and placed it in her hands.

"The God of the widow and the fatherless bless you!" exclaimed she, receiving it with a smile of unconstrained gratitude.

Before she could say more, however, the gentleman withdrew abruptly from the apartment; only remarking to her, as he closed the door, that he would see to it that they did not suffer.

The woman for some time sat stupefied and speechless with wonder, and then big tears rolled out from the chrysal depths of her clear blue eyes. She was overcome with feelings both of gratitude and vague anxiety.

The scene that soon after followed between the little girl and her mother, in which the former made full confession of the wrong she had done, and pleaded earnestly and tenderly in extenuation of her fault, we will not attempt a description of. She repented of what she had done, and faithfully promised her mother that at some future time she would go and repay the value of the loaf she had taken.

The same gentleman chanced to be in at a popular clothing store, just at the close of a day not more than one or two weeks thereafter, when a woman entered, closely veiled. She brought with her a bundle, which she laid down upon the counter at a distant part of the store, and waited for the clerk to open it. The stranger stood, as it happened, in such a manner as to screen him from the rapid and casual glances of the woman. He was but a few paces from her, and could hear distinctly all she said.

Presently the clerk took up the bundle, opened it and withdrew to the light for a closer examination of its contents. It was a