

THE COAL-IMP.

I was sitting one night by my fire—
‘Twas a fire of Westmoreland coal
With a mixture of coke, which I recommend
As a comfort for body and soul.

My chamber was cosy and warm;
The curtains were closed all around;
And the snow at the windows rattled away
With a soft and tinkling sound.

As I sat in my easy chair,
I think it had got to be late;
And over the top of my book I saw
A face in the glowing grate.

An ugly old face, too, it was—
With wings and a tail—I declare;
And the rest was ashes, and smoke and flame,
And ended—I don't know where.

So odd were the features, I said
“I must put you on paper, my friend;”
And I took my pen and jotted him down—
Face, wings, and wriggling end.

A queer old codger he seemed,
As vaguely he stared and shone;
But I fixed him in outline as well as I could,
And added a touch of my own.

He flapped his wings in the grate,
And struggled and puffed to be free,
And scowled with his blazing carbuncle eyes,
As if he appealed to me.

Then I said—but perhaps I dreamed—
“Old fellow—how came you there?”
“I'm not an old fellow”—the face replied,
“But a prisoned Imp of the air.”

“In the shape of combustion and gas
My wings I begin to find out;
So I flap at the bars and grow red in the face,
And am ugly enough, no doubt.”

“I am made for a much better lot;
But I cannot escape, as you see;
Blistered and burnt, and crammed in a grate,—
What could you expect of me?”

“I once was a spirit of air.
A delicate fairy page
Long ago—in fact before
The carboniferous age.”

“For centuries I was kept
Imprisoned in coal-beds fast,
When you kindled your fire this evening, you see,
I thought I was free at last.”

“But it seems I am still to wait;
No wonder I'm cross as a bear.
Make faces and flutter my wings of flame,
And struggle to reach the air.”

“My ruby-faced friend,” I said,
“If you really wish to be free,
Perhaps I can give you a lift or two,
It is easy enough. We'll see.”

Then, taking the poker, I punched
A hole in the half-burnt mass—
When the fire leaped up, and the Imp flew off
In a laugh of flaming gas.

St. Nicholas for Feb.

(For the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.)

A TALE OF THE BUSH.

FOUNDED ON FACT.

Greta and I were very young when we made up our minds to unite our destinies. Not that it mattered much, for we had known each other long enough, being brought up together as brother and sister might have been.

Not on the same equality, however; for she was the only child of a well-to-do farmer, while I was an orphan, rescued from destitution, and expected to give my willing services in return for the food and clothing I received.

I cannot recall the precise date when I first realized my love for my pretty Greta. I suppose the feeling stole insensibly upon me, as is usual in such cases. I do know, however, that I should never have had courage to avow my sentiments to my master's daughter, but for an untoward event, which left her without another friend in the world.

Her mother had been dead some years, and she had long acted as her father's housekeeper—and a neater, trimmer, prettier little body, it would have been impossible to find in all the country; at least, I thought so, and a good many others besides, for Greta had plenty of beaux—some with money, too, though she never gave encouragement to any of them, so far as I could see, and love made my eyes and ears pretty sharp.

One night, about this period, her father was returning late from market, on horseback, too palpably in a state which testified that he had encountered many friends, and had been unusually solicitous respecting their health. Whether this was the sole occasion of his mishap we never knew, for he was brought home, crushed, insensible, and dying, having been thrown from his horse, sustaining severe injuries. He died, having recovered consciousness but for a few moments—not sufficient time to make any arrangements for the future of his weeping orphan.

After the funeral, an unprincipled brother of his, stepped in and claimed everything, showing papers to support his claim, which baffled even the astute lawyer I had engaged to defend Greta's interests. It was then I offered my poor friendless girl the support of my strong arms, and the sympathy of my true heart. To my delight, and I may say, my surprise, they were willingly, nay, lovingly, accepted. It was then she made the confession, very sweet to my ears, that her affection was as long cherished as my own; but, woman-like, she had awaited the overtures I had been too modest to make.

There was no need to stand on mourning etiquette where the girl needed a protector, and in less than a month we were married, and look-

ing to our future from a new standpoint. I had some savings—very little—and some things which had belonged to Greta's mother, realized a little more. This small capital we desired to invest to the best advantage. Greta whispered: “It would pay our passage to Canada.”

Hint quickly acted upon—and another week found us bowling over the blue Atlantic, as full of wonder and delight as two children, and as careless of the future as though our pockets had been weighed down with gold.

Well, we landed at Point Levi, and I had just three and sixpence in my pocket, while Greta had her clothes, and a few trinkets remaining from her days of affluence. Some few of these were disposed of, and a little more money realized, and then we struck off boldly for the Eldorado we firmly expected to find.

We had heard of the land where bread was to be had for the growing, and meat for the hunting; whose woods were stocked with game, and whose rivers teemed with fish; and what better spot could be found, I questioned, for a youth of my capabilities, and a woman of my wife's many estimable qualities?

On we jogged, our rosy English faces, and strange manners, eliciting wondering remarks from the kindly habitants, whose hospitality we frequently claimed.

And nobly was it dispensed, these simple people setting before us the best of everything they possessed, and making much of us, as if we had come to enrich them, instead of decreasing their oftentimes scanty store.

At length we reached settlements where our own tongue was spoken; and at one of the farm houses where we sought a night's shelter, the owner offered me work. I accepted it, acting under Greta's advice, who had begun to weary of her journey, and who thought it was time we settled to something, although I would willingly have kept on for another month.

The farmer's wife employed Greta's skill with the needle, while I was initiated into my duties, which I found very different to what I had been accustomed to in highly cultivated England. But the experience did me good, and soon I was quite an adept at felling trees, driving oxen, making fences, boiling maple sugar, and other pursuits peculiar to Canada.

After a few months, however, Greta and I began to think of getting, by some means, into a little house of our own; but, how to do this, was the question. We were unable to buy a farm, even if there had been any to sell, which there was not.

We took counsel of our host, our employer, rather, who delivered himself of this oracular observation:

“You might squat.”

Seeing that his advice was lost upon my ignorance, he condescended to explain that ‘back ten miles, there was a block of land, the owner of which, if there was an owner, which, in itself, was questionable, lived at such a distance that it was morally impossible I should ever be disturbed.

Should I settle upon it? Acting upon this hint, I left Greta where she was, and set off to build me a home.

I found a “human habitation” within half a mile of my future residence, the occupants of which were likewise squatters; but there was room enough for all, they assured me, and kindly lent me all the aid in their power.

My late employer had presented me with an axe, the first necessity of a settler, and with this, and the proffered aid of three or four stout fellows, I went to work.

First, we selected several straight young spruces, and while some of our number were trimming the branches, others were clearing off the underwood, to leave a clear space for the house, or shanty, for it was little else. This concluded, we laid the spruce logs in a square, and saddling the corners, soon had an edifice of the required height. This was topped by some rude beams and rafters, the whole roofed in with squares of bark, to provide which, some giant spruces and hemlocks in the vicinity had to peel off their jacket literally. A rude, rude dwelling, even when completed, but still the dearest spot on earth, for was it not home?

Too much could not be said of the kindness of our widely scattered neighbors, who tried to supply, as far as their means lay, the articles we needed, which, in that backward settlement, were only to be procured with difficulty, even though you had money. Some gave us their own labor; some, the use of their horses, or oxen; some lent such articles of furniture as they could spare. My first acquaintance sold me a good cow, the payment of which I was to work out when I could spare time. It is needless to say that Bessy soon became our chief comfort, and was greatly petted by Greta, whom she appeared to love dearly; but then, who could help it—even a cow?

Soon we had another pet, in the shape of a lusty young Canadian, who made the gloomy old woods resound with his healthy cries. With my wife, my child, my cow, a yoke of hardy steers, and a few acres of clearing, I felt as independent and happy as a prince. Indeed, perhaps I was truly happier than many princes are.

The next year we had added to our belongings four fine sheep, and Greta was going to do wonders in the wool business, for the thin calicoes and muslins of her outfit were poorly calculated to stand the wear and tear of bush life; and she was beginning to estimate the worth of a good home-made gown.

What was our chagrin, on awakening one morning, to the routine of our daily life, to find our best ewe missing. A thorough search was

instituted, but without success; but my nearest neighbor, of whom I made enquiries, opined that a bear was at the bottom of the mischief. This view of the matter was confirmed, when on searching the probable route pursued by the captor, we found tufts of wool sticking on the undergrowth, and spots of blood here and there, where the bear had apparently rested his burden. No search availed to find the carcass—the hungry brute had taken care of that; for, emboldened by hunger he must have been, to venture so near our dwelling, and to carry off a full-grown sheep.

This having been the first loss of the kind we had sustained, we were much distressed, and Greta became quite nervous. Partly to allay her fears, and partly from a love of adventure, I borrowed a gun, and safe in the knowledge of its possession, watched our sheep pen for several nights, hoping to get a pop at the predatory monster, and wipe out old scores with him. I also procured a good dog, but he was carefully kept within doors on these occasions, lest his barking should frighten off my hoped-for target. Mr. Bruin, however, was not entirely ignorant of these measures, or else had business elsewhere, for he failed to put in an appearance; and other matters soon drove this one from my mind. I trusted a good deal to my dog, and for a time all went smoothly as before.

One day, it became necessary to take a grist to the mill, which was distant about seven miles. I set off at sunrise, hoping to get my grain ground, and to return before night; so I yoked up my lively steers (I had not arisen to the dignity of a horse,) and set off, taking care, as I thought, to leave the dog as a guard for Greta and the baby, and not until I had arrived at my destination did I discover that the wily little wretch had skulked behind me all the way, not daring to show himself while there was any risk of being sent back. As I felt ashamed to vent my anger on the attached brute, who now came fawning up to me, I consoled myself with the thought that I should be home before Greta could begin to feel alarmed, for I knew bears seldom venture out by daylight.

The day passed slowly and wearily on, and never did poor prisoner receive his freedom with more joy, than I felt as I turned the horny heads of my cattle in the direction of home, longing for the sight of my darling's bright face, and the soft clinging arms of my little Willie. I was much later than I had hoped or intended to be, and my utmost endeavors did not suffice to hasten our advance, for oxen are proverbially slow, and seldom quicken the weary jog which is their delight. One by one the stars dropped into the sky, and the woods around scintillated with fireflies. The distant barking of dogs alone broke the stillness, but evoked no answer from Pompey, who now contentedly toddled at my heels.

As I passed on, amid the wild, and often picturesque scenes with which I had now become familiar, I fell into a reverie, and thought carried me back to sunny old England, and the early days when I was a poor laboring orphan, and my Greta the petted darling of her home; and I wondered if God would bless my endeavors, so that in this new world I could restore to my cherished wife the comforts she had once enjoyed. Whilst thinking thus I got over my journey, and was quite unknowingly entering my own clearing, when a loud growl from the dog awoke my attention, and caused me to discover where I was. The fireflies flashed continuously, but that pale, steady light, just ahead, I knew to proceed from the windows of my lowly home. Just then, the dog, with a loud yelp, sprang past me, nearly upsetting me, and disappeared into the darkness in front.

I was now quite close to the house. The night was very dark, but not so much but that I could perceive a dark form running, or rather, leaping away from the door of my cottage, hotly pursued by the dog. A turn in its career revealed its broadside, and I knew that the sanguinary robber of my sheep pen was before me. I cheered on the dog, which, however, could do nothing save give chase—while, as to my getting a shot, that was now out of the question.

Hastening to the door I shouted for admittance. The door was opened by Greta, candle in hand, and pale as a corpse. I had no sooner crossed the threshold than she fell insensible in my arms. Laying her upon a rough couch of my own manufacture, I hastily relit the candle, which had fallen from her hand, and looked around me in surprise. In the cradle lay our eighteen months boy, wide awake, and staring with all the might of a pair of very blue eyes, while, huddled in one corner were our three remaining sheep, standing with their noses thrust together, as if for mutual protection and comfort. The door, I now perceived, had been nearly carried off its leather hinges, which were almost worn in two, while the staples which held it were strained considerably. A hole, large enough to admit a small pig, had been grubbed in the soft earth beneath the sill.

I had no time to ask myself what all this meant, for my fainting wife absorbed all my attention.

It was not till Greta had passed through a long and severe illness, and another little Greta had usurped Willie's place in the cradle, that I learned the full particulars of all that had occurred that night, although I had guessed much.

It appears she had watched in vain for my home coming, at the expected time, and missing Pompey as well, became quite nervous—more so, in fact, than the occasion warranted. As the

darkness came on apace, and the distant, but easily recognizable howl of a bear broke the painful stillness, her fears reached their climax. As regarded her own safety, she had much faith in the efficiency of her blazing stove, well knowing that such animals are usually afraid of fire.

But what of the sheep? In imagination, she already saw the largest and finest of her remaining woolly treasures triumphantly carried off by the relentless foe. Here a happy thought, born of the extremity of despair struck her mind.

With a glance assuring herself that our boy lay peacefully sleeping in his cradle, she went out and drove the docile sheep indoors, and firmly, as she thought, barricaded the door; then not a little proud of her achievement, sat down to await my return. Presently, what was her instinctive horror to hear hoarse, stealthy breathing without the door, which soon after received a push that might have been delivered by the shoulder of an ox.

Again that horrid breathing, so close at hand, chilled poor Greta to the heart, palpitating wildly, as low suspended growls broke on her ear. She knew then that fear was not likely to deter the terrible beast from seeking the prey he keenly scented under her roof. He must have been horribly pressed by hunger, or perhaps, for who shall limit the instinct of these creatures, he knew that he had only a defenceless woman between him and a rich repast. After a few minutes, what was my poor girl's horror, to hear him commencing to root beneath the door, and after another interval his hog-like snout protruded beneath the frail barrier, which actually shook with his tremendous efforts.

With no definite idea of what she was going to do with it, Greta had held the poker in her hand till now. At this juncture, scarcely knowing what she did, she thrust it into the blazing logs, in the stove, and withdrawing it red hot, made a desperate lunge with it at Bruin's nose.

A howl of pain, and it might be defiance, showed that her effort, though directed at random, had been successful.

Again, and again, the action was repeated, but only seemed to madden, instead of intimidating the brute, who must soon have effected an entrance, but for my timely arrival as before described, when the revulsion of feeling caused the overwrought girl to faint in my arms.

After her recovery, Greta declared we must remove to a more settled district, as she repelled the thought of continuing in our present lonely habitation.

The way to this was opened sooner than we expected.

A neighbour kindly lent me a Quebec news paper, in which he observed, by a singular coincidence, an advertisement setting forth that “if Margaret Hilder, wife of William Fowler, were living, she would hear of something to her advantage, by communicating with Messrs Quill P. Holdfast, of Chancery Lane, London.”

Need I say that no time was lost in acquiring this desirable information, which was to the effect that my wife's uncle, Benjamin Hilder, was dead, and in dying had confessed the wretched forgery, and deception of which he had been guilty, and had restored her rightful inheritance to his niece, besides willing her his own property, in the fervor of his death bed repentance? With ample means at command, I purchased a well stocked farm in a thickly settled part of the Eastern Townships, close to a thriving village soon to become a town, where Greta runs no risk of a repetition of her dreadful experience.

MARY J. WISE.

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC.

THE London *Hornet* believes that Mlle. Titiens will find her chief triumph in New York.

MR. H. H. WOOD, the actor who played the clergyman, *Julian Gray*, in “The New Magdalen,” when it was first brought out, is to abandon the stage for a Unitarian pulpit.

JENNIE LEE, the apple blossom of an actress, who has so many admirers, played *Polly Eccles* in “Caste” for her benefit, at the California Theatre, San Francisco, recently.

MR. and MRS. Seguin have withdrawn from the Kellogg troupe. Mrs. Seguin's roles have been shared by Miss Beaumont, and Miss Randall sang “Siebel,” recently, in Philadelphia.

NEVER, according to a London critic, have the varied abilities of the Vokes Family been displayed to greater advantage than in the pantomime of “Aladin” at the Drury Lane Theatre.

MME NILSSON is established in elegant apartments in the Boulevard Malesherbes, Paris, and her friends and admirers keep it converted into a perfect bower of flowers.

ERNST'S VIOLIN, a “Stradivarius” of the great period, and in perfect preservation, has just been purchased by the eminent violinist, Madame Norman-Néruda, from Mr. David Laurie, of Glasgow, for the sum of £500.

A MUSICAL journal of Milan gives a list of the new operas brought out in Italy, during 1874. The number is thirty-five, being an increase on the preceding year, when it was only twenty-four, whilst in 1872, fifty-two were produced.

At the Italiens Theatre Bellini's “Sonnambula” has been produced for the debut of Madame Moriani, a lady in good society in Paris, as Amina. Her nervousness was, however, so great that she could scarcely get out the notes. On a second performance there was a perceptible improvement.

Mlle. Broisot, a young Parisian actress, is very pretty, and, having to act the part of an heiress who is quite plain, tried to get rid of some of her charms by painting the corners of her mouth so as to make it look large, and wearing a large ruff to disguise her neck. Never did ugly actress try as hard to look pretty as this lovely one strove for homeliness.