

THE MAIDEN'S CHOICE.

My eyes are bright, my heart is light,
My purse is heavy with gold;
Yet I am afraid I shall rest a maid
Until I have grown old.

Some would take me for beauty's sake
Some would wed me for gold;
Such love would die did beauty fly—
I will not be bought or sold.

But if I could find one who would
Love me for my true self,
I'd barter my dress nor feel the loss
For what care I for self?

One who would screen no action mean:
A man of noble mind
Who would with might defend the right:
Frank, loyal, brave and kind.

Could I but prove how I would love
Him, all my soul aglow!
If I but knew his love was true,
Or were he high or low

'Twere all the same, I'd yield my fame
Into his hands, secure
No taint of shame could spot the name
Of one whose love was pure.

NED P. MAH.

MISS BESS.

BY NED P. MAH.

"Boat's late to-day, Jim. Telegraph man says she didn't leave Copper Head till 1 o'clock. So they'll have finished dinner long before we get aboard, and we'd better have our hash slung to us here."

"All right. Ask Miss Bess what's on the card, and order for the two of us. What'll please you'll please me."

An interview with Miss Bess resulted in a cosy little dinner being shortly served to the two hungry passengers, who, though from time to time they glanced admiringly at her superb figure and the dark beauty of her face, forbore any attempt at the rough jokes which they would have thought the correct thing with many a landlord's daughter elsewhere.

Miss Bess—they all, even the roughest of them, called her Miss—was a magnificent half-breed, with masses of raven hair, almost blue in its blackness, and a strange, abstracted, dreamy look in her large dark eyes—a look which would almost lead you to imagine that she was not attending to the orders that were given her; yet, deft-handed and silent, she served her father's guests quickly and well, and elicited everywhere a respectful admiration. Some of the commercial men professed not to like her, it was true, for they were afraid of her, and would as soon have thought of playing with a magnificent tiger as have dared to snatch a kiss from the ripe red lips, between which the milk white teeth gleamed; but they owned that nowhere else were they better served, or more quickly attended to.

"Which boat is it to-day, Bill?" asked the traveller addressed as Jim of his companion, as his hunger appeased, he at length thrust back his chair and threw his napkin on the table.

"It's the old Cormorant," replied Bill. "She's never very fast anyway, and just now freights are heavy, and to-day she's got the wind dead against her into the bargain."

"There she is now, at any rate," returned the other, as a sonorous whistle boomed loud and quavered, as the mighty wind wrestled and toyed with the volume of sound.

The two men rose and settled their score, and were issuing from the inn to take their way to the wharf, when in the middle of a gust of wind, himself like a hurricane, through the violently opened door a handsome stripling entered, and, rushing between them, knocked them right and left, like a ball striking to effect a double hazard at English billiards.

"That youngster'll get his head in a sling one of these days," remarked Bill, as the figure rapidly disappeared in an inner room. "He's a smart lad, but madder than a hatter. He and Miss Bess would about make a pair of it when they've got their gas on, I reckon. Miss Bess is a fine girl, but I wouldn't like to be round when she was in her tantrums."

"I want a rare steak right away," affirmed a guest, as, after repeated ringing of the bell on the restaurant table, Mrs. Gagnon herself appeared in answer to the summons. "Where's Miss Bess to-day, anyway. Not gone sick, is she?"

"Oh no," replied her mother, laughing. "Bess is never sick. Guess she's just run into her room to fix her hair. I'll see your order attended to right off, sir."

Shortly afterwards, George Burton, the Cormorant's purser, with a flushed face, passed through the bar.

"Have a drink, George!" cried more than one of the idlers in the bar-room, for despite his quick temper and somewhat brusque manner, George was well known and very popular.

"Can't," cried George. "Don't you hear the old man whistling like mad?" I shall have a squeak for it as it is, if I don't want to be left cooling my heels on the wharf."

The last words were lifted over the roof and scattered broadcast on the prairie by the wind, for, before he had uttered them, the speaker was well outside the door of the Red Brick Inn.

Then Miss Bess re-appeared in the dining-room, her black hair very smooth and shining, and went about quick and quiet and dreamy-eyed as usual, deftly executing the orders that were usual.

"Handsome, well-built fellow that George Burton," said one of the men who had asked

him to drink, as he came into the dining-room from the bar. "Got one of the prettiest girls in New York, too, for a wife, and two children, a pidgeon's pair, boy and girl, regular cherubim."

"Didn't know he was married," returned the person addressed. "Looks so young. Only a boy himself."

"I do know, though," said the other. "I was there when he was spliced. In fact his wife is a sort of distant cousin, and the boy—pledge No. 2—was born just before I left for Manitoba in the fall. Haven't seen any of 'em since, but I'll show 'em to you, if you have a mind, when we reach N. Y."

Meanwhile Bill Black, mate of the Cormorant, had done what he could, seeing the small amount of freight he had to deal with, to eke out the time and give George Burton a chance. He had landed six barrels that he knew were for She-moganish and not for White Falls, and then ordered them on again, but they were all aboard now and no George in sight. The captain engaged, tugged the whistle angrily, the gangways were run off, and the Cormorant began the manoeuvres necessary to get out of the awkward little harbor. Then the Captain's sharp eye spied Bob, the porter, hovering anxiously about and called to him:

"Mr. Burton ashore again?"

"Didn't see him come aboard, sir."

"That boy will break his neck with the Company sure as eggs," said the Captain. "I'll give him a lesson." And he telegraphed the engineer full speed, ahead, just as George's lithe figure burst round the corner of the freight shed, leapt the some fourteen feet of water between the wharf and the Cormorant's stern, caught the taffrails with both hands and vaulted on board over the heads of two nervous old ladies, whom he begged courteously not to be alarmed, and wormed his way through the crowd to his little office amidships, there to ticket his passengers.

About nine o'clock that night the Cormorant had to put in to Port Wilderness, with some slight disarrangement of her machinery, which would necessitate her delay until after the arrival of the train from Lake Head next morning, as the engineer would have to run up to the city and back to obtain some necessary article for the repairs. George Burton was soon ashore, negotiating the loan of a horse from a half-breed farmer.

"Pity you hadn't come half an hour earlier," said his friend; "I had a pony in the yard. Now they're all loose on the prairie, but you are welcome to any you can catch."

Presently George had lassoed a wiry little Indian brute, and soon was cantering gayly over the fifteen miles of green sward that separated him from White Falls.

Meantime Miss Bess had moved among the guests at the Red Brick Inn, but her ripe lips were no longer parted with the bright smile that showed the even rows of gleaming teeth, her bearing lacked its usual imperious erectness, her quiet tread had lost its wonted elasticity. The guests looked at her askance, and asked each other in whispers, what was wrong with Miss Bess to-night? And when the day's work was at length ended, and the house was quiet, and all its inmates were at rest, Bessie Gagnon raised the sash of her little bed-chamber on the ground floor, slid out shadow-like upon the prairie, and flitted across it as fast as the lead-like weight at her heart would let her, towards the spot where the murmuring falls seemed to call her, with a constant refrain of importunate promises of peace, and rest, and oblivion.

Shortly after eleven George Burton reached the brow of the hill which overlooked the falls and the Red Brick Inn and the gleaming streak of canal. The night was wild, but fine. Scouring clouds raced each other across the sky, throwing strange, weird, phantom-like shadows, interspersed with patches, and dabs, and gasches of brilliant moonlight. Checking his little steed in the shadow of a clump of brushwood, George surveyed the grandeur of the scene. Presently a hurrying figure caught his eye, making a beeline from the inn to the rock above the falls. It was the figure of a woman. "That's Bess," cried George to himself, "I'll bet my life. Is the girl mad? What is she doing there this time of night?" and, digging his heels into the flanks of his wiry little pony, he scoured down the slope at forty miles an hour.

When she caught sight of this flying apparition, Bessie Gagnon increased her speed, but, finding herself halted, turned, made a movement to retrace her steps, but, feeling flight useless, faced about, and stood at bay, erect and white. George threw himself from his horse, and would have caught her in his arms, but she struck him passionately in the face and struggled from his embrace.

"Don't touch me, George Burton," she cried.

"You are a villain!"

Quick as lightning George caught her by the arms and pinioned her, grinding her elbows together behind her back.

"It's a straight waistcoat you want, Bess," he exclaimed, "but I guess I can hold you anyhow until the fit's over. Now, perhaps, you'll explain why I am a villain at eleven, when I was all that was nice at three o'clock to-day."

The girl choked and trembled all over with rage and pain. Her struggles soon exhausted her, however, and hysterical sobs convulsed her frame.

"Oh, George!" she said, "why did you deceive me so? Why didn't you tell me that you had a wife and family in New York?"

"Ah! that's the trouble, is it?" replied George. "I did not know that it was of such

vital importance to you whether I was a bachelor or a widower. Poor Mary died soon after little George's birth, near upon eleven months ago."

GIVING AWAY A CHILD.

On board a ship, bound for the United States, were an Irish family—husband, wife, and three children. They were evidently in very destitute circumstances. But the exceeding beauty of the children—two girls and one boy—won for them the admiration of their fellow-passengers. A lady, who had no children of her own, was desirous of adopting one of the little travellers, and made application, through a friend, who gives the following touching account of the negotiation:—

"I proceeded," he says, "immediately on my delicate diplomacy. Finding my friend on deck, I thus opened the affair."

"You are very poor?"

His answer was very characteristic.

"Poor, sir!" said he. "Ay, if there's a poorer man than me troublin' the world, God pity both of us, for we'd be about aqil."

"Then do you manage to support your children?"

"Is it support them? Why, I don't support them any way; they get supported some way or other. It'll be time enough for me to complain when they do."

"Would it be a relief to you to part with one of them?"

It was too sudden. He turned sharply round—

"A what, sir?" he cried. "A relafe to part from my child? Would it be a relafe to have the hands chopped from the body, or the heart torn out of my breast? What do you mane?"

"You don't understand me," I replied. "If, now, it were in one's power to provide comfortably for one of your children, would you stand in the way of its interests?"

"No, sir," said he. "The heavens knows that I would willingly cut the sunshine away from myself that they might get all the warm of it. But tell us what you're drawing at?"

"I then told him that a lady had taken a fancy to have one of his children, and if he would consent to it the child should be educated, and finally settled comfortably in life. This threw him into a fit of gratulation. He scratched his head, and looked the very picture of bewilderment. The struggle between a father's love and a child's interest was evident and touching. At length he said—

"Oh, murther! wouldn't it be a great thing for the baby? But I must go with Mary—that's the mother of them—and it wouldn't be right to be givin' away her children before her face and she to know nothing at all about it."

"Away with you, then," said I, "and bring me an answer back as soon as possible."

In about half an hour he returned, leading two of his children. His eyes were red and swollen, and his face pale from excitement and agitation.

"Well," I inquired, "what success?"

"It was a hard struggle, sir," said he. "But I've been talking to Mary, an' she says, as it's for the child's good, maybe the heavens above will give us strength to bear it."

"Very well. And which of them is it to be?"

"Faix, and I don't know, sir," and he ran his eye dubiously over both. "Here's little Norah—she's the oldest, an' won't need her mother so much. But then—O, tear an' aigers, it's myself that can't tell which I'd rather part with least, so take the first one that comes wid a blessing. There, sir," he said, and handed over little Norah.

Turning back, he snatched her up in his arms, and gave her one long hearty father's kiss, saying, through his tears—

"May God be good to him that's good to you."

Then taking his other child by the hand he walked away, leaving Nora with me. I took her down to the cabin, and we thought the matter settled. It must be confessed, to my great indignation, however, in about an hour's time I saw my friend Pat at the window. As soon as he caught my eye he began making signs for me to come out. I did so, and found that he had the other child in his arms.

"What's the matter now?" I asked.

"Well, sir," said he, "I ask your honor's pardon for troubling you about so foolish a thing as a child or two, but we're thinking that maybe it'd would make no differ—you see, sir, I've been talkin' to Mary, an' she says she can't part wid Norah, because the creature has a look ov me; but here's little Biddy, she's purtyer far, an' av you please, sir, will you swap?"

"Certainly, whenever you like," said I.

So he snatched up little Norah as though it was some recovered treasure, and darted away, leaving little Biddy, who remained with us all night. But, lo! the moment we entered the cabin in the morning, there was Pat making his mysterious signs again at the window, and this time he had the youngest, a baby, in his arms.

"What's wrong now?" I inquired.

"An' it's meself that's almost ashamed to tell ye. Ye see, I've been talkin' to Mary, an' she didn't like to part with Norah because she has a look ov me, an' sure I can't part with Biddy because she's the model ov her mother; but there's little Paudeen, sir. There's a lump of a Christian for you, only two years old, and not a day more. He'll never be any trouble to anybody, for av he takes after his mother he'll have

the brightest eye, an' av he takes after his father he'll have a fine broad pair of shoulders to push his way through the world. Will you swap again, sir?"

"With all my heart," said I. "It is all the same to me;" and little Paudeen was left with me.

"Ha, ha," said I to myself, as I looked into his big, laughing eyes, "so the affair is settled at last."

But it wasn't; for ten minutes had scarcely elapsed when Pat rushed into the cabin without sign or ceremony and snatched up the baby, and said—

"It's no use yer honor. I have been talking to Mary, an' we can't do it. Look at him, sir; he's the youngest and the best of the batch. You wouldn't keep him from us. You see, sir, Norah has a look ov me, an' Biddy has a look ov Mary; but, sure, little Paudeen has the mother's eye, an' my nose, an' a little bit of both ov uz all over. No, sir, we can bear hard fortune, starvation, and misery, but we can't bear to part with our children, unless it be the will of heaven to take them from us."

THE LEGAL LENGTH OF A LECTURE.

Archibald Forbes describes in the *May Century*, how he came to be sued by a Welsh local agent for breaking an engagement to lecture. The lecturer had only an hour and a half to devote to the audience, owing to the necessity of catching a train for London. As the agent insisted on a preliminary speech of introduction, etc., Mr. Forbes refused to lecture, and was nearly mobbed at the depot. The case was tried, with the following result:

His contention was that he was acting in the interests of the Newport people in prohibiting the curtailment of the lecture. Mine was that the lecture hour was eight, and that my lecture was only an hour and a half long; when the proceedings were protracted, it was because of unpunctuality and other people's oratory. In proof of my assertion I offered to read my lecture to the court, but the jury visibly shuddered, and the judge said life was too short for this kind of evidence. However, he summed up in my favor, and the jury followed his lead; so that I won my only law suit. The plaintiff appealed to a higher court in London, and the case came on before Lord Coleridge, who made very short work of the matter.

"It is acknowledged," said he, "by the defendant that his lecture is an hour and a half long, and it seems the plaintiff wanted it longer. Now I hold," he continued, "that any lecture is a common nuisance that lasts longer than an hour, and so I dismiss the appeal."

VARIETIES.

WHEN Macready was playing *Macbeth* in the provinces, the actor cast for the part of the messenger in the last act was absent. So the stage manager sent a supernumerary on to speak the lines set down for the messenger, viz: "As I did stand my watch upon the hill, I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought the wood began to move." *Macbeth*: "Liar and slave!" Super: "Pon my soul, Mr. Macready, they told me to say it!"

IN GOOD HANDS.—He was a young fellow, a little awkward and bashful, but of sterling worth of character. She was a Cincinnati belle, and had sense enough to appreciate his worth, despite his awkwardness and bashfulness, and was his fiancée. On a gloomy Sunday evening last winter they were standing in front of the window in the parlour of her home, watching the snowflakes rapidly falling outside. He was not up in society small talk, and, being hard up for something to say, remarked as he watched the snow falling: "This will be hard on the old man's calves and sheep." "Never mind, dear," said she, slipping her arm around him, "I will take care of one of them."

ADVICE TO THIEVES.—History records that a provident American citizen, before leaving town for a sojourn among the mountains, posted upon the inside of the hall-door a conspicuous placard, with this inscription: "To burglars or those intending to burgle. All my plated jewellery and other valuables are in the Safe Deposit Company's vaults. The trunks and cupboards contain nothing but second-hand clothing and similar matters, too bulky to remove, on which you would realize comparatively little. The keys are in the left-hand top drawer of the side-board, if you doubt my word. You will also find there a certified cheque to bearer for ten dollars, which will remunerate you for your loss of time and disappointment. Please wipe your feet on the mat, and don't spill any candle grease on the carpet."

STREETS OF GOLD.—Thirty miles from Santa Fee, New Mexico, is the Mexican village Las Placitas. It is built of adobe huts, founded on rocks. Prospector Jessie Martin detected mineral in this rock. He pounded up some of it and got a rich result in gold. He located the streets of the town whence the gold rock was taken, and had assays taken, which yielded \$4,000 of gold to the ton, the lowest grade of rock assayed being \$48. Governor Lew Wallace has just returned from the place. He paced off a lead, making it eighty-four paces in width. Its length is not known, but 9,000 feet along the vein has been located. Subsequent assays in Santa Fe give from \$3,000 to \$6,000 per ton. The whole village is built on the ledge, and rock worth \$3 per pound has been thrown about as worthless.