

DEATH'S STING.

BY THOMAS CLAUDE DEAN.

Far in the depths of everlasting night
I wander now;
For nameless sorrow dwelleth in my sight,
And on my brow.

II.

The demon grief hath built a lifetime throne,
And reigns supreme;
Mocking with plaintive sigh and soul-born moan,
My once sweet theme.

III.

With me life's naughty sea is one great sigh,
And on the shore
The waves dash low and mournful, with the cry
Of "nevermore."

IV.

Then ask me not where all my joy hath flown,
Or, why it fled,
But let me, now, go on my way—alone!
For she is dead.
Ontario.

A RAILWAY JOURNEY.

A close cab laden with luggage drove up to Euston Station in time for the 7.30 A. M. train for the north. While the porters surrounded the boxes, the occupants of the cab passed straight through on to the platform, looking rather nervously about them. They were two—a very pretty girl in a most fascinating travelling costume of blue serge and fur, and an elderly woman, who, from her appearance, might have been her nurse.

"Sit here, and don't move, Miss Edith, while I take your ticket: now mind you don't stir," and she deposited her on a bench.

"Are you the young lady as has ordered a through carriage reserved?" asked a guard, with official abruptness.

"Yes."

"Then come along of me, miss."

"No, no; I must wait," and Edith, who was quite unused to travelling, grasped her bag and did not move. The guard looked astonished, but only shrugged his shoulders and walked off. Presently he came back.

"You'll be late, Miss," he said, not encouragingly. "Train'll be off in another minute." Edith looked at him in despair. Should she leave her post? Would Jenkins never come back? A loud aggressive bell began to ring. Edith started up; she seized all the things Jenkins had put under her charge—rugs, carpet-bag, umbrella-case, loose shawl, and provision basket—and was trying to stagger away under the load, when Jenkins came back very hot and flurried, seized half the packages, and hurried her to the train. The guard unlocked the special carriage, and put her in.

"No hurry, ma'am," he said; "four minutes still."

"I don't at all like it, now it has come to the point, Jenkins," said Edith, leaning out of the window.

"Nor I, miss: and how your mamma could let you go all alone like this, passes me; but I have spoken to the guard and written to the station-master, and you've a good bit to eat, and not a blessed soul to get into the carriage from end to end: so don't be afraid, my dear, and I make no doubt that your dear uncle will meet you at the other end."

"I have no doubt that one of my uncles will—I hope uncle John, as I have never seen uncle George."

"Everything you want, miss?" said an extra porter. "I have put in all the rugs and a hot-water-tin, and the luggage is all right in the van just behind."

"All right, all right!" said Mrs. Jenkins.

"Thank you, ma'am," said the porter, pocketing a shining half-crown.

A gentleman suddenly came running on to the platform; the train was just about to start. "Here, porter, take my portmanteau; quick—smoking carriage!"

"All full, sir! quick, sir, please!"

"It's Mr. George!" cried Jenkins, suddenly. Edith started forward. "Oh!"

The gentleman caught sight of Jenkins. "Here, guard, guard! put me in here!"

"Can't, sir—special."

"Quick! let me in! it's my niece!"

The train began to move.

"Confound you, be quick!"

The door was opened just in time, and Edith, as excited as Mr. George, seized him with both hands by the coat-sleeve, and pulled him in with all her might into the carriage. They were off.

Mr. George sat down opposite to Edith with a sigh of relief.

"I am so glad to see you, uncle George," said Edith, timidly; "for though I am generally bold enough, I was rather afraid of this long journey."

"I will take care of you," said the uncle. "I am very glad to make your acquaintance, my dear." The "my dear" sounded a little strained, as though it were not a common expression on uncle George's lips, and Edith looked up at him. She had not expected uncle to be so young in appearance; but she had often heard her mother say that he was the youngest-looking man of his age she had ever known; and now she quite agreed—for though she knew him to be really about fifty-eight years of age, he might from his appearance be taken for five-and-twenty, or even less. He was remarkably good-looking—more so than she had ex-

pected—and his eyes looked very young, and frank, and blue. There was a twinkle in them also; she was sure that he was fond of fun. Edith felt quite fond of her uncle; she was not one bit afraid of him—his face was so open, and good, and kindly.

"Now we must make ourselves comfortable," said uncle George, and he proceeded to set to work. He put the rugs and baskets into the nets, he pushed the carpet-bag and portmanteau under the seat, took off his hat, put on a very becoming Turkish fez, extracted newspapers from his pocket, spread a shawl over Edith's knees, and then wriggled himself comfortably into a corner seat.

"How well old Jenkins wears!" he said. "She looks like a young dairy-maid."

"Oh!" said Edith, a little shocked at his irreverence.

"I remember how she used to feed me with dried fruit and macaroons out of the store-room."

"Really! surely she is not old enough for that?"

"Oh, ah! I forgot her age; but the fact was I wasn't of course a boy."

"Of course not. Why, I think mamma said that you and Jenkins were born the same day—or was she the eldest?"

"Oh, I was the eldest."

"No, you were not: I remember she was three weeks older than you, and it was because she was your foster-sister that she always was so fond of you. Indeed, mamma said that she wanted to leave her to go to you and aunt Maria when your eldest children were born, even out to India."

"My eldest children! what do you mean? Oh! by the by, yes; they are dead."

"Dead! my cousin George, dead?"

"Yes, yes, my dear."

"Poor little Addie! was it true that George never got over her loss?"

"Don't!" said uncle George, abruptly; and he held up a newspaper upside down.

Edith touched his arm very gently.

"I am so sorry, uncle George," she said, sweetly. "If I had known that you had lost them both, I would not have said anything; please forgive me. And poor aunt Maria, too! Oh, I beg your pardon."

Uncle George threw down his paper and looked smilingly at her.

"Does your mamma ever speak of me?"

"Constantly, perpetually," said Edith, her voice still a little choked.

"And what does she say of me?"

"She says that you are the dearest, kindest, warmest-hearted, sweetest dispositioned old gentleman existing: she says you have been a gallant officer, and a loyal, true-hearted soldier." Edith's eyes kindled. "And I have heard how you distinguished yourself in India, and I—I am very glad to see you, Uncle George."

"Yes, yes, he is all that," said he, with enthusiasm.

"What? who?" asked Edith, confused.

"My father—I—I—I mean my son."

"Poor George! he was a most distinguished soldier also. I wish I had known him. No, Uncle George, I won't speak so—I do not want to pain you."

"I like to hear you tell me about him, my dear."

"I have only heard how good a soldier he was, and that he was so handsome and so good."

"And had he no faults and defects?"

Edith looked surprised.

"I used to hear that he was conceited."

"No, no," said Uncle George, hastily; "he never was that. He was proud, I grant—perhaps too proud—but never conceited."

"Poor George!" sighed Edith; "I had so looked forward to knowing him."

"Had you really?"

"Yes; I never had a companion of my own age. Do tell me, shall I like my cousins at Hatton?"

"I think so, some of them; do you mean Uncle John's daughters, or his step-children?"

"Both."

"I think you will like Mary, tolerate Susan, abhor Agatha, admire Jane, and adore Alice."

"Alice is the adorable one, is she?" said Edith, laughing; "and is she the one they say is so pretty?"

"Oh no; poor Alice is deformed, and can never leave the sofa; but she has the sweetness of an angel and the courage of a martyr; she is not in the least pretty."

"Oh, what a trial! always on the sofa?"

"How comes it that you know none of your cousins?" said he, suddenly.

"Why do you want me to tell you what you know so much better than I do, Uncle George?"

"Yes, yes, of course; but naturally I want to know your side of the story. Have you never been at Hatton?"

"Never; and I thought it so very kind of you to induce Uncle John to persuade mamma to let me go."

"Yes; I thought, you know, that a few companions of your own age would do you good. How old are you?"

"Did you not get mamma's letter, in which she told you that I was to be eighteen to-morrow?"

"No; it must have been late. I never heard of it."

"How very unfortunate! Then no one will know I am coming. She asked you to tell Uncle John about the trains and things."

"Oh, ah! that letter! oh, of course, that is

all right. I don't—I—I sometimes don't read letters through."

Edith laughed.

"I will tell you one version of my story. Mamma being papa's widow, and papa having been the eldest son, had to leave Hatton when I was born and turned out to be a stupid little girl; and she went abroad because she was so delicate, and became a Roman Catholic."

"Holloa!"

"What is it, Uncle George?"

"You are not one, I hope?"

Edith looked rather indignant. "It is very odd of you to say that," she said, "when you know as well as I do all that you did about it; indeed I shall never forget your kindness. I was very unhappy when mamma wanted me to change; and Uncle John's letters and all Aunt Maria wrote made it worse than ever, only your letters made all smooth; and mamma was so much touched by the one you wrote to her about papa's trust in her, and my not being hers only, and all that, that, indeed, I have always loved you—you have seemed to me like my own dear father."

"I am very glad, my dear child, and I hope that in future you will be guided by my advice."

"I hope I shall see a great deal of you, Uncle George, for I know how fond I shall be of you, for my mother loves you dearly."

"It is very kind of her."

"And do you know, since we came to live in England, I have never paid a single visit, or been for one week away from home. Oh, it is such fun going to Hatton! Do my cousins ride?"

"Yes, a great deal; are you fond of it?"

"I love it; there is nothing in the world to me like a good gallop. Ah, it was the greatest trial of all my life when Queen Mab was sold!"

"When was that?"

"Mamma made me give up riding, or rather I gave it up of myself, because it made her so nervous."

"What else do you care for?—dancing?"

"Oh, I love it; but I have never been to a ball in my life."

"There are to be two at Hatton next week, and you must promise me the first valse at each."

"Do you valse?"

"Oh yes. You see I am not such an old foggy as you expected."

"No; nobody would believe you to be fifty-eight, except for one thing."

"What is that?"

But Edith blushed and would not answer.

"You need not mind, child—I never was at all sensitive; and alas! now my memory is not what it was."

"That's it," said Edith, eagerly; "only I did not like to say it. Here we are at a station."

It was now ten o'clock; Uncle George bought the "Times" and the "Daily News," and they both began to read. About twelve o'clock the pangs of hunger began to assail Edith, and she exclaimed—

"Uncle George, it is only twelve o'clock, and I must eat to live."

"I have been existing merely for the last hour with the greatest difficulty, but I have got nothing when-with to refresh exhausted nature; I calculated on a bun at Carlisle."

"Hours hence! No, I am amply provided. Will you have beef or chicken sandwiches, or cold partridge or what?"

They made a very good lunch, and uncle and niece grew hourly better acquainted.

"I believe we ought to look out of the window," said he presently. "My father said that the country about here was quite beautiful."

"That must have been before the days of railways," said Edith, gravely. "Those coaching days must have been quite delightful."

"They were."

"Mamma has told me about that extraordinary adventure you and papa had on the Aberdeen coach."

"It was extraordinary."

"Papa caught the branch of a tree, did he not?"

"Yes; and do you remember what I did?"

"You jumped out just as the coach upset, and sat on all the horses' heads."

"And a most uneasy seat it must have been; and did Uncle Arthur—I mean your papa—remain suspended in mid-air?"

"No, he swung into the tree. I have often heard of your climbing exploits, and that when you were young you could climb any tree."

"I have not lost the power," said Uncle George stretching himself. "Holloa!"

"What is the matter?" said Edith startled.

"Nothing—nothing—sit still!"

But she followed the direction of his eyes. The train (a very long one) was going round a sharp curve, they were in one of the last carriages, and to her horror and terror, she saw about a hundred yards in front of the train, a whole herd of cows on and off the line—two or three frantically galloping.

All heads are stretched out of the windows, clannouring tongues and even cries resounded from the other carriages, but neither Edith or George uttered a sound, only she put back her hand and caught his; he seized it very tightly in the suspense, knowing well that a terrible accident might be impending. It was hardly a second, but it seemed a lifetime. The frantic cattle rushed off the line in a body, all but one unfortunate beast. The guards put on the very heaviest brakes, but the impetus was so great that the slackening was hardly perceptible.

It may have been fortunate that it was so, for instead of upsetting the train, the cow was tossed off the line utterly destroyed, and the engine rushed on in safety.

George and Edith sat down opposite to each other; both were very pale.

"Thank God!" said Edith, and she covered her face with one hand. George did not speak, but he took off his cap and looked out of the window for one minute.

"Now I shall give you some sherry," he said suddenly. "You are the pluckiest little brick I ever came across. Any other girl would have screamed."

"I never scream," said Edith, indignantly; "and I don't want any sherry."

"I am your uncle, and I say you are to have some—drink it up."

"I hate wine," said she giving back the flask.

"There, good child to do as you are told."

At the next station a perfect crowd of passengers was waiting for the up-train. A great fete was going on in the next town for the visit of some royal personage, and the train was filled to overflowing. Presently the civil guard came up to the special carriage and said most deprecatingly that there was one gentleman, who couldn't find a place anywhere; and as he was only going to the next station, would they admit him for that twenty minutes. Uncle George consented very discontentedly, and very grudgingly moved his long legs to admit of the entry of a very stout old gentleman, who sat heavily down, and received into his ample lap a perfect pile of packages and baskets, and a brace of hares, and a rabbit tied by the legs which he had dexterously suspended by a string round his neck.

"Not worth while, indeed, my dear madam," he said, as Edith began to make room for his things. "Only twenty minutes—no inconvenience, I assure you."

The heavily-weighted train moved off. The old gentleman now began a series of playful bows which made the hares and rabbits dance up and down.

"It really was too good of you to admit an old foggy like me," he said blandly; "for of course with half an eye I can see the tender situation."

A deep growl from Uncle George. He gave a little start and went on to himself—

"Sweet young couple! just wedded, eh?"

Edith felt half choked with laughter, but she managed to say convulsively—

"Will you give me my book, Uncle George?"

The old gentleman started, cocked his head as a blackbird does when he perceives a very fat worm, and muttered—

"Impossible!"

Edith and George were wrapped in their respective novels. The old gentleman fidgeted, sighed, and arranged his features into a most sanctimonious expression. There was dead silence till he reached the station, where he descended. The departure bell was ringing, when his head suddenly reappeared at the window, the rabbit streaming wildly from the back of his neck.

"My children," he said, "take my advice—go back to your friends. This—A little shriek ended his discourse; the train was going on; and he, being borne along on the step involuntarily, two stout porters rushed to the rescue and lifted him off. Edith and George laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks.

"I could eat again with a little persuasion," said George, presently.

"Why, what o'clock is it?"

"Just five, and we shall not get in till eight-thirty. Remember that we had our luncheon at twelve."

"Very well." And they proceeded to eat.

The sun had gone down, and the whole sky was gorgeous with gold and crimson light, on which great black clouds floated prophetically.

"What a grand sky!" said Edith.

"Magnificent! Nowhere does one see such clouds as in England."

"Were you very fond of India?"

"Of course I am; my work lies there, my hopes, my future."

Edith looked astonished. "I should have thought," she said, "that you would have been content to rest at home; but I admire you for loving work. Shall you go out again?"

"That depends very much upon circumstances. It would be a great grief to me to give up my profession."

"It is very odd, but I certainly think that mamma told me you had given up your profession."

"She was mistaken," said Uncle George, shortly.

"I have often longed to go to India," cried Edith.

"Have you?" said George very eagerly.

"Oh yes, beyond anything; life there gives everybody a chance. I mean, heroic men and great characters are formed in India, and men have great responsibilities and development for quite a different class of most desirable qualities there."

"That is quite true; and you are just the sort of woman to help a man do anything."

"I am so glad you think so, Uncle George," she said, laughing and blushing.

At seven o'clock they reached a very large station, where the train had half an hour to wait. They got a cup of tea, and then both