

VISIONS

S. J. H.

The scene and words appropriate of the Nativity were very soothing to her, and as she listened to the wonderful story of the birth of the Son of God, a peace stole into her heart and her face regained some of the cheerfulness of youth.

Her step was lighter as she walked home from church, and she nodded merrily to her neighbours as she entered the home.

Suddenly her face paled and her step faltered as a man came forward. "Ena," he uttered, "have you no Merry Xmas wish for me to-day?" "George," she murmured, "is it you?" Is my prayer answered?

There was no doubt of it, for the touch of the caress was sufficient answer to her questions.

"What caused you to come, George?" she asked later that day.

"Well," he replied, "last night I saw a vision and in it Christ appeared and told me of God's love, and when I woke this morning my thoughts turned to you, and I felt constrained to come and, if possible, give you a Merry Xmas."

Further words were needless, and as the sister and brother knelt that night at Evensong in the parish church their hearts were full of thankfulness to the Divine Creator for the gifts that had come to them at Merry Yuletide.

Wish everybody merry and happy Xmas.

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had the opportunity of expressing to on's Compliments when you visited the Xmas shopping hampered us.

KEARNEY.

THE WRONG JULIET.

By C. T. J.

That the whole gamut of human passion can be stirred just as swiftly among the dwellers immediately without the confines of the Arctic Circle as among the more favoured inhabitants of tropical latitudes, where the heat of the sun, the luxuriance of vegetation and the general 'dolce far niente' of living cause more of a turmoil in the red corpuscles, is a strong assertion, but one none the less incontrovertible.

The love of desire and the desire of love is much the same all the world over, and even gay Letharios and love-lorn Romeos of 75 degrees north fall victims to the tender passion and use strategies which need not be despised by the superior white man in order that the object desired may be gained.

Sometimes, alas! the results are not as anticipated, and the gallant swain discovers that he has carried off—not the Juliet of his dreams, but the Caliban of his nightmares; for they suffer from visitations of these nocturnal disturbers of slumber, do Eskimos, after eating too heartily of whale blubber at supper time washed down with copious and oft-repeated draughts of lamp oil.

Ettiwa was the lovely daughter of Oksuk, a personage of some importance in his tribe, which dwelt anywhere and everywhere according to the laws governing the food supply. Oksuk being somewhat of the disposition of Whang the Miller, looked upon his beautiful offspring as the most realisable asset in the family inventory, and as such he intended that her price as well as her virtue should be set beyond rubies, or whatever is the Eskimo equivalent.

Ettiwa, as the belle of the tribe, was not without admirers. No prettier girl, be she white, brown, red or black, should be. It shows a kink somewhere, when there are no male butterflies singling their wings around the flame of beauty's lamp. Old Oksuk, however, took care that none of the tribal youth should come near without his permission, and two only of the village beaux were permitted to approach the shrine which held his jewel. These fortunate and much envied favourites were named Ahwelah and Etkusook. Upon both of them did the cunning Oksuk show his favours, which by the way did not cost him anything, said favours being the smiles of the fair damsel, except his daughter.

The first favourite in the running with him was undeniably Etkusook,

he laying claim to greater financial status in the community, though less gifted in physical perfections than his rival. The beautiful Ettiwa with feminine contrariness had already cast eyes in the direction of Ahwelah, who as before noted was an Eskimo Saul, standing at least two inches taller than any other man in the tribe, and these points count with a maiden no matter what her colour or climate.

Now appear on the scene the white explorers suffering from the modern malady Polaritis. They engage the husky lads of the community and the no less husky dogs, for the Polar journey. In this deal Etkusook is much more fortunate than Ahwelah, as being older and more experienced he secures a dog-master's job, the latter having to be content with the smaller pay and harder work of a bearer of burdens. This bit of good fortune coming the way of Etkusook, causes Oksuk, who has ever an eye to business, to throw Ahwelah out of his matrimonial calculations, and to lean upon the promoted dog-master with the greatest of grin. Before the expedition starts, Ahwelah, who is no slouch of a lover, manages to steal a few moments talk with the desire of his eyes, the gist of the conversation being entirely satisfactory to himself. Etkusook, not knowing this, and with a greater thought of the main chance, interviews the scheming Oksuk, and arranges that on the return of the party he will wed the fair Ettiwa, a la Esquimaux, reckoning, like many another self-satisfied individual, without the lady.

During the absence of the aspirants for her hand, Ettiwa is considerably pestered by her avaricious parent to marry Etkusook. But she will have none of it. Not for her the joy of seeing Etkusook lie on his back while she feeds him tit-bits of blubber and seal-flesh until he is unable to move. This only is she prepared to do for the object of her affection, the youthful Ahwelah, but she dares not let pa on to this, lest he get wise.

On the return of the expedition some months later, Etkusook presses his suit personally and with vigour, backed up by Oksuk, but to all their entreaties and threats the deaf ear is turned. Determined to have the lady to preside over his igloo, he and Oksuk make one more determined onslaught on the defenceless maiden. But the courage of thousands of generations of blubber-eating ancestors fills her frail body and endows her

with strength to resist the fate of being an unwilling bride. Meanwhile Ahwelah grows despondent, thinking his chances now are slim, when an event occurs which leaves him master of the situation. The schemers finding that fair means cannot compel their wishes, now agree to resort to foul play and abduction is the hazard on which they stake for success. Discussing ways and means in the shelter of the lee side of Oksuk's domicile, their nefarious designs are overheard by Ahwelah, who has been sneaking around on the off chance of receiving a smile from the being on whom he has set his heart. Listening carefully, and scarce daring to breathe, he secures the whole outline of campaign, and with native shrewdness sees a way to turn it to his own advantage and the discomfort and defeat of his now hated rival and his accomplices.

Making his dispositions accordingly, he watches for an opportunity of getting a few words with Ettiwa, which happens when the conspirators go over to Etkusook's igloo to drink to the success of the scheme in bumper of seal oil.

The time selected for the dastardly deed draws on apace, and having been cautioned and instructed by Ahwelah, the damsel carefully prepares to play her part in the comedy. During his term of employment with the Polar party, Ahwelah has learned a few of the white man's tricks, and as well, having a mind to eventualities, appropriated some of the medical stores. Knowing something of the soporific influences of morphia, he conveys a portion of the drug to Ettiwa, with orders to put it in Papa's night cap of hot whale oil, which, after quaffing the old gent, unsuspecting of counter-plot, enters his sleeping bag and placing himself across the entrance of the igloo is soon, under the combined influence, fast in the arms of Morpheus.

All now is silent within, but presently there is audible the sound of suppressed breathing, and Etkusook crawls cautiously into the apartment. Going round the figure at the door he makes for the sleeping bag over in the corner and very gently, so as not to waken the occupant, quietly pushes and pulls it through the passage and outside, when laboriously hoisting it on his shoulder he hurriedly makes tracks for his double kayak moored conveniently near, and into the vessel deposits his burden, which he notices with alarm is wondrously quiet and still. Not waiting to investigate he jumps in and seizing the paddle proceeds to put distance and salt water between him and the village. Across the bay he has a hunting and fishing igloo to which he intends bringing the feminine spoil of his masculine prowess. But Etkusook had never heard of the

poet Burns, and the words he wrote:

"The best laid plans of mice and men, gang aft agley", or he would not have been in such haste to land his prize, but would have tumbled it overboard with Eskimo profanity, for upon reaching his country seat and releasing his captive from the suffocating embrace of the sleeping bag, he drew forth—not the blushing and indignant Ettiwa, but the sullen and bloated visage and form of his fellow conspirator, Oksuk.

Ettiwa with truly feminine cunning had changed positions with her revered progenitor, and instead of winning a reluctant bride, Etkusook found himself in possession of some one else's father-in-law, for Ahwelah and Ettiwa taking time by the forelock, had made it up immediately following the abduction, got married after the manner of ye joyous Eskimo and lived happily ever after.

The Casualty.

By "PIONEER."

Half a mile from the trench the bombing officer of the South Downshire—known unofficially as "Bombs"—was met by the sergeant, accompanied by an orderly.

"G'day, Sergeant Hooper," greeted Bombs, cheerily. "What's it like in the trench? All right?"

Only pausing to relieve himself of bronchial encumbrances, the N. C. O. launched into explanations.

Things, it appeared, were not good. Emphatically, they were not good. On the contrary they were bad; dam bad. The bomb stores were in accessible places, and, moreover, they leaked so that the fuses were all damp. There seemed to have been no system with the battalion from whom they had taken over, the bombing officer of which appeared to be suffering, the sergeant explained, from an obscure form of mental irregularity, known to the initiated as "B.B. in his Belfry."

Bombs groaned. He was on his way to this particular trench for the first time, and he was laden with haversack, field glasses, revolver, compass, map-case, and two water bottles.

He relieved himself of all encumbrances except for one water bottle. The orderly, observing the first one included in the discarded equipment, accepted with suspicious alacrity the task of carrier to Bombs' dug-out.

Officer and sergeant spent a busy and profitable afternoon. There was a lot to see to. Each bomb store had to be located, maps consulted and memorised, strong points noted, bombs and fuses tested and examined, and all the thousand and one questions disposed of which fall to the lot of an officer when his battalion takes over a fresh part of the line.

By the time they were through it was dusk; it was also close to the time fixed for Bombs' dinner.

The sergeant stood ready to salute and go to his own dug-out. Bombs unheeded his water bottle. "Like a lot of rum, sergeant?" he invited hospitably.

"I sure should, sir," responded the N. C. O., emphatically.

"Can't understand old Bombs' carrying two bottles of rum," soliloquised the sergeant, as he made his way to his dug-out. "It isn't like 'im. 'E's no booze artist, Bombs isn't; never 'as been. A four days' tour 'an' two bottles of rum! 'E'll be gone' some if 'e gets through all that."

When he reached his destination his first thought was for the orderly, Private Tooms.

No one, apparently, knew where he was to be found. He had been observed proceeding in the direction of Bombs' dug-out; since that time, however, he had been lost to view.

The sergeant was very tired, and looked for no greater boon at the moment than a mess-tin of tea and a sleep in his bunk. On the other hand, he red the happy-go-lucky Tooms, and in any case, asatoon-sergeant, it was up to him to look after his men.

There was, therefore, nothing for it but to go in search of the absentee.

Cursing inwardly, he climbed over the parapets and dropped into the field behind. As his feet touched the ground he heard a groan.

Through the gloom he could just distinguish a form huddled miserably in a strained position under the lee of the parapets. From the doubled-up figure came, alternately, groans and other indications of human discomfort. Every now and then a strained face of exceeding whiteness looked up to Heaven as though in appeal.

Cause and Effect.

Dark as it was the sergeant could distinguish in the sufferer the classic outlines of his friend Tooms.

For a moment he thought the boy had been hit by some of the desultory shelling which had taken place in the afternoon.

He bent down sympathetically.

"Where'd it get yer, son?" he asked.

"Get me!" ejaculated the sufferer, between spasms which, in themselves, told the sergeant he had been mistaken in his first diagnosis. "Get me! Nothin's got me."

He passed a moment to keep an urgent appointment.

"At least," he corrected, wiping the cold sweat from his forehead with his sleeve. "Nothin's that the Hunns 'ave been 'andin' out."

"Then what's the matter wi' yer?" demanded the sergeant, shortly and unofficially. "Booze?"

A look of unutterable scorn flashed

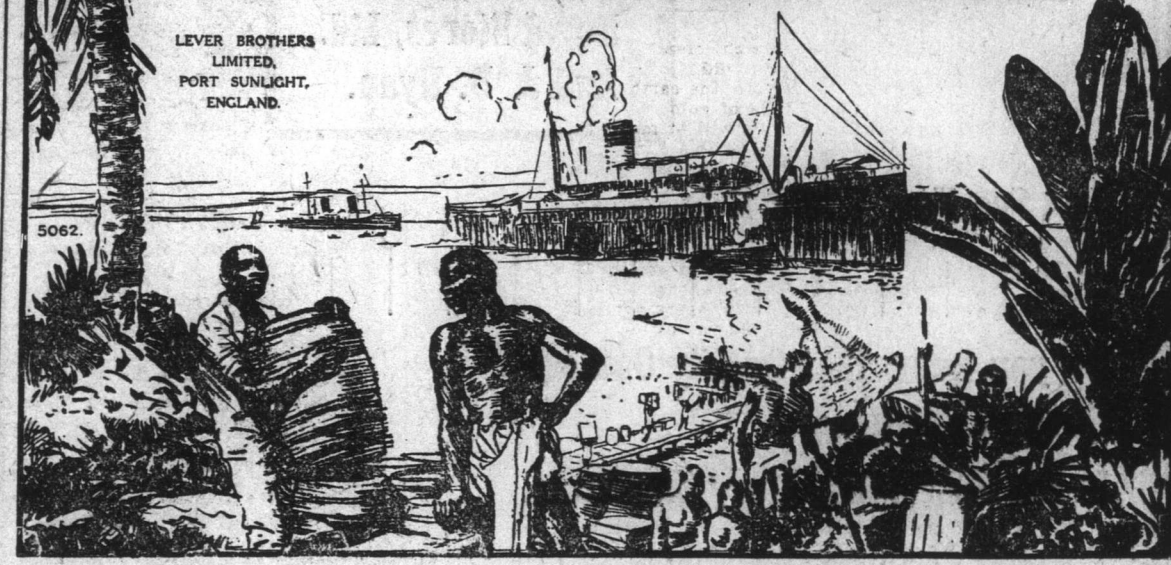


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momentarily across the pale green countenance of the sufferer.

"Booze!" he almost shouted.

"Booze!"

Another pause to answer a further call.

"The matter is," he explained feebly, "that officers, Bombs or no Bombs, don't 'ave no call to go carrying gun-oli in their water-bottles." London Times.

Beneath the Mistletoe.

Beneath the mistletoe I drew Eileen, Entranced to watch her lashes drooping low. O'er laughing eyes that strove to look serene Beneath the mistletoe.

No charm I lost; the shoulder's ivory glow. The little scarlet lips and robe of green. Her dainty cheek, her lips' carnation bow!

And then a tender kiss, to crown the scene. Nay, she was posing in my studio; I drew her for a Christmas magazine. Beneath the mistletoe.

—Corinne Rockwell Swain.

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MINARD'S LINIMENT RELIEVES NEURALGIA.

The Bewitched Clock.

(Selected).

About half-past eleven o'clock on Sunday night a human leg, enveloped in blue broadcloth, might have been seen entering Cephas Barberry's kitchen window. The leg was followed finally by the entire person of a lively Yankee, attired in his Sunday go-to-meetin' clothes. It was, in short, Joe Mayweed, who thus burglariously, in the dead of night, won his way into the dead clock-turkey.

"Wonder how much the old deacon made by orderin' me not to darken his door again?" soliloquized the young man. "Promised him I wouldn't, but didn't say nothin' about winders.

Winders is just as good as doors, if there ain't no nails to tear your trousers onto. Wonder if sal 'll come down?" The critter promised me. I'm afraid to move here, 'cause I might break my shins over sumthin' or 'nother, and wake the old folks. Cold enough to freeze a polar-bear here. Oh, here comes Sally!"

The beautiful maiden descended with a pleasant smile, a tallow candle, and a box of matches. After receiving a rapturous greeting, she made up a roaring fire in the cooking-stove, and the happy couple sat down to enjoy the sweet interchange of views and hopes. But the course of true love ran no smoother in old Barberry's kitchen than it did elsewhere, and Joe, who was making up his mind to treat himself to a kiss, was startled by the voice of the deacon, her father, shouting from her chamber door: "Sally, what are you getting up in the middle of the night for?"

"Tell him it's most morning," whispered Joe. "I can't tell 'im," said Sally. "I'll make it a truth, then."

Joe, said Sally, and running to the huge, old-fashioned clock that stood in the corner, he set it at five. "Look at the clock and tell me what time it is," cried the old gentleman upstairs.

"It's five by the clock," answered Sally, and, corroborating the words, the clock struck five. The lovers sat down again and resumed the conversation. Suddenly the staircase began to creak. "Good gracious! it's father."

"The deacon, by 'thunder!" cried Joe. "Hide me, Sally!" "Where can I hide you?" cried the distracted girl. "Oh, I know," said he; "I'll squeeze into the clock-case." And without another word he concealed himself in the case, and drew to the door behind him. The deacon was dressed, and sitting himself down by the cooking-stove, pulled out his pipe, lighted it, and commenced smoking very deliberately and calmly. "Five o'clock, eh?" said he. "Well, I shall have time to smoke three or four pipes; then I'll go and feed the critters. 'Haden't you better go and feed the critters first, sir, and then smoke

afterward?" suggested the ever dutiful Sally. "No; smokin' clears my head and wakes me up," answered the deacon, who seemed not a whit disposed to hurry his enjoyment.

Bur-r-r-while-z-ding-ding! went the clock. "Formented lightning!" cried the deacon, starting up, and dropping his pipe on the stove. "What in all creation is that?" Whist! ding! ding! ding! went the old clock-turkey.

"It's only the old clock striking five," said Sally, tremulously. "Powers of mercy!" cried the deacon, "striking five! It's struck a hundred already."

"Deacon Barberry!" cried the deacon's better half, who had hastily robed herself, and now came plunging down the staircase in the wildest state of alarm. "What is the matter with the clock?" "Goodness only knows," replied the old man. "It's been in the family these hundred years, and never did I know it to carry on so before."

Whiz! bang! bang! bang! went the old clock. "It's burst itself!" cried the old lady, shedding a flood of tears. "and there won't be nothing left of it." "It's bewitched!" said the deacon, who retained a leaven of New England superstition in his nature. "Anyhow," he said, after a pause, advancing resolutely toward the clock. "I'll see what's got into it."

"Oh don't!" cried the daughter, affectionately seizing one of his coat-tails, while his faithful wife hung to the other. "Don't!" chorused both women together. "Let go my raiment!" shouted the deacon. "I ain't afraid of the powers of darkness." But the women would not let go; so the deacon slipped off his coat, and while, from the sudden cessation of resistance, they fell heavily on the floor, he darted forward and laid his hand on the door of the clock-case. But no human power could open it. Joe was holding it inside with a death-grasp. The deacon began to be dreadfully frightened. He gave one more tug. An unearthly yell, as of a fiend in distress, came from the inside, and then the clock-case pitched head foremost on the floor, smashed its face, and wrecked its proportions. The current of air extinguished the light; the deacon, the old lady and Sally fled upstairs, and Joe Mayweed, extricating himself from the clock, effected his retreat in the same way that he had entered. The next day all Appleton was alive with the story of how Deacon Barberry's had been bewitched; and though many believed its version, some, and especially Joe Mayweed, affected to discredit the whole affair, hinting that the deacon had been trying the experiment of tating frozen elder, and that the vagaries of the clock-case existed only in a dis-tempered imagination.

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