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TO MURDER

Exceeding sorrow
Commendation and heart
Because tomorrow
We must depart.
Now is exceeding sorrow
All my part.
Give over playing.
Cast thy viol away;
Merely laying
Thine head my way;
Prison, give over playing,
Grave my way.

Be no word spoken;
Weep nothing; let a pale
Silence, unbroken
Silence, prevail.
Tristesse, be no word spoken
Lest I fail!
Forget tomorrow!
Weep nothing; only lay
In silent sorrow
Thy head my way;
Let us forget tomorrow
This one day!
—Ernest Dowson in Fortnightly.

THE MILL MYSTERY

The Mills of the Gods Grind It Out at Last.

A vessel had gone upon the rocks of Skull reef and was fast breaking up, they said. A plank washed ashore bore the name Goliath, recognized by some as a whaler which had sailed from Sag Harbor about three years ago. High up on the summit of a sand dune, her wet hair flying straight out behind her, striving to shut out the flying sand and spray and to follow with her eyes the boat as it rose and fell, stood Mad Mary Heath.

She was always down there, roaming about the sands, gathering shells or crouching upon the dunes gazing seaward. Tonight she seemed the genius of the storm, bending, swaying and waving her arms aloft as if beckoning to the sea.

"What ails poor Mary tonight? The storm seems to affect her terribly. She looks a veritable seeress," said Sweryn Yarbourn, who stood among the group of villagers gathered upon the beach.

The mournful sound of the bell buoy on the reef came fully upon the wind, and anon, when a rift in the clouds lighted palely the writhing chaos below, the ship might be perceived on her beam ends pounding the reef, and presently she was seen no more. Then all at once, from out the hell of waters, was flung high up the beach, with a grinding crash, the great lifeboat, with its writhing, wriggling crew, only less white and weak than the boat and the falling men far up out of reach of the baffled sea. As they bore the rescued man upon a plank to the boat-house a scream of triumphant laughter rang out over the roar of the tempest, and Mad Mary, who had hovered about the edge of the crowd, flitted away over the dunes, shrieking, "My dream, my dream!"

With a long quivering sigh the pallid figure lying upon the old tarpaulin at length opened its eyes. Matt Romney stood over him watching for any sign of life and with a commanding gesture keeping the throng back. The eyes, in which consciousness slowly dawned, wandered from point to point and at length rested upon the countenance of the captain of the life savers, and there they rested, growing gradually rounder as a look of horror crept into them.

At length, with a convulsive start, he strove to rise, but, too weak, sank back, screaming, "Keep off, keep off," waving Romney away with frantic gesture. The face of the latter had assumed an unaccountable pallor, and, with a harsh, broken laugh, he snarled:

"Give him a turn over that keg, men, and get the salt water out of him."

But the fellow, struggling to his feet, ran like the wind straight toward the sea. He was soon caught and, relapsing into unconsciousness, was carried to the cottage of old Jans Chisholm, about a mile back from the beach.

Yarbourn had been a silent and much puzzled observer of all this. The storm had apparently driven the man insane, he thought.

The rescued man tossed for a week or two in delirium under the rafters of the old salt box hut.

In the small hours one night Goody Garlick, who was hired to watch at his bedside, was aroused from a doze by the voice of the sick man.

"O God, the cruel millstones!" he cried. "They are grinding out blood! Look! Look!" and he would have thrown himself from the bed had not the nurse pinned him down with her sinewy arms.

Three years before the town of East Brompton was roused from its lethargy by one of those happenings which contrasted so sharply with its dreamy life as a chasm opening in a sunlit plain.

One morning when the gray east was shot with red Mary Heath strode into town, wild eyed and drenched with dew, and rapped loudly at Justice Larry Osborn's door.

"There's something wrong over 't the mill," she panted in answer to his gruff query. "Has anybody seen Gideon? I been settin' up all night watchin' for him. He started out last night with the meal bag, an' I haven't seen him since!"

"Thy's-thy's"—she clutched at the door facing—"blood runnin' out from under the mill door, an' when I looked in the window the hopper was all splashed with it, an'—" And she swooned upon the doorstep.

There were nine days of wonder and speculation and investigation. Romney was at a clambake, he managed to prove, and knew nothing, and Mary Heath still watched and waited in her hovel for Gideon, who came not, but in his place the wolf.

The village beauty, she might have been Mrs. Romney. The dove might have shared the goshawk's nest and been mistress of her heart, the penniless son of a once prosperous farmer, a handsome youth, and their path had proved more rugged than that of love is usually said to be. Want stared them in the face; hunger perched vulturelike over the door.

One night Gideon started up, his eyes bloodshot with drink and despair, and, swinging his meal bag over his shoulder, staggered forth into the night.

It was one of those white nights characterized of Long Island, no moon or stars, but more like deep twilight. Mary stood long at the gate, waiting for her husband. Suddenly there was borne upon the night wind the creaking of the arms of the old mill as it turned

creaked so loud. Round and round went the great sails in the gloom, and screech after screech pierced the night, and then it was still.

As she crawled her neck in startled attention the figure of a man, a sailor by his garb, passed quickly up the lane.

For one instant he turned a white face upon her and pointed to the mill as he ran, speechless with fear. That face was graven upon her memory.

In an agony of fear she barred the door and stared from the window all night long, and when the dawn reddened the east she set out for town.

The mills of the gods grind slowly, But they grind exceeding small. With exactness they grind all.

Surveyor Yarbourn murmured these words pensively as he wrought in the deepening twilight to obtain an ensemble of the old mill, whose gaunt arms spread specterlike across the saffron sky.

"But who comes here?" Seated beside his "honny," riding slowly up the lane, was Matt Romney, the ex-mill keeper, for since the tragic occurrence of three years before, still enveloped in mystery, his mill stood there abandoned, like a thing accursed, the evil gist of that dreadful night being the last it ever turned out. Something disturbed Yarbourn's vision. Was his drawing wrong, or had the arms of the mill moved?

High over the crest of the dun hill against the fast fading sky between the pines of sorrowfully rising billows the storm lamenting over the salt marsh the great wings of the accursed mill were slowly beginning to move, and from its unused hinges came creakings as of a thing in motion.

"After turned the skeleton arms, and louder came the dismal creaking, which rose to a shriek—a chattering, broken, awful sound, which suddenly ceased as the arms stopped turning.

Yarbourn had risen to his feet and was gazing fixedly, scarce believing his eyes, when a something seemed to issue from the mill and slide and grate down the hill. On it came, past the salt turn, under the billows, anon melting in the twilight.

"Pshaw!" said Yarbourn. "It's only Vyer's red calf. Must have got through the gap. Oh, my God, look!" Not 20 yards from him, hovering limply over the road, was a dark red figure, with flapping rags and for a moment a glimpse to his bursting eyes of what might have been the artist's costume.

As it wavered Yarbourn caught a gurgling cry behind him, and, turning, he beheld the miller on his knees, whiter than stone, with both arms stretched out before him.

"Let me alone!" he screamed. "I won't go along. Oh, look! Where are his arms?" And he fell frothing in the road.

Yarbourn bent over him and shook him. He sat up with a ghastly smile.

"It's nothing, Mr. Yarbourn—a tech of the jimjams, that's all. That Sag Harbor whisky always does it."

He mounted his horse and disappeared in the dusk.

Yarbourn, much shaken, packed his traps hastily and stalked slowly homeward, muttering:

The mills of the gods grind slowly, But they grind exceeding small.

A dog howled plaintively as he passed Mary Heath's cottage, and over the dark ridge of its roof hung a gibbous moon.

Yarbourn went that evening to Mother Chisholm's to see the convalescent sailor.

He sat long, smoking and observing him. Incidentally he mentioned that he had been sketching the old mill.

The man immediately showed so much agitation that the artist became apprehensive and passed him his pocket flask.

"There! Take a nip of that, and you'll feel better."

The sailor did so, and Yarbourn began to talk about the rescue and Romney's bravery.

"Brave!" whispered the man. "And so's the devil brave, I reckon." And, showing signs of going to pieces again, he took another nip at the flask at Yarbourn's suggestion and, motioning to the door, said:

"Shut it tight an' fast an' listen to what I tell you. It's been on my mind to make this here paper for some time, but I've had no chance. An' I'm a gone coon now, being struck by a spar, so make the most on what I says."

"I come from down the island, an' about three years ago I was on my way to Sag Harbor to ship aboard the Goliath, a whaler, goin' for a three years' cruise. It was night when I passed in the lane by the mill an', being tired out, perched on a fence to rest a bit."

"I was lookin' up at the big mill, when all on a sudden the arms began to go 'round' with a terrible creakin, an' it seemed to me they was the sound of voices mixed with it. I didn't see no light in the winders, an' I walked over that wonderin' why they was workin' without any light."

"Twas what you call a white night. You could see as plain as day, an' as I got nearer there was such a screechin an' chatterin as made my blood run cold, 'bout knowin' exactly why, I looked in at the winders—give me some more of that. The mill stopped an' the noise, too, an' O Lord, that devil of a boat's capstern was pullin' away from the grindstones the armless body of a man!"

"There!" says he. "Curse you, you'll steal no more corn, nor sweethearts neither! He come creepin' out the door, an' I hid in the bushes. For an hour he was diggin a hole down the hill, near the swamp, under the forked willow. You kin find it."

"I darsn't move. Pretty soon he went into the mill an' come out, draggin the body. He drug it down an' chucked it in the hole, an' while he was fillin' it in I fell over an' cracked a dry branch. He come boundin' up the hill with a cocked pistol, but I got away without him seein me."

"I passed a woman standin' at a gate, but I was too skeered to stop—only motioned back."

"My ship had anchor up an' was ready to put to sea as soon as I got aboard, night though it was, as time had been lost the day before. The captain was that mad he wouldn't listen to what I had to tell."

"We had good luck an' were near home again when the squall struck us that drove us on to Skull reef."

That morning, as the mists were vanishing like ghosts before the approaching dawn, Matt Romney walked past his mill for the last time, with iron upon his wrists.—Minneapolis Journal.

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