

# The Last Rose of Summer—A Cariboo Sketch

By D. W. Higgins, Author of "The Mystic Spring," "The Passing of a Race," etc.

"The rose is fairest when 'tis budding new,  
And hope is brightest when it dawns from fears,  
The rose is sweetest washed with morning dew,  
And love is loveliest when embalmed in tears."  
—Scott.



HENEVER I see appended to a funeral notice in cold metallic letters, "Friends will please omit flowers," a chill runs through my veins. Than flowers, sweet emblems of earthly purity and heavenly grace, the choicest gifts of a generous Providence to mankind, what more fitting tribute of affectionate regard could be laid upon a coffin? Flowers are emblematic of Life and Death and the Resurrection. They are symbolic of faith in a world beyond the skies. How often is the lovely crocus, the first of the early flowers, seen gently forcing its pretty head through the sun-melted snow, as if hastening to convey to the world the glad tidings of renewed life. Next comes the lovely violet, in its garb of bright blue, filling the air with gentle fragrance and charming all with its quiet modesty and beauty. A little later and the floral sisters flock in troops of varied hue and form to gladden the senses and fill the air with delicious perfumes. Then comes the lovely rose, glowing in pride and majesty, distilling its fragrance and casting it upon the air for the gratification of the senses. Sweet emblem of purity! As a writer once said, "Music, sweet music, could not have addressed a language to the heart more thrilling, or have touched the sensibilities so keenly as does this lovely flower—the queen of all Flora's gifts." Yet a little and the summer will be gone and the evanescence of the rose and mingle it with the meanest blossom. The grass withers, the flowers fade, the morning dew abideth not, the grateful evening cloud passeth away, like the glory of the fleeting hour and the cold north wind sweeps over the land. How typical of life is the appearance, the growth, the course, and the withering of flowers!

"When spring unlocks the flowers to paint the laughing soil," we have the resurrection. In summer the fullness of strength and growth. In autumn, the bounteous fruits of nature and gentle decline. In winter, death, with the promise, as conveyed by the spring flowers, that we shall live again!

"No flowers!" Why, they are the embodiment, the emblem of Christian faith. Without flowers the world would be a desert indeed—a Death Valley, for where flowers bloom not, nothing for the good of mankind will grow. "Wear no crepe for me," said a dying Christian woman once in my hearing. "But pile my coffin high with flowers!" With the permission of the reader I will narrate a little story of a rose, a dying woman and a self-sacrificing Englishman.

All old Caribooites will readily call to mind a singular character who went into the mines in the spring of 1862, where he acquired a considerable "pile" of gold, which he afterwards lost on card tables and race courses. His name was Thomas Edwards. He had received the education of an English gentleman, and at an early age, after a violent quarrel with a stern father, entered the British navy as a midshipman. On a far-off station, he became a sub-lieutenant and resigned from the service and left his ship and entered Cariboo to mine. While at sea he had acquired many of the characteristics and the mode of speech of the ordinary seaman, for he was a large-hearted, but reckless, devil-me-care fellow at best. A favorite expression of his was "bloody." A man with him was either a bloody fool or a bloody good fellow. If he heard a sermon it was either bloody fine or bloody rot. A meal was bloody good or it was bloody bad. So after awhile he came to be called Bloody Edwards, and the name stuck to him as long as he lived afterwards. On Williams Creek Edwards was very popular. Everyone liked him and not a miner but would have shared his last crust or dollar with him. These were days when liberality was deemed a virtue and penuriousness a fault, if not a vice. A rich miner who refused to "set 'em up for the boys," as treating was called, was regarded as a good-for-nothing, while the spendthrift who flung away his gold often before it was taken out of the ground and "shouted for the house" was voted a thoroughbred without fault or blemish.

The scenes at the mines were often of an exciting character. The days were given over to hard work, and when there were no night shifts, the nights to gambling and debauchery. Nearly every one had money and the few who did not owned claims that were believed to be rich and so were enabled to bank on what the ground was supposed to contain—but often did not.

The bars and dance houses did a roaring business. In every saloon there were tables at which sat professional gamblers. Most of them were men and a few, alas! were women, who, when they entered the mines had left their good names behind. In the dance houses were a number of females who rejoiced in the title of hurdy-gurdies. They were paid to steer their half-intoxicated partners after each dance to the bar and induce them to treat at fifty cents a glass. These girls appeared to possess unquenchable thirst. They consumed large quantities of beer, wine and whiskey, but were seldom incapable of taking care of themselves. The gold commissioner of the day refused to interfere with gambling and the

establishments plied the trade with a brazen indifference to decency and law.

With the miners, as I have said, "Bloody" Edwards was a prime favorite, and no wonder, for he was one of the most genial, generous souls who ever entered Cariboo. He was jovial and witty, and but for the too frequent use of the adjective that preceded his surname would have been welcomed in any society. He quite shocked a minister who held service at the camp one Sunday morning by slapping him on the back and informing him that he had delivered a "bloody" fine sermon and insisting that he should partake of a "bloody" good cocktail at the nearest bar.

"You see, your reverence," he remarked, "we are not much on style here; we cut out all the 'bloody' society talk and come right down to hard-pan and bedrock in our own bloody language. There's no bloody sense in putting on airs or making believe, that we're anybody 'at home when we are nobody here. A man's past counts for nothing in Cariboo. All we want to know is what a bloody fellow is, not what he was. Who'd ever think to look at me and hear me talk, that my father was a British Admiral and that I had once been an officer in the Queen's bloody navy? No one. Here I'm just Tom Edwards, commonly known as 'Bloody' Edwards, at your reverence's service," and he removed his hat and bowed as he lifted the drink to his lips.

All over the camp Edwards was known. If a miner were injured Edwards was the man who rendered first aid. If there was a death on the creek and no clergyman handy "Bloody" Edwards read the service, and did it well, too. If there was a prize fight between the Surrey Chicken and the Boston Pug, Edwards seconded one of the pugilists. In a dog fight Edwards was sure to be owner of one of the pugs. Were a cocking main on the carpet, one at least of the birds belonged to the gentleman with a sanguinary belief.

Early in 1862 there appeared on the creek a tall and very handsome woman. Her dark hair was streaked with gray and she was not very young, but her face bore traces of beauty. Her language was unexceptionable, her manners lady-like and her carriage graceful. She was accompanied by a gambler named Castle—her husband, she said—and he dealt faro and three-card-monte in one of the bar-rooms. She was known as Belle Castle and appeared to have come from a class far superior to that from which sprung the hurdy-gurdies. As Colton would say, her fall was therefore the greater; but she had carried her ladylike qualities into the pit where she stumbled and sank.

Castle and his wife did well from the start.

Their table was the best patronized in the camp. The easy grace with which the woman handled the cards and the pleasant smile her face always wore, even when the bank was loser, drew many admirers to her table, and the profits were very satisfactory.

Among the first to patronize Mrs. Castle's table was Edwards. She received him with a quiet grace that would have become the queen of a drawing room, and when he lost or won she raked in his money or paid out the bank's money without a change of countenance or an expression of satisfaction or disappointment. Edwards went often to the table and bet heavily, winning occasionally, but oftener losing. An acquaintance sprang up between the pair. Each recognized that the other had been cast in a different social mould to the riff-raff that hung about the saloons and gambling houses, and from the first there existed a feeling of friendship between them which soon became the subject of comment by the gossiping miners. It was noticed that Mrs. Castle always addressed her admirer as Mr. Edwards or Tom—never as Bloody Edwards, and that he tried to drop the word from his vocabulary, but with indifferent success. The "boys," too, delighted to tease him by introducing the offensive adjective without regard to its fitness and suggesting that now their favorite had met his affinity he would soon be seen going to church with a prayer book in his hand and wearing a boiled shirt and a plug hat and passing the plate.

Edwards took all these remarks good-humoredly, and as he was keen at repartee, generally managed to give back as sharp trusts as he received.

When the Castles came on the creek it was observed that the woman brought in her hand a little rose-tree. This had been planted in a small earthen pot and was guarded on the journey by the woman with a lover's jealous care. In the bar-room where the Castles operated this little tree was placed behind the counter amid a row of glasses and bottles, and there it grew and expanded until one day a tiny bud appeared on one of the branches. In a few days other buds were thrown out and then the sweet flowers began to bloom and the petals opened day by day. Men came from all parts of the creek to view the unwonted spectacle of a blossoming rose and admire the beautiful plant which seemed almost a sentient being that was rewarding its mistress for the care she had bestowed upon it. Mrs. Castle watched over the plant like a guardian angel. The "boys" begged her for a boutonniere; she gracefully declined, but it was noticed that Bloody Edwards, every Sunday morning, appeared with a fresh, red rose in his buttonhole.

Where did it come from if not from Mrs. Castle's "garden" was asked, and heads were wagged and wise looks exchanged.

Things went on in this way through the summer of 1862, and with the first fall of snow on the hills many of the miners, the men and women gamblers and the hurdy-gurdies prepared to leave for the coast. Among these were Mr. and Mrs. Castle. Rumor said that they had made a huge sum of money which they had sent ahead by Barnard's express. They secured seats on the next stage for Yale and were discharging a few liabilities and saying farewell to friends when the woman suddenly fell sick. It appeared that she had helped to nurse a woman who was troubled with a sore throat. In a short time the sore throat developed into diphtheria and the patient died after a brief illness. Dr. Bell, who was called to attend Mrs. Castle, pronounced her ailment to be diphtheria, and a very bad case. At that time this disease was one of the most deadly known. Before the discovery of an anti-toxine few who were attacked by diphtheria recovered and nurses and friends fled from it, for it was more deadly than smallpox. And so it fell out that every one fled from poor Mrs. Castle's bedside. Her husband, after depositing with a merchant a sum of money for her support and treatment, took one of the seats in the stage he had engaged, and a frightened hurdy-gurdie occupied the seat he had taken for his wife. He drove away unheeding the shouts of derision and contempt that assailed him as he went.

I have said that every one fled from the sick chamber. All but one. And Bloody Edwards was that one. He volunteered to nurse Mrs. Castle. She implored him to seek safety—to leave her to her fate. The doctor told him that the disease must run its course, and if the woman was doomed to die no power on earth could save her. Edwards refused to budge a foot. He would nurse her in spite of the risk. The woman at first refused to accept his ministrations but at last, with a grateful acknowledgment of his bravery and self-abnegation, she gave in to his pleadings.

When Edwards entered the sick room as nurse he noticed that the rose-tree occupied a place on a shelf just where the eyes of Mrs. Castle could rest upon it. There was but one blossom on the tree. "It was the last rose of summer left blooming alone. The others had faded and gone." The flower, large, full-bloomed and crimson lifted its head as if proud of its beauty. Ever and anon the sick woman glanced at the rose lest some one should carry it off. She frequently asked Edwards to bring it to her that she might feast her eyes upon its glorious beauty and enjoy its fragrance.

Edwards was struck with the inroads the awful disease had made in a few hours. The poor woman's face was distorted and lined with pain. Her long, rich tresses lay on the pillow unkempt and neglected, her eyes were sunken and glowed with an unnatural brilliancy, and her hands and face burned like hot coals to the touch. The fever of the disease was devouring her.

Everything human skill had devised for the cure of diphtheria was resorted to and nothing that the patient needed or desired was denied.

The progress of the complaint was rapid, and on the second day Drs. Bell and Black felt it their duty to tell Edwards that the lovely woman whom he had volunteered to assist in her extremity must soon die. They asked him to tell her. After the first outburst of grief was over Edwards approached the sick bedside. The patient had sunk into a light sleep, but she roused herself as Edwards approached and asked in a low tone:

"Is that you, Tom?"

"Yes, Belle."

"Tom," she said, after a short pause, "I am going to die. I know it. A moment ago, while I slept, I saw myself lying in a coffin. You, Tom, stood by me—the only mourner—and you were crying. Oh! Tom, Tom, I have got to go just when I wish to stay."

In a voice broken with sobs Edwards gently told her that the doctors had given her up.

The dying woman took one of Edwards' hands in hers and kissed it. Then she half raised herself, and placing one arm about her devoted friend's neck drew his face down to hers.

"Tom," she whispered, "I was not always what I am. Once I was as pure as the lovely rose that blooms on yon shelf. Who I was no one will ever know. My secret shall die with me. A dear mother and brothers and sisters in far away England watch for my coming with straining eyes and hopeful hearts. But they will watch and hope in vain. They will see me never again. I have been wicked, Tom, and I am paying the penalty. But for your faithful heart I should have died alone—deserted in this wilderness of sin and wretchedness! Many times I have wished myself dead and now I would live for your sake. But it is too late."

She paused as she disengaged herself and then continued:

"Forgive me, Tom. I was selfish and I did not think. Perhaps I have given you the disease. Stand back from the bed, dear."

She paused again, and but for the sobs that welled up from Tom's heart and the ticking of a little clock there was a deep silence. Then she said, "Tom, bring me the rose. Oh! be quick, quick!"

Edwards brought the rose to her side.

She seized the flower, and conveying it to her lips kissed it again and again, crooning to it as a fond mother croons to her baby, and carressing it and all the time raining hot tears upon its beautiful face.

"Tom," she said at last, "you will find a book on that table. It is the Bible. Bring it here."

Tom obeyed. It was a richly bound copy of the Bible, with golden clasps. On the fly-leaf were written these words, in a female hand—

"Bella, from her mother, on her wedding day."

"Freston, August 24, 1857."

The dying woman kissed the inscription and then said, "Turn to the 8th chapter of St. John and read what you find there."

Tom obeyed with choking voice and streaming eyes.

"And the Scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken—"

"No, no," she interrupted, hurriedly. "Read lower down, what Jesus said to the woman."

Tom read again.

"Woman, where are these thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord!"

"He said unto her, neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more."

"Tom," she presently whispered, promise me that you will lay my pretty flower on my breast and that it will be buried with me. It is all that I have to remind me of what I once was."

"I promise," sobbed Edwards.

The woman relinquished her hold on the plant and said no more, but lay quietly as if asleep.

Edwards drew an improvised curtain about the bed, turned down the light and sat down to wait.

When the doctors came they pronounced her dead. The Great Physician had forestalled them.

Edwards glanced at the rose and was shocked at the change that had come over it; in a few brief moments it had lost the bright red hue, its petals had turned black and it hung limp, shrunken and lifeless, on the stem! Its life had gone out with its mother-friend!

They buried her the same day in a rude pine coffin. On her poor bruised heart they laid the blighted rose, which she had reared so fondly and which had died with her, and her mother's Bible. Together they repose on the lonely hillside, awaiting the call. The rude headboard that Bloody Edwards placed to mark the grave has long since rotted, and he, too, has paid the debt that all must pay, sooner or later; but none ever solved the mystery that enveloped the career of the late Mrs. Belle Castle.

## Mr. Whitelaw Reid on the Presidency



THE Atlantic Union gave a dinner at the Criterion Restaurant to meet the United States Ambassador and the Postmaster-General, in celebration of the establishment of penny postage between the United Kingdom and the United States, and in commemoration of the visit of the American Fleet to Australian waters, says the London Times. Lord Monkswell, chairman of the council of the union, presided, and the company included, in addition to the guests of the evening, Mrs. Whitelaw Reid, Lady Monkswell, Mrs. Sydney Buxton, Lord Kinnaird, Lord O'Hagan, Sir Frederick and Lady Pollock, Sir Clifton and Lady Robinson, Sir H. Gilzean-Reid, Sir H. Babington Smith, Sir J. Hayes Sadler, Sir George Young, Sir Frederick Young, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Hope Hawkins, Mrs. R. N. Fairbanks (President of American Women in London), Sir Robert Perks, M.P., the Hon. E. G. Pretyman and Lady Beatrice Pretyman, the Archdeacon of London, the Hon. J. W. Taverne, Mr. Craig Wadsworth (American Embassy), and Captain Muirhead Collins, C.M.G.

After the toasts of "The King" and "The President of the United States" had been honored, Sir Frederick Pollock proposed "The Guests."

Mr. Sydney Buxton, M.P., replied. He said that during the three years that he had been at the Post Office he had been strongly in favor of penny postage with America. They hoped that the example set would be followed by other nations, and that we should extend the system to the friendly country of France and other nations on the Continent. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Whitelaw Reid, replying to the toast of "The United States of America," proposed by Mr. Anthony Hope Hawkins, said that, according to the latest dispatches that evening, the United States was doing very well. They were supposed to have no politics in the Diplomatic Service, but even the most strenuous member of the unsuccessful party would probably pardon his venturing to give the assurance that the country was going to keep straight on in the course which had brought it such power and prosperity in the past, and which had received such emphatic approval now. Their friends the enemy would also permit him, he thought, to say that the character and antecedents of the President-elect gave the most satisfactory guarantee that the most powerful and popular President since Lincoln was to have a judicious, able and worthy successor, trained to the business, and quite cap-

able of continuing the great record made by recent Administrations. He was brought up in an atmosphere of honorable public service. When he (Mr. Whitelaw Reid) first ventured away from his native place his home was in the same town with him. He had the honor of knowing his father, when the present President-elect was a lively youth from Yale. That father was one of the most prominent citizens of Cincinnati. He had begun as a tutor at Yale. He was then a lawyer in the Queen City. General Grant called him to his Cabinet, first as Secretary of War, where 28 years later his son was to succeed him, and afterwards as Attorney-General. He also adorned the American Diplomatic Service, first in Austria and later in Russia. The son had walked worthily in his father's footsteps, first at Yale, then at the Cincinnati Bar, and then on the Bench. After that he had an extraordinary training in successful administrative work, first in the Philippines, and then in the War Department, with Cuba and Panama thrown in as incidental occupations for his spare time. No American citizen doubted that his experience thoroughly framed him for his new post.

They said that it had been a heated campaign. The heat might have been partly in the perfervid despatches which the newspapers needed to make them interesting. He was afraid that he was incompetent to judge, since it was the first campaign at which he had not been present for over half a century. Too much importance should not be attached to the strong language. Evidently it had lost nothing in cable transmission, and in any case it did not begin to approach the strong language with which the Opposition assailed George Washington. Even Mr. Bryan, of whom they all thought well personally—in spite, as some of them believed, of his having the largest variety of misinformation possessed by any politician of our acquaintance—might console himself with the reflection that nothing had been said against him in this campaign half so bad as what a large part of his party was saying all the time against Abraham Lincoln. It was not for the servants of the Government in foreign posts to presume to forecast the policy of the incoming Administration. There was, however, one thing which he thought they might be sure of. It would pursue the same foreign policy with which the country was already familiar, and which was once defined by John Hay as consisting of the Golden Rule plus the Monroe doctrine. It would try to maintain fair dealing and friend-

ship with all nations, and particularly to be on the most friendly terms with the Mother Country.

For the best recent step in that direction they had to thank, primarily, Mr. Sydney Buxton and his colleague on the other side of the water, Mr. George Meyer.

In conclusion, the Ambassador said that everybody, excepting the cable stockholders, would warmly wish success to the insatiable Heniker Heaton in his present crusade for having the British Government and the American cable companies carry messages between the two countries at a penny a word. But if they were going to ask this, it would be wise first to keep their trawlers from breaking a cable a month at the stockholders' expense. Even on the lowest and most sort-of basis of computation, the cables were worth more, to both countries, than the extra fish. (Cheers.)

Other toasts followed.

### LONDON TO GO SKATING

It is twenty-five years since roller skating was fashionable in England, and the revival of the pastime is probably due to the improvement which has taken place in recent years in rink floors and roller skates. An enterprising speculator started a rink in Liverpool a year ago which has been an enormous success. The best people in the city drive up in their automobiles to the rink.

The same man then in turn opened rinks in Newcastle, Sunderland, Edinburgh, Dublin, Bradford and Hull. Now he is opening a gigantic hall, the Olympic, in London as a skating rink, and it is anticipated that Londoners will catch the infection as quickly as the provinces.

The day of the old asphalt rink is over. At the Olympia the floor will cost £5,000. First of all, sleepers will be laid down in a concrete floor and then a "deal floor" will be fastened to them. In this way the unevenness of concrete floor will be counteracted and there will be extra resistance for the skaters. On this floor a maple covering will be laid down, which will be polished by a sort of gigantic carpet sweeper called an electric sandpaper sander. This machine is driven over the maple floor and the oil in the floor is drawn out and spread evenly over it, thus increasing the polish of the skating surface.

The Olympic floor will accommodate 5,000 skaters. Military bands will play and there will be fetes on skates.