

**MUTABILITY.**  
The flower that smiles today  
To-morrow dies,  
All that we wish to stay  
Tends and then flies.  
What is this world's delight,  
Lighting that mocks the night  
Brief even as a bright  
Star in the sky?  
Virtue, how frail it is!  
Friendship, how rare!  
Love, how it sells poor bliss  
For proud despair!  
But we, though soon they fall,  
Survive their joys, and all  
Which once we call.  
Whist! skies are blue and bright,  
Whist! flowers are gay,  
Whist! eyes that change ere night  
Make glad the day,  
Whist! yet the calm hours creep,  
Dream thou—and from thy sleep  
Then wake to weep.

**THE BOOM AT RIDGE STATION.**

BY HENRY TRILL PERCY.

"God bless you, child, for you are going out with your face turned toward the north."  
"I did not mind it, mother, for I'll be home in an hour, and then I won't feel the wind so good by."  
"It was just daylight on a winter's morning. A chill north wind was blowing against the small brown house, while the mother stood in the window watching her daughter as she walked through the light snow, which had fallen during the night."  
"There, I know Joanna would find it hard to struggle against this strong wind," the mother said to herself as she saw the young girl turning her face toward the house and walking backward.  
But before she turned her face to the wind again she threw a kiss toward the window where the mother stood, and was seen out of sight. It was a half-mile walk to the station and Joanna Rugby stamped the snow off from her feet as she stepped on to the platform.  
"There is a smoke coming out of the chimney so clear that I can see it," she thought as she turned the handle of the door.  
The young man came forward as his sister crossed the threshold of the door, and with a look of surprise on his face, said: "What are you going to do, the child on this early train for? Why didn't you wait until the 9:02?"  
"Because I have some business to do, and if I wait until the 9:02 it will bring me into the city too late to accomplish all I wish to do. Why didn't you come home last night, Oscar? Mother sat up until after twelve o'clock waiting for you."  
"I slept in the station," the young man replied.  
"I hope you didn't go down to the Junction again last night, Oscar."  
"That's my business, Joan."  
"But if you lose your place here, what shall we do this winter?"  
"I'm not such a fool as to lose my place, Joan. Here she comes. Be ready to jump on, she doesn't stop a second."  
"I'll be home on the 6:10," the sister called out from the platform as the train moved off.  
The young man turned the key in the door of the station and started for home. His thoughts were not happy ones. He wondered if Joan's business in the city had anything to do with him. Could it be that anyone had reported at the office about his going to the Junction to see Oscar? As he came near the house he saw his mother's face at the window; she was watching for him. As he opened the door his mother said, in a kindly tone of voice: "Good morning, Oscar."  
Then she took the breakfast off from the stove and put it on the table. There was a weary look in her face and a sad one, for she knew in a moment that Oscar had been drinking heavily.  
Joan said you said up late waiting for me," he said in a gruff tone of voice. "Haven't I told you never to sit up after the 10:20 train comes? If I'm not old enough to take care of myself and come and go as I please, I wonder when I will be. It's perfect nonsense for you and Joan to worry over me all the time."  
"Oscar," said his mother, laying her hand on his shoulder, "you know why I am anxious about you. I am your mother and you are my dear, loved boy, and you are going to waste your life and that you will give up these bad companions who are leading you to ruin."  
"Box will be my mother, mother, the young man replied in a kinder tone. "I'll admit I haven't done so well last night. But I'm going to do better. I've got down accounts to settle today. Can you let me have five dollars?"  
"I have but a small amount of change in the house, my dear. Joan and I got along just as comfortably as we can. There are some bills yet due, you know," his mother replied. "There is but very little left of your poor father's insurance money now."  
"Oscar had finished his breakfast and glanced up at the clock. "I'll have to get back to the station," he said. It was very evident that he did not care to talk over money matters with his mother.  
"He was not in a pleasant mood that morning, but as he was going to close the door he turned his face toward his mother and said, "Good bye, mother."  
"You'll be home at noon, Oscar?"  
"Yes, mother, I suppose so."  
Mrs. Rugby watched her son until he was out of sight, and then she began to wash the breakfast dishes.  
"It doesn't seem to do a bit of good to say anything to Oscar," she thought. "I've talked and talked, and I've prayed and prayed for him, and he does not seem to do any better; if anything he grows worse. It seems as if the Lord had forsaken me. Everything looks so dark this morning. What a misery that Lord does visit our faces when we go out to face the wind and storms of life! We wouldn't have courage to take a step forward if we could see what's before us. But by keeping just to the little inch in front of us, somehow we get over the rough and stormy life. The Lord gives us light and strength when we get where we need them. Yes, I know that well, for I've travelled over some pieces of road where I had fallen if He hadn't held me up. I'll trust Him if the way is hedged up before me this morning."  
It was a sort of lightning up of the

load to kneel down by the low rocking-chair and commit her erring boy to the Lord's keeping.  
Oscar Rugby was soon standing in the one store of the village. The post office was in the corner of the store, and after talking a few minutes with some men who were warming themselves at the stove, the young station agent threw the mail-bag over his shoulder and passed out. The 9:02 was due in eleven minutes and he hurried along to the station. The mail-bag was light, for there were only a few dwellers to write letters at Ridge Station. Ten years before it had had a boom in the real-estate market and twenty years before the station houses had been built. But the railroad company would not put on trains sufficient to make it a convenient suburb and in consequence the lots, which in the prospective seemed good investments for the land company, were now lying on their hands as poor property from which nothing could be realized. It was strange, too, that the railroad company could not see it for their advantage to have the cars run more accessible, for the locality was the most hilly and picturesque of any within twenty miles of the prairie city.  
Mr. Rugby had bought a few acres of land for a large house and built a small house at a few years before. He believed until the day of his death, which took place soon after his new home was completed, that property at Ridge Station would soon be a high price.  
When Oscar Rugby had received the mail to the agent on the 9:02 train there was nothing more for him to do until the noon train came in from the city. He looked up the station and jumped on the No. 7 freight which always slacked up at the Junction and rode to Willow Junction, the next station below. Willow Junction was quite thickly settled, for two roads crossed each other at that point and the other road was more accommodating to those who wished to do business in the city. But there was a saloon at the Junction which was proving to be too much of a temptation to Oscar Rugby, as well as to many others of the railroad employes.  
When Joanna Rugby got up to the city she took the cars to ride up to one of the fashionable avenues. Amid the "ding-dang, ding-dang" of the cars as they rushed along through the noisy, crowded thoroughfares, she found it a hard matter to collect her thoughts and arrange her plan for work. When she signalled the conductor to let her off at the next corner of the avenue her heart almost lost its courage. And when she found herself at the foot of the high steps in front of a fine marble residence she took hold of the railing and stepped for a few moments to steady herself. When her hand at the door was answered by the housemaid, she said, in a trembling voice: "Would you like to look at some crocheted trimmings this morning?" and the boy she held in her hand was reached out toward the girl in the white apron.  
"No, I don't want any of them and the lady of the house never buys things at the door, so there's no use of my troubling her," and with these words Joanna was directed to the parlour.  
"Yes, I will look at them. Come in and look at them in the hall," she said. "It is so warm in that hall, and such a comfort to be able to take a seat even for a few moments, that when Joanna untied the box and heard the kindly words of the young girl as to the beauty of her handwork, the tears came to her eyes.  
"Soon the dear old grandmother and mother and elder sister, with a guest who was stopping for a few days in the hospitable home, gathered around the box of trimmings and in a short time each had made selections, and to Joanna's delight only three more pieces remained in the box.  
"I'm very thankful to you all," she said. "And life looked so differently to me that day her face was lighted up with that wonderful look of satisfaction which shows on all our faces at certain times in our lives.  
"Better bring a cup of tea and some home-made bread and butter," when she said the mother to the housemaid. "It is after one o'clock and she must be faint and hungry."  
"Where had she come from?"  
"Ridge Station," the lady had never heard of the place, hence the gentleman in the blue coat, and at that very moment was congratulating himself that the railroad company had made a satisfactory arrangement with the address company and his high spirits would be soon brought down to earth by the news he had received in the wooded hills, where he returned at a large advance.  
"Did I hear this young girl say she lived at Ridge Station?" the gentleman asked, as he stepped into the hall.  
"When Joanna answered the gentleman he asked her a number of questions about the people and the facilities of access to the city. Did many people own their places and where was her home?  
"Joanna wondered why the gentleman seemed so interested. She pondered over it on her way back to the Union Depot. Could it be possible that her father's prediction was coming true? Was Ridge Station going to have a boom at last?  
"Where's your brother, Miss Rugby?" were the first words Joanna heard when she got off from the cars at the station. "He hasn't showed up since he left, and I've had to bring down the mail myself, and folks is awful mad over it. He did the same thing last week, and he'll be complained of and lose his place, I can tell you that."  
It was the store-keeper who accented Joanna in this manner. For he had frozen to death, waiting on the platform with the station all locked up and no fire in it, if it was open.  
"I have a duplicate key in my pocket," Mr. Waterman, and I'll open the station," and with these words Joanna opened the door and went in. There were some kindlings and a hod of coal standing by the stove and she had soon kindled a fire. The 7:30 train would be soon coming from the other way, the knowing her mother would feel anxious,

Joanna ran across to the house to tell her she had returned, and would have to go back to the station as Oscar was not there. But he is sure to come by the Junction on the train, mother, so don't worry," she said, in a cheerful tone of voice.  
It was one of those "knock-down blows" which come to us all sometimes in our lives, and for a moment Mrs. Rugby felt as if she could not rise from it. Where could Oscar be? And why was he neglecting his duties at the station? He used to be such a home boy and so thoughtful of her and his sister. But he never brought any money home now to her. His salary at the station was small but he had supplemented it by copying for the general solicitor of the city, who liked his work and gave him all he could do. But was plain that Oscar Rugby had not been doing much copying of late. The poor woman buried her face in her hands. She dared not look out, for it seemed to her that there was an indelible something in the air that would change the conditions of her life. But at that moment the Lord came to her and whispered, "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord." Let not your heart be troubled, neither shall ye be afraid."  
The 7:30 train was late that night. There was no telegraph office at the station to announce the time of trains, so all there was to do was to wait until the whistle sounded at the bend in the road. There were no passengers excepting in the night, so Joanna sat alone. As time passed on and the clock struck nine a feeling of loneliness came over her. The lights were being turned out in the houses that were scattered along the road, and her mind was full of apprehensions. Had the train been wrecked? Where was Oscar?  
At that moment a light step was heard on the platform. It was her mother's step. "The cold wind had been too much for her and sometime after she got inside the station her cough was no trouble some that she could not speak. "I didn't bear the whistle, Joanna, so I knew the train was late and I was afraid to have you stay here alone," she said. "I shall be glad to get her cough under control."  
"I'm afraid it will make you ill, dear mother. It is a bad night for you to be out."  
"I couldn't help coming, child. I didn't know what a bad night you were in. Ten o'clock struck, then eleven o'clock—no train whistling. The two women sat together looking into the fire. They had not spoken for some time, when Joanna said, "Do you know, dear mother, that I think that Ridge Station is going to have a boom in the spring?"  
"Your father always said it would, Joanna, and that this station will be an important one yet."  
"And such a chance for Oscar," she exclaimed. Just then hurried footsteps were heard at the other end of the platform and a stamping of feet and suppressed voices. Two men opened the door and came in.  
"There's a freight wreck down below the next morning and the engine and train can't get by it, though they're clearing it away fast."  
"Any body hurt?"  
"Well, yes, Mrs. Rugby." The tone of voice in which the man spoke filled the two women with surprise. "The engineer is hurt and the fireman is scalded some, but not bad."  
"Oscar!" exclaimed the mother. "Something has happened to him! I know there has."  
"Yes, so bad as it might be, Miss Rugby. Os' hasn't killed, but I guess he'll lose his leg. They'll bring him up in the passenger. He wanted me to come and tell you that he was coming on the 6:10, but the engine got stuck on the trestle by the creek and it threw her down the embankment. Os' says not to be frightened for he'll be all right in a few weeks again."  
Mrs. Rugby withered so courageous now that the hardest place in her whole life had been reached. But light and strength are given according to our need, and this she spoke of as she and her daughter left the station and went to the two men from the Junction, and went to make ready for the home-coming of the injured one.  
The terrible ordeal had been passed. Oscar rested comfortably at ten o'clock the next morning and the surgeon said everything looked favorable for a speedy restoration, at least as speedy as it were possible under the circumstances. Joanna was taking care of the station, for it was their only resource for money, and she feared the man who kept the store would apply for it. But Mr. Waterman, although he was rough in his ways, was a kind-hearted man and went himself to the city to ask that she might be allowed to keep the station as long as she liked. Some had stories of Oscar had found their way to the office and they were considering the matter. "Clacking it out of his hands."  
"Mr. Waterman told Joanna she'd better go and see the officials herself the next day and try to keep the station for her father. He said he would take care of it for her that day. After Joanna had had a talk with the men who had charge of the station's business, they asked her if she thought she could take the station, and she said not thought it possible for a woman to be station agent, but after a few moments' reflection she looked up with a new light in her face, and said, "Yes, I think I could take the charge of it."  
And so Oscar's commission was made over to his sister.  
A Spring came and the boom with it. Real-estate men and property-buyers got off from every train that came out of the city. Houses were being put up and a manufacturing company were making their plans for the erection of a large building. The railroad company were well satisfied with the present station agent, but business was going to increase and the question arose, could a woman manage it all?  
"Why not?" they said; "let her try it at any rate. And so they increased Joanna's salary, and all the employes along the road were glad. Every one of them treated her with respect; not a coarse jest or profane word was spoken about the station. The mail-bag grew so heavy for Joanna's arms, but Mr. Waterman put it in and took it off the noon train for her. Oscar Rugby had gotten along well enough to be about on

crutches when the first warm April sunshine came. He and his mother were very happy together, for Oscar's severe injury had been the means of bringing him out of the darkness of sin into the light of God's love.  
"Had it not been for this accident I fear I should have kept on in my evil ways, mother. The sadson at the Junction had such a fascination for me that I was becoming unable to resist it. But the Lord has saved me."  
When the mother heard her son speak these words, she sang the hymn her mother sang so many years before:  
"Lead me on to a mysterious way,  
Oscar Rugby had learned telegraphing the year before and through his sister's influence he secured the place of telegraph operator at the station.  
"That's what I call a direct dispensation from the Lord," said Mrs. Waterman as she saw Oscar going towards the station on his crutches. That boy was going wrong just as fast as he could. I never could see why, because he has one of the best Christian mothers in the world. I expect she did all of talking to the Lord about him in that little brown house up there. Well, he heard her and He answered her prayer, too, in a different way from what she looked for, though."  
"What a fine station they have built here," said one passenger to another as they stopped at Ridge Station a year afterwards. "When I came over the road the last time it was only a small affair."  
"O, yes!" exclaimed the fellow-traveler at his side. "This place has had a boom and property has gone right up and what do you think, the station agent is a woman."  
"A woman?"  
"Yes, and they tell me she is one of the best agents on the whole road."—Standard.

**THE WAY TO SLEEP-TOWN.**

BY S. W. FOSB.

The town of Sleep-town is not far, In Timbuctoo or China, For it's right near here in Blinkton In the State of Drowsylina. It's just beyond the Chingumboo hills, Not far from Nodville Centre; But you must be drawn through the valley of the Law.  
Or the town you cannot enter, And this is the way They say, they say, That Baby goes to Sleep-town.  
Away he lies over Bylow bridge, Through Lullaby land to wander, And on through the groves of Moonshine valley.  
By the hills of Wayoff yonder, And then down the fairies' ring home The sleeping baby take up— Until they enter, at Jumpoff Centre, The Peckaboo vale of Wakeup, And this is the way They say, they say, That Baby comes from Sleep-town.  
"Follow the Telegraph Poles, Johnny!"  
"Do you think you had better try to go home, Johnny?" asked Grandpa Earle, looking from his sick-chair out of the window, and saying, "I am afraid I may know, and the way home bother you."  
"I wouldn't care, grandpa," said Johnny, "but I told mother she might expect me about dark—no, I said half-past five."  
"And that is dark, Johnny."  
"I know it, and if I can get home sooner, so much the better. She will worry about me, you know, and I hate to have her do that."  
"Oh, yes, she will worry," replied Grandpa Earle, remembering that his daughter had lately moved into the town and had still the stranger-feeling. Her husband, too, was at sea, and she and Johnny were the only ones in the house.  
"I see, I see how it is, said grandpa, "and your mother will be lonely without you. Do you know the way?"  
"Up Squirrel Road?"  
"Yes, all the way over the hill; but if anything should happen, snow coming thick and bothering you, where the road forks, as it does several times, then remember and don't take any risks in travelling by night, but follow the telegraph poles, Johnny. They run along side Squirrel Road and take you right over the hill. Don't forget, now."  
"Thank you, I will remember."  
Johnny was soon out of the house and tramping along Squirrel Road.  
"I've got it," he said, "What is that?"  
Something white on his coat sleeve, a snowflake. "This came another, an owl, and soon how fast they flew! But there were the telegraph poles."  
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