

A Dream.

There are times when a dream delicious Steals into a waking hour, Like a face with love capricious...

AN UNCOMMON KIND OF GIRL.

By P. J. NEVEN.

"Would you please tell me where Mr. Wrayburn's office is?" asked a man with the unmistakable air of the country.

The man took the chair which the clerk had indicated with his pen, and sat on the edge of it, with his hat in his hand...

After waiting for about twenty minutes he was told that Mr. Wrayburn was ready to receive him.

"I received a letter from you the other day concerning a mortgage that's on my farm."

The lawyer looked up quickly from a number of papers which he was busily sorting and arranging...

"Ah, yes, I remember now, I wrote you the other day to notify you that the mortgage is due, and that we expect you to be prompt in paying the debt."

"Yes, sir," the farmer replied, with alacety pulling a blackened, well-worn cotton bag from one of his capacious pockets.

Again the lawyer rubbed his nose violently, then arose, went to the safe, opened it and disappeared within its depths.

worrying witnesses and haranguing juries; he had been connected with many of the most celebrated trials and law-suits in the country...

By this time Mr. Ryan had the money counted out on the table. "Fourteen hundred and eighty-seven dollars and thirty-six cents, principal and interest, I believe you said in your letter, Mr. Wrayburn. Well, here it is, every cent of it."

Instead of taking the money the lawyer only glanced at it and said, "Pardon me, Mr. Ryan, before we go any further would you object to telling me the circumstances which forced you to mortgage your farm?"

"Quite so, sir, but I assure you it is not idle curiosity that prompts me to inquire into your affairs, and I am satisfied that after a while you will not blame me for asking about them."

"It is not by any means a funny story I have to tell you, sir, but one which calls up many sad memories. Nellie—God bless her true heart—is the only child I've left now, and had it not been for her I'd never have managed to scrape that money together. Eleven years ago she was only ten years old, and a prettier child you never saw, with her dancing, bright blue eyes—her poor mother's eyes—and her rosy cheeks. My work usen't to seem half as hard after she'd come dancing across the fields like a sunbeam, in her little pink sunbonnet to give her old father a kiss before trudging off to school. And I used to think when I'd see her starting off down the road with her little dinner-pail in one hand and her book and slate in the other what a fine education I'd give her. I'd send her to the best institutions in the country and make her a great and noble woman; for I believe, sir, that the best legacy a parent can leave his child is a good moral and intellectual training, the best the country can afford, if it is in his power to take advantage of it."

"She was a good wife to me, a kind, devoted wife, and a good mother to her children. No matter what happened she was always cheerful and uncomplaining. But I'll say no more about that, sir, I'll not weary you but hasten on, for I know your time is valuable. Her grave was hardly covered when Tom, my oldest boy, the mainstay of the family, the pride of us all for his manly strength, and kindly, loving nature, was stricken with the fever. We all thought his strong, robust constitution would bear the strain and bring him through safely; and a noble fight he made for his life. He would have conquered had he not got a relapse. The crisis was passed and he was recovering fast. We were congratulating ourselves on the fact that he was out of danger, and that with a little care he would soon be up and around again, when one morning he hurriedly by appearing in the kitchen with his every-day clothes on and telling us that he felt well enough to go to work. With difficulty we persuaded him to go back again to bed, but that exertion cost him his life. In three days he was stiff and cold in death."

"I had two sons, Tom and William, one twenty-three, the other twenty, two fine, strapping young fellows, who could do more work than any other three men in the whole country-side; ah, sir, they were good boys and with the pride of their mother's heart; and they were so kind to her! They'd milk the cows, churn the butter, haul in the wood and water, and they would even scrub the floor and make the beds if she would let them. It used to do me good when she'd be scolding them for working, as she thought, too hard, to see Tom catch her up in his big, brawny arms as easily as if she were a baby and stop her mouth with a big, smacking kiss, while William would look on and give that ringing, hearty laugh of his which I can still hear."

"Ah, yes, sir, I understand what you were going to ask. For days we watched each other, wondering which of us would be the next. Something told us that the grave was not yet satisfied, that it was yawning for another victim. Oh how I prayed that William would not be cut down in the glory and strength of his young manhood at a time when life is so sweet and so hard to give up, and that I would be called instead—I who was weary of life and who longed to be laid to rest by my wife in the silence and peace of the tomb! But it was not to be. My poor lad had to go. For a long time when he felt it coming on he fought against it and tried to keep Nellie and me from knowing that it had attacked him, thinking that perhaps he could shake it off. He struggled with it for dear life, but the more he struggled

the stronger grew its grasp upon him. I'll never forget the awful look of despair that came into his face when he came in from the field and told me he had to go to bed. If, when he first felt it he had attended to it properly instead of working on in desperation hoping to drive it off he might have come round all right, but no, it was not to be, and it was not long before the grave closed over him too. Ah Heaven, my boys, my poor boys, why were you snatched away so young, and I left here, a useless old hulk!"

The old man's mental anguish was so keen that he started from his seat, clenched his hands above his head for a few seconds while the memory of his great sorrow seemed to tear and rend his heart; then he let them fall heavily at his side. After a long pause he succeeded in mastering his grief, resumed his seat, and with a trembling voice went on with his story.

"I have but an indistinct recollection of the time that immediately succeeded the death of my second boy. I have a confused remembrance of crowds of people, kind, pitying faces coming and going, and then a long blank silence when I seemed benumbed and devoid of all feeling. The first thing that I can remember clearly is awakening one morning to find myself in bed. The room door stood open and I could see Nellie in the kitchen busily preparing the breakfast. I felt very drowsy, and went off to sleep again before I could carry out my intention of getting up. I awoke with a start, sprang out of bed with an odd sensation of having slept a long time. I hastily put on my clothes and went out into the kitchen, where I saw Nellie sitting in the chair by the window knitting. She arose as soon as she heard me enter the room, came towards me, but stopped short when she caught sight of my face. It struck me at the time that there was some change in her appearance which I could not discern. From her my eyes went to the table, which was set for breakfast for only two."

"Why, is this, I said, 'you haven't set places for mother and the boys. Where are they?'"

"She gave a low cry when she heard my voice, then darted forward, and put her arms about my neck. "Hush, father, don't ask any questions, that's a good dear, but sit down and eat your breakfast."

"She almost pulled me over to the table. I sat down wondering at her strange behavior. Now and then I noticed her stealing a glance at me as if terribly apprehensive of something. Her hand trembled so much that she spilt the tea in pouring it out. Three times I had to refuse the biscuits which she nervously passed to me. Her agitation became so great that at last I became anxious for her."

"Nothing, father, nothing," she said, making a mighty effort to control herself. "Let me help you to some more steak."

"There is no more on the platter," I said, looking at her in amazement.

"She was now so nervous that she seemed actually crying. A sudden dread seized me that something was wrong and that she was endeavoring to conceal it from me. Naturally, I connected it with the absence of the others. I had been under the impression that, as I slept late, they had had their breakfast and gone to the fields and that the mother was about the house somewhere. Every moment I had expected to see her enter the room and hear her rallying me good-humoredly for being so lazy. At the same moment I became conscious of a strange air of silence and loneliness that seemed to pervade everything, and it oppressed me heavily. I was just going to ask her where her mother was when with a rush the memory of everything came back. Ah, God, I shall never forget the feeling I experienced at that moment! It seemed as though I had received a blow physically. For a moment I was dazed. I grew white and rigid as marble. Then I rushed bareheaded into the air and ran like mad towards the barn, calling on Tom and William and Molly. For a time I was out of my mind and did not know what I was doing. Nellie told me afterward that she will never forget her dying day the awful despair and grief that was in my voice when I was calling them. I looked everywhere for them, and at last found myself in the cemetery. I remember nothing between the time I was rushing through the fields and when I threw myself on their graves. No sound now escaped my lips except long quivering moans. I thought I should have died under the awful sense of desolation which filled my heart, and oh how glad I would have been to go and lie there with them and quell the grief that was killing me. I was crushed to the earth by the weight of my great sorrow and I felt and wished that I might never rise again. I at last became conscious of somebody's presence, and looking up I saw Nellie standing near me with streaming eyes. She told me afterward that she had been there a long time before she could attract my attention. She called me and even shook me, and I paid no heed. The poor child became very anxious for me and didn't know what to do. I sprang up, caught her in my arms, and strained her to my breast, as though I were afraid I'd lose her too. "Ah, my little Nellie," I groaned, "we've only each other now—we've only each other." She reached up, put her arm round my neck, and kissed me. And then the tempest of my sorrow broke, the long pent-up grief burst forth in tears, and I swayed to and fro as the storm swept over my

soul. Nellie made no effort to stop it, but allowed it to continue, knowing that it would do me good in softening, breaking up, and carrying away that awful weight on my heart that was crazing me. At last I grew more calm, and she gently asked me to go home. Without replying I took her by the hand, turned toward the graves of my lost loved ones, looked long and lingeringly at them, and then suffered her to lead me away.

"Every evening after that we went together to visit them, and poured out our souls in prayer for their eternal repose. Nothing gave us more comfort than this, the thought that perhaps we could be of assistance to them. Sometimes we went in the afternoon and spent hours there. On those occasions we would have long talks about them and the happy past. It was then that the present would fade away, the years roll back, and our dear ones be with us again. Again I'd see Tom catch up his mother to stop her mouth with a kiss, and hear William's loud, ringing laugh, and then I would smile, and Nellie almost clap her hands in her old childish way. I felt so much better from these visits that by degrees I began to grow accustomed to their absence and gradually brought my mind to bear on our temporal concerns. The first thing I noticed was that Nellie seemed to have grown quite large and womanly. As soon as I observed it I looked and looked at her, and the more I looked the more I wondered that I had not noticed it before. Then when I began to try to solve the enigma my wonder changed to amazement.

"Child, I said to her, 'come here.' "She came over and sat beside me. "What has made the change in you? It seems to me that you have grown wonderfully tall these last two weeks."

"She grew pale and agitated at once, but tried to hide her nervousness from me. Instead of answering my question she said it was time for our customary visit to the cemetery. That put all other thoughts of my mind. I went and got my hat and we started out. Shortly after that I returned to the matter again and it seemed to move her so much that my wonder was redoubled, and I insisted on her giving me an explanation.

"She astounded me by asking, 'What year is this, father?'"

"What?'" "Why, 1882," I said, staring at her. A dreadful suspicion came over me that her mind was weakening. She looked long and wistfully at me; then got up without saying a word and went into the house—we had been sitting outside the front door enjoying the calm evening. In a few moments she returned with a newspaper in her hand. She put it into mine, and pointed to the date. I looked blankly at it, for there before me I saw June 20th, 1885! I rubbed my eyes and looked again; I turned the paper over and looked at the other side, but the same date met my eyes on every side. I looked at Nellie and saw her watching me with a face as white as snow, and then I realized the truth. The last three years of my life had been a blank to me! My mental powers had been suspended by the awful affliction which had met me, and I had lived and moved without knowing it. Instead of being dead only two weeks, my wife and children had been mouldering in their graves for three years. Thrice had the seasons come and gone, thrice had the flowers bloomed and withered on their breasts. I leaned back in my chair, giddy and faint at the discovery. I was silent for a long time endeavoring to become accustomed to the idea that three years had dropped out of my life without my being conscious of it. Nellie sat on a low chair at my feet waiting for me to speak. Then a sudden fear seized me. "Was I violent, Nellie? Did they put me in the asylum?"

"Oh, no, father, you were quiet all the time, and you never went away from home. Indeed, you were too quiet, for you never spoke a word after William's death until two weeks ago when you came to life again. You went about with so awfully vacant a look in your eyes that it makes me shudder to think of it. I tried every means in my power to have you cured; I got the best doctors obtainable to treat you, without success, and I had my mind made up that you would never get better when you came to yourself. The doctors wanted me to let them send you to an asylum, but I would not listen to it, as I was determined to keep you to myself and take care of you, and now I have you and you are your old self again, are you not, dear?" And she threw her arms impulsively round my neck and kissed me. "I was terribly afraid for you," she continued, "that morning at breakfast when I spilt the tea on the tablecloth. I thought when the memory of our loss would come back again that you would lose your reason again; and I think you did lose it for a while—with a sad smile."

"It was then that I faintly realized the treasure I had in my daughter. During those years she had devoted herself entirely to me, prompted by a love and sense of duty amounting to utter self-forgetfulness. She had denied herself every little pleasure which young people prize so much, to take care of me. She might have let them take me away to an asylum and been free, but she preferred remaining at home in the lonely house in the company of a silent old man who moved and breathed, but who was mentally dead and not even aware of her presence. I had accepted her ministrations without the slightest acknowledgment. She spoke to me and I did not answer. A dog would have been better company, for he would have shown friend-

liness and been responsive to her caresses, while I was heavy, silent, passionless. My heart swelled with compassion as I thought of her suffering when she was obliged to bays her grief alone. What dreary days and nights she must have spent in the silent, lonely house which formerly was so pleasant and cheerful when we were all there! I kissed her hand reverently and humbled myself in the presence of that pure, unselfish devotion; I drew her to my arms and held her there trembling lest something should happen that I should lose her. I raised my eyes, filled with tears of gratitude, to the throne of Divine Mercy and blessed the Giver of all good gifts for this inestimable treasure.

"And how did we get along all that time, Nellie? Who did the work?"

"Why, you and I," she said, smiling brightly at me, "as well as we could. You did exactly as I said, for you were a good, obedient boy. You would go and plough when I bade you and do everything else I'd tell you. I believe you would have tried to jump over the moon if I told you. But sometimes I had to go and tell you to stop for you'd work away all night and plough the field over again if I'd let you; and she laughed merrily.

"But did I do all the work? Didn't you have a hired man?"

"Oh, in the very busy season we used to have a man for a few days, but the rest of the year you and I managed very well. You did the heavy work, and I the easier; I can drive a team now first rate."

"I looked and saw that her hands were browned and hard from work and exposure to the sun. "My poor child, you surely did not work out of doors like a farm laborer?"

"Of course; why not? It did me good; I am strong and healthy. I took my time, and did not work too hard, and then, as I said, I did the lighter work, such as harrowing, driving the horse-rake and binder, building loads and so on, while you did the heavier. The outdoor exercise was all the better for me. And now," she said to prevent me from speaking, "let us go and have some supper."

"Well, sir, you can readily understand working under circumstances such as these did not tend to make us wealthy. Nellie was only thirteen at the time my reason was dethroned and I was rendered incapable of acting intelligently. Everything then was left in her hands, and naturally matters did not progress as well as they otherwise would owing to her lack of experience, judgment and physical strength. Considering the herculean task she undertook to perform, it was marvelous she was able to accomplish anything at all. As it was, the farm was in rather a poor condition, although it was remarkable it was not much worse. I can ascribe that fact only to the courage and tireless energy of my little girl, who, I found out afterwards from the neighbors, worked much harder than she led me to believe. The expense of re-improving the farm and the settling of the numerous doctor's bills which poured in on me together with many other accounts which it is unnecessary for me to particularize, compelled me to come to Mr. Harmon. It is now five years since I mortgaged the farm, and I am glad to say that we have succeeded in scraping the money together which you see on the table and which gives us back our little place again, clear and without a cent on it. I say 'we' because fully half of that money represents the toil of my daughter, who would not hear of my hiring labor, but came into the fields herself. 'Why shouldn't I, she said, 'haven't I worked outside these last three years? I'd grow rusty now if I shut myself up in the house.' I had to yield to her wishes, and there's the result," and the farmer pointed with an air of pride to the money; "most of that's her's, sir."

"I think it's all her's," said the lawyer. "What do you mean?" inquired the farmer, starting.

"Your daughter is of age, is she not?" was the lawyer's queer answer.

"Yes, sir, she was twenty-one last month," said a farmer, wondering still more; "but what of that?"

Without replying Mr. Wrayburn stood up, handed him one of the papers he had brought from the safe and asked him to read a certain paragraph which he indicated. Mr. Ryan pulled from his pocket a battered tin case, took out a pair of spectacles, wiped them with an enormous red handkerchief which he pulled from another pocket, and then put the glasses on his nose. These were securely kept in place by a piece of yarn passing round the back of his head. He took the paper in his hand, turned it over, examined it critically, and then looked inquiringly at the barrister.

"This is not the mortgage, sir."

"Oh, no, did you think it was? That's the last will and testament of the late Mr. Harmon."

"What is he dead?"

"Why, didn't you know? Yes, he died two weeks ago."

"Is that so? I am very sorry to hear it. He was a good man and a gentleman in every sense of the word—a good man and a gentleman"—he repeated partly to himself, "who was always very kind to me and never pushed me for the interest. I must tell Nellie, so that we can remember him every day in our prayers. But," he said, referring to the will, which he held in his hand, "what have I to do with this?"

"If you will kindly read what I showed you, you will understand," replied Mr. Wrayburn. The farmer turned the paper over, found the paragraph, and began to read it, while the lawyer sat back in his chair, and watched his face closely. There was a deep silence for a few