

THE GUIDING STAR.

A Story of the Canadian Parliament.

BY CHARLES GORDON ROGERS.

“LOOK out!” shouted someone.

The young man addressed, turned quickly, and glanced up the street. The cause of the commotion flashed upon his vision—a runaway pair of fine horses, bearing down and almost upon him.

There were two women in the sleigh. The elder one had shrunk into a corner in a terrified attitude. The younger stood upright, grasping the back of the driver's seat, and stared over the heads of the horses, with wide and beautiful eyes. It was the expression of these eyes that caught and riveted the young man's attention for the instant, during which he mechanically absorbed the details of the situation.

The driver sat rigid, frightened and futile, jerking spasmodically at the reins which the horses now controlled. The leaping horses, the high-seated figure of the shrinking driver, and the statue-like form of the girl were silhouetted momentarily against the blood-red background of the western sky, and bound by the high buildings of the long street. As in a narcotic-given dream, to the eyes of the young man, the stone walls seemed to flow by, converging in clear-cut perspective at the end of the street, where the sun seemed setting. And over all, like a halo, was the *nimbus* of the mid-winter atmosphere, made golden by the sunshine.

Suddenly, to the corner, a car came clanging down a cross street, at a right angle to the course the runaways were taking. The sudden appearance of this electric monster, together with the loud accompaniment of its warning gong, disconcerted the horses and threw them from their stride.

It was the youth's opportunity—the chance of a moment and of a lifetime. He sprang to the horses' heads and seized the bridles with either hands. Then, as if at a signal, and seeing that the

horses were checked, a dozen other men ran to his assistance. The driver, like one loosed from his bonds, leaped down. Others surrounded the equipage with expressions of sympathy and solicitude for its occupants. In the midst of it all the young man slipped away.

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On a certain February night of the famous session of 1896, George Hilton, newspaper correspondent, sat in the Press Gallery of the House of Commons, alternately scribbling upon the paper before him and gazing across the chamber to the Speaker's Gallery. The Gallery was comfortably filled with fair faces, and faces that had once been fair; but Hilton's glance was not of a generally appreciative and disinterested nature. Rather, it seemed focused upon one young person who sat in the front row, and, leaning over the rail, appeared mightily interested in a bald-headed and elderly gentleman below, who was discoursing fluently upon the universal benefits to be derived from the extension of a certain waterway, possibly through his own constituency. The declining attitude of the girl annoyed Hilton, since it only allowed him a very complete view of the top of her be-feathered hat, save at moments when the bald-headed orator in the arena, paused in his talk to sip from a tumbler of water; during which brief periods the girl would raise her head and glance indifferently about, to resume her original attitude at the sound of the next word from the gentleman who held the floor.

“What the deuce can she see—or rather, hear—to interest her in the old duffer?” muttered Hilton in disgust, as he dipped his pen viciously into his allotted inkwell, and prepared to write the orator down an ass. “One can't call it a dry subject exactly, though it seems to be so to the old gentleman; but it's not the sort of thing one would imagine a woman