

GEORGE FRANCIS TRAIN ON THE WINTER CARNIVAL.

The following grotesque attempt to immortalize our Canadian Carnival in rhyme, was sent to our friend, Mr. Erastus Wiman, of New York, just before he started for Montreal. It is from the well-known Mr. George Francis Train, now called the philosopher of Madison Square, inasmuch as he now spends most of his time under the trees in that popular resort. The eminent psychologist evidently had read the description of the ice palace which Mr. Wiman furnished to the *New York Tribune*, and which has provoked the accompanying ode:

Madison Square, N.Y.

Citizen (or Subject), Erastus Wiman, President Great North Western Telegraph Company of Canada, Box 808, New York City.

Congratulations on Grand device
Of Iceberg, Carnival of Ice!
Three Times Round World, I've never seen
On Planet such Aladin Scene?
(Nor shall I see your magic scheme)
Since wires were cut, with Type and talk,
I never yet have left New York:
Our Icemen here are in Distress,
To witness your "Iceberg Success,"
(In Palace-Cars our millionaires
Should send you our Park Polar Bears.
To Blizzardize, your Ice Case Role
Out-Zeros Blizzard at the Pole.
Your Crystal Palace, Hutchinson.
Out-Monuments our Washington.
The Biggest thing the World has done
Since Apple Jack caused Adam's fall,
Is "Ice Glacier of Montreal!"
While you out-Iceberg us in Ice,
We out-Monument you in Vice!
Canada beats Ice Esquimo
In Ice Case Mansion in the Snow!
"Erebus"? "Terror"? And "Resolute"?
Alaskan? Inuit? Aleut.
Would be astounded! "Mer de Glace"?
"Mont Blanc"? De Long on Lena Pass?
Are all Eclipsed? Rae, Hall and Kane?
Tyson? Buddington? and "Jeanette" Fame
Don't count! Montreal wins Ice Gauge:
You show us how Glaciers are made
In "Ice-Architectural-Trade!"
The Northern Lights will dazzle night
In Palace Ice Electric Light!
No danger of Milwaukee Fire—
Holocausting Funeral Pyre.
Six stories high of Ice in Air,
No Fire Engine is needed there.
World must admit, from Base to Roof
Your building is double Fire-Proof:
Insurers at the lowest Rate,
The Risk of Fire can safely take,
(For once House needs no Fire Escape.)
With kind regards, will you please send,
This Psychogram to my old friend,
Sir John Macdonald (biggest man,
On Continent, in statesman class,
Lord Beaconsfield of Englishmen?)

GEORGE FRANCIS TRAIN.

ALMOST A TRAGEDY.

BY MARY BLANK.

It is our last Christmas Eve together. No wonder that my arm is so closely wound round her waist, and that her head lies lovingly against my shoulder, as though half loath yet to lose its customary resting-place. For her the future appears all bright; she is marrying the man she has chosen, and a sister's affection no doubt seems tame in comparison with that world of love which is open now before her. Still there is something in her manner to-night betraying a vague uneasiness, something almost indefinable, yet clear enough to me, who have studied her every mood since earliest childhood. My seven years' seniority has established a different relationship between us: it is more as a child that I love her than as a sister, and she too has always looked upon me in the light of the mother we have lost. Our father also is dead; and, having been all in all to each other so long, it seems scarcely credible that the New Year should have power to part us. It is a wild eerie night without. The wind is blowing so boisterously that every door in the house seems to be creaking on its hinges and every window shaking in its frame. The candles have not yet been brought in, and only the fire-light flickers on our faces and casts long shadows around. My pretty little sister shivers, and edges still closer to my side. "Ruth," she whispers timidly, "do you ever feel, on a night like this, as though you were not alone, as though something intangible were beside you, and you dared not turn your head to see what it is?" "I am not so stupid," is my prompt reply. "I don't believe in shadowy forms and impalpable presences, nor indeed in anything ghostly at all." "Ghosts are the bogies with which they frighten children. I am not speaking of them, but of the spirits—"

I interrupt her hastily. "If you are going to talk nonsense, Eva, I shall ring for lights. It is Davis who puts these ideas into your head, and it is very wrong of him. I shall tell him so when he comes."

Davis is the man she is going to marry; and at his name her eyes droop, and her fingers fidget nervously amongst the fringes of my dress. Sometimes I am half afraid that there is more fear than love in her feelings for him. He is very grave, even taciturn at times, and very much older than she. But, when I had at first set my face against the marriage, partly on these grounds, and partly because he was a widower, and I was a little jealous that my darling should have even a dead rival, she had begged me so hard to consent, and had seemed so distressed when I hesitated, that I could not but believe she loved him. For myself, I never cared for him, but was quite ready to admit that my

prejudices were unfounded; and he was so good and gentle to her always that I was soon won over to their side.

It was at a dance that she met him first. I remember so well how gay she was when she set out, how full of fun and roguery, her eyes dancing and her lips tremulous with delight. She has never been so light-hearted since. Even that same night, when I went into her room to hear of all the events of the evening, I was struck by a change; she was looking so pale and tired, and answered me only in monosyllables when I questioned her. Not till the next morning did I hear of the stranger who had been there, who had danced with her nearly all night and evidently captivated her fancy. In the evening too it had come out that he was somewhat of a conjurer and ventriloquist; and afterwards, Eva told me, he had attempted to mesmerize her, but only partially succeeded. He had chosen her because he said she had such dreamy, spiritualistic eyes, and would surely make a good medium.

But in this he is mistaken; soft and languid as my little sister seems, she has a very strong will, and does not so easily succumb. It is for this reason, because she is usually so brave and self-contained, that I am surprised she should be nervous now.

"What is it dear?" I whisper anxiously, when she lapses into a scared silence, holding my hand so tightly the while that it is with some difficulty I refrain from crying out.

"Ruth, what shall I do when I leave you?" she cries irrelevantly, as it appears to me.

"You will have your husband; you will not miss me," I return moodily.

"Ruth, that is unfair. As if he could ever be quite the same to me as you, quite so good, or quite so dear! I love him—oh, yes, I love him—my whole soul is bound up in him, I think—but, but—"

"But you are a little nervous to-night, and unstrung. Leaving home is always a trial at the last," I answer tenderly.

"It may be that; but do you know"—drawing her hand away to rest her head upon it, and peering thoughtfully into the fire—"I have never been the same since that night!"

"The night you met Davis?"

She nods gravely, and I congratulated myself on the wisdom with which, when I once found that opposition would be useless, I had hurried on the marriage. She is so delicate and easily excited that the uncertainty of a long engagement would have completely worn her out.

"Of course," I commence rallying, "when a girl is in love—"

But she breaks in, almost sharply—

"It is not love; or, if it is, love is the most selfish, all-engrossing sentiment under the sun. It is a pain, and no pleasure. It is a morbid fascination that precludes all other ideas, all goodness, purity, and sweet home-affections. Oh, Ruth, if this is love, life is not worth having!"

"You mean you do not care for him?"—blankly.

"No; I care for him too much. It is my own feelings I condemn. He is everything that is good and true."

"I do not understand."

"Nor do I. It seems of late as if I were living in a spirit-world, as though I had no identity of my own at all."

"Eva, I believe it is that spiritualistic rubbish which is doing you harm!"

"Perhaps," she answers doubtfully. "I have often heard that mesmerism has a strange effect on nervous people."

"You don't mean to say that you suffered yourself to be mesmerized after that first time?" I exclaim, in horrified displeasure, forgetting for the moment that she is no longer a child to be scolded into good behavior.

I cannot claim obedience from her now, I had spoken so strongly on the subject at the time that I thought she would have respected my wishes.

"Only once, and that did me good, I know," is the apologetic reply, and she slips her hand again into mine. "I had one of my reeking headaches, and with just a few passes of his hand he sent me to sleep, and when I awoke I was quite free from pain, only feeling very weak, little mother!"

"Because I have such a horror of anything of the sort," I answer slowly. "Something I saw when I was a child impressed me so much that I can never think of it without a shudder."

"Tell me about it, Ruth, she pleads. "It is Christmas Eve, the time for story-telling."

"If it will not frighten you," I begin demurringly; but she reassures me eagerly, and pokes the fire into a blaze to disperse some of the shadows which are gathering thickly about us.

And so I commence my story, only omitting the name of the farm mentioned, because I did not wish that she should have any dreary associations with the village where we lived so many years, and where, strange to say, Davis Locke contemplates taking another house when they are married.

"I was only ten years old when it happened," I begin; "you were a little child, and our father was still alive. It was he that took me to the farm one wintry afternoon, and left me outside while he went to speak with the man who lived there—his tenant. He said he should be only a few moments; but he was away so long that I became restless, and wandered round the house, looking into the windows to see if I could find him. It was so cold, too, standing still, and I thought perhaps some one would notice me waiting there and call me in to the

fire. But my expectations were not realized, and I was about to turn back discouraged, when a wide-open window caught my eye, and I made towards it at once. The room belonging to it looked so dismal and dark that my first thought was that I would rather be outside than in there; then I saw a small fire burning in a low old-fashioned grate, and although it was nearly out, I could not resist stepping in to warm my hands. Not till I had crossed the threshold did I observe that I was not alone. A woman was seated on a high-backed chair, between a door that stood ajar and the window. Her eyes were closed, and the hair was blown back from her thin white face by the draft, while now and then her lips moved, and she began talking to herself in a low, mournful key.

I stop a moment for breath, and am half-startled by the rapt attention Eva is giving to my story. Her eyes are fixed on my mouth, as though she would hear the words before they are spoken; yet she gives a quick sigh of relief when I cease.

"Are you frightened? Shall I stop?" I ask a little anxiously.

"No, no—go on," she answers impatiently, "I want to hear it all."

And half-unwillingly I continue—

"At first I thought she was asleep, and only stared at her curiously; but, after a few minutes' scrutiny, I saw she was in pain, such dreadful contortions passed over her face, while her eyelids twitched continually. Presently I summoned up courage to pluck her by the sleeve, and to my surprise her eyes opened directly; and she looked at me with such strange intensity that I trembled and dare not move away. Then suddenly she caught my arm and cried out—

"Child, have you come to save me! He is mesmerizing me to death, I tell you; he is mesmerizing me to death!"

"Before I could answer, I heard another voice behind me which commanded silence; and turning round, I saw glaring in at the door a dark, wicked-looking face, close shaven and with short black hair. Only one word the man spoke, and that in low, almost soothing tones, but my arm was released at once, and the woman shrank back in mortal terror on her chair. As for me, a scare came over me; and, with a piercing shriek, I dashed through the window, leaving the miserable woman alone with the man who was perhaps, as she said, her would-be murderer. I did not stop till I reached home, and there my story was received with a little laughter and more discredit. They said I had been dreaming; but I knew I was awake, and felt sure the woman was in real need of help. I have never forgotten her face, and I think I should remember his."

"All alone in the freight?"

It is Davis Locke who has entered, and now stands beside us, laughing at our fright. Eva is soonest reassured, and hides an April face of mingled smiles and tears on his shoulder. I am more seriously alarmed.

Never before have I noticed how dark Davis is, and what a sinister look comes into his eyes at times; and now, taken in conjunction with the story I have told and the fact that he too is a mesmerist, I can only shudder and bury my face in my hands.

"Why, Ruth, you are more frightened at your own story than I was!" laughs Eva lightly.

"Has Ruth been telling ghost-stories?" asks Davis, twirling his long black whiskers and looking up with faintest interest. "It is just the night for them. As I came through the garden all the trees seemed alive, full of such strange sights and sounds, and the wind was sobbing like an angry child."

"It was a true story I was telling," I remark gravely.

"And we have not heard the end yet. Ruth, did the woman really die?"

"Yes, she died a fortnight later."

"And you believe—"

"I believe she was murdered, foully, cruelly murdered," I answer, with an impressiveness that surprises myself. "And some day I feel sure that the man who did it will be found and brought to justice."

"Your sister is getting quite bloodthirsty," says Davis, with a sneer, turning his face from me and addressing Eva. "What is it all about?"

"Do not tell him, Eva!" I implore, excitedly, somehow feeling a strange reluctance that he should hear the story. "Do not tell him. It was all my fancy, I dare say; but I would rather not have it mentioned again to-night—and before him."

Eva smiles, and says no more on the subject; but Davis Locke's eyes meet mine scowlingly; and for the first time I feel as if I had a reason for my instinctive dislike.

Christmas Day itself is finer than the Eve. There is no snow, and there is very little frost; and the sun comes out late in the morning, and makes the world seem brighter than it has for many days.

We are all in church together as the first rays pierce through the clouds and enter the large, stained windows; but, when I turn round contentedly to admire the scattered colored lights, I see they have produced a weird effect.

On Davis Locke's face they lie like a pale-blue shadow, giving him so haggard and evil an appearance that I turn away in disgust, only to meet a still more uncanny sight. My sister's head is bent over her book as she is joining in the responses, serenely unconscious that she is bathed in such a sea of red light that for a moment I fancy it must be blood, and that somehow she is wounded. Then gradually it fades away, leaving only a narrow streak across her

white forehead, and two larger splashes on her left shoulder and right arm. I shiver convulsively, and close my eyes. When I open them again the colors are not to be seen. Eva is looking at me wonderingly, and Davis leans over to ask if I am ill. Forcing a smile, I assure them of my perfect health; but all through the service I feel as though something untoward had happened, and I am not myself again until we go out into the air. I do not tell either of them what caused my distress, partly because I do not wish to alarm Eva, as I myself have been alarmed, and partly because I do not wish to be ridiculed. Besides, I am half-ashamed of myself now; it was such a natural thing to occur. We lunch together; and, when the meal is over, the carriage comes to take me to the neighboring town, where my father's sister has lived since we all left the home-country.

"Are you coming, Eva?" I ask, as she lingers behind a moment.

"Eva will stay with me," says Davis Locke; and, though the words are quietly spoken, I resent the air of authority which accompanies them.

"Aunt Mary will be offended," I observe gravely. "We have never missed going before."

"If Davis wishes me to stay, I must," says Eva, determinedly.

I go back to my seat and bring out my work. After all, it is nicer in the house this afternoon. I can send the servant with a message, and go myself to-morrow.

"Do not let me keep you from going," says Davis, politely.

I turn crimson. It has never struck me that perhaps they would like to be alone; it is such a new idea that my sister can prefer any other person's company to mine. I resent being dismissed like this.

"You are quite right," I answer, stiltily. "There is no reason at all why my actions should be influenced by yours;" and then, gathering up my crewels and crash, I sweep angrily from the room.

"She is cross; let me go to her," I hear Eva saying anxiously as I mount the stairs; but her lover only laughs, and detains her.

On my way down I pass, in dignified silence, not meaning to say good-bye, the door of the room where they are sitting; but, just as I am getting into the carriage, I look up and see Eva on the terrace.

"Don't be long, little mother!" she cries out gaily, nodding and smiling, until Davis interposes, drawing her back into the room, and closing the window with what seems to me a very vicious snap. Then I am driven off.

It is a six-mile drive, and the carriage is a closed one; so that I have not gone far before it is filled with steam from the hot water-can which I am using as a foot-stool. The glasses get dull and frosted with my breath, and presently I can see out no longer, and soon grow so warm and drowsy that I fall fast asleep—and dream.

My dream is a strange one, and evidently suggested by the event of the morning and the story I had told the night before. I am all alone in a large room, the dulness and dreariness of which reminds me of the room I entered fifteen years ago. A woman is advancing towards me all draped in black, waving her arms wildly in the air, as if she were under the influence of some strong drug or opiate. By-and-by she half turns away, and then I see that a tress of golden hair has escaped from its confinement, and is lying lightly on her sable garments. Insensibly attracted, I draw near and touch it softly; in color and texture it is very like my little sister's. There is just the same curling wave in it too. It I could only see her face! The next moment she glides away from me, and I have no strength to follow. A large white hand appears from between some heavy damask curtains at the far end of the room, and draws her behind them, while I can only stare stupidly after her and wonder whether she has gone. A whole hour, it seems, do I spend watching for her to re-emerge. My eyes are nearly starting out of my head, so earnestly do I gaze; and all the time I keep telling myself that it is only a chance resemblance, that my darling is safe at home. I think I cannot be quite sound asleep, my thoughts are so clear and collected. Then comes a low moaning cry, and instantly I recover myself and have power to move. With supernatural strength I tear down the curtains and penetrate into the space beyond. A man is standing with his back to me, bending over a prostrate form, a gleaming knife upraised, telling of the crime that has been committed. The victim is the woman in black; but now the veil is thrown back, and I can see—what? I stagger back and press my hands to my eyes to shut out the appalling sight. Everything seems growing dim, fading away in a crimson mist.

"Thank Heaven, it was only a dream!" I exclaim aloud, as I wake up and find myself safe in the carriage; and, though I cannot shake off an impression of ill, I know I have no reason for supposing that Eva is not as free from danger as myself—more so indeed, for an accident might happen to me at any moment with a pair of fresh horses not yet accustomed to run in double harness, while she is at home, with Davis to take care of her.

I do not open the windows, warm as it is. I am afraid of catching cold. Indeed my eyes are bloodshot now, I suspect, or why should everything wear that crimson hue? No doubt of it—I am in for one of my regular influenzas. I am glad when the rattling of the wheels over the stones tells me that we are at my aunt's. Then at last we pull up, and the door is opened for us to alight.