

Weary.

I am weary of all this sin and sadness, Weary of pleasure, joy and pain, Weary of all who have proven vain, Weary of hoping that I shall be saved, Weary of smiling to hide the sorrow, That deep in my heart is closely pressed, Weary of wishing a bright light to rest, Weary of laughing of pleasure and mirth, Weary of treading the dark paths of earth, Weary of thoughts that were once loved well.

Earth is at best but a wearisome place, Time ever teaches this—it must be true— Many are they who are left in the race; Those who reach home, alas! are few, Death in life's morning how gladly I greet it, Home to my dear loving Father above; With joy and not sorrow my spirit shall meet it, For I know He is not angry—but calleth in love, And often while musing I picture the meeting With those who have gone home a little before; And their low, tender voice I seem to hear greeting, Helping me on to Eternity's shore.

TED BRAYLEY'S SACRIFICE.

A Story of the Australian Gold Fields, by B. L. Farjeon.

At the bottom of the shaft little Dick Million looked scarcely human. To begin with, the shaft he had sunk was thirty-six feet deep, and black darkness would have enveloped him had it not been for the dim light shed by one sickly tallow candle—the candlestick being a flat piece of silver bark shaped like a bat, so that he could hold it conveniently in his hand or stick it in the clay wall while he worked away with his short-handled pick. Into the broad oval of this bat four nails had been driven and within these four nails the candle was fixed. To go on with, little Dick Million was literally in tatters and his face, his hair, his body and his ragged garments were bespattered with the soil in which he had been industriously digging since sunrise. Still further, the man himself, as he squatted on the ground, was in a state of the most tremendous excitement. In his outstretched palms lay some crumbling lumps of earth, in which bright gold was glittering, and he was gazing upon this treasure in delirious exultation. There was a sufficient reason for his frenzy. He had just struck the gutter.

"If this is a fair sample," he muttered, "it will wash fifty ounces to the tub at least. A hundred tubs at that rate will be five thousand ounces. Twenty thousand pounds! Hoorah!" Poor Man's Gully had been rushed six months ago, and in less than a month it swarmed with gold diggers. Dick Million himself was the discoverer. Tramping thither with his wife and child, a pretty little girl scarcely five years old, he set about prospecting and had found gold. Not in large quantities, but in his judgment the indications were promising, and he had let some mates at a distance into the secret. They circulated the news, gliding it richly, and "Rush, O!" was the cry. But the eager miners were doomed to disappointment. With the exception of Dick Million's claim only a few specks here and there were found, and Dick Million's earnings were nothing to boast of. He made at the most two ounces a week, and this lasted but a short time. The new gold field did not have a name, and the disappointed diggers christened it "Poor Man's Gully," and then began to scuttle away as fast as they had down to it. Dick Million, however, did not lose faith in it.

"There's gold about," he said to his wife, "and I'm going to stick to Poor Man's Gully till I find it." "All right, Dick," said his wife. "You're not often wrong."

A few other miners, though with less faith than Dick, also stuck to it and scattered themselves over the hills and gullies and marked out claims and sank shafts with dispiriting results. Their numbers gradually thinned, one and another dropping away to seek a new Tom Tiddler's ground, and at the present time the population of Poor Man's Gully comprised forty souls, all told. Dick Million was glad for their sakes that he had justified himself. True, their faith was lukewarm and his was steadfast, but he had in a measure lured them to Poor Man's Gully, and now he was in a position to reward them.

He had been in Victoria six years, and his little daughter was born in the colony. With that exception he had met with ill luck hitherto, but his little Georgie (short for Georgina) was a nugget far more precious than the largest that fortune-gold-digger ever found, more precious even than the "Welcome" nugget, which had been sold for £100,000. A hundred thousand would not have purchased little Georgie of him, and supposing an impossibility, and that he was willing to sell her for a hundred thousand, there was his wife, who would have turned her back upon all the gold that had been dug out of the bowels of the earth since the creation, and hugged her darling Georgie to her breast to prevent her being spirited away. Upon this point, and upon most others, Dick Million and his wife were in perfect accord; but there was certainly one upon which they did not agree.

Ten years ago, in the old country, by which endearing term England is known to all Englishmen in the Australian colonies, Mrs. Million, being a maid, and a pretty one into the bargain—elsewhere should Georgie have got her good looks?—had half a dozen sweethearts, two of the most earnest of whom were Dick and a man older than he, by name Ted Brayley. Now, Dick was an honest, steady, plodding young fellow, and Ted Brayley was an out-and-out scamp. He was a dissipated, idle, worthless fellow whom no efforts could reclaim, and it was perhaps his misfortune that

he had a bit of money. This he ran through quickly, all but an income of thirty pounds a year, paid to him in quarterly installments, and so tightly guarded that it was out of his power to dispose of the capital; otherwise he would soon have squandered it. He had, however, one good spot in him—he loved Charlotte Littlewood, Mrs. Million's maiden name, with a very genuine love. Had not Dick Million been in the way, it is not at all unlikely that she would have married him and tried to reclaim him, and thus have insured for herself a life of misery. But Dick stood first, and his wife, chafing at the bottom of her heart a sneaking regard for him. She and Dick did not agree in their estimate of Ted Brayley.

Dick could see no good at all in him, and declared that he was utterly, irremediably a bad lot. Lotty shook her head, and declared on the other hand that there was a great deal to admire in Ted, and that if he had had proper guidance in his youth he would have turned out a worthy and good fellow.

"When he does something to prove your words," said Dick to his sweet-heart, "I'll believe as you do. Till then I stick to my opinion. Let us talk about something else; I'm sick of his very name."

Which did not in the least affect Lotty. She was a pertinacious young person and she still kept a little corner in her heart for Ted Brayley. Perhaps because he loved her so well. Women are strange creatures and have strange ways of reasoning.

When Dick Million and his wife made up their minds to emigrate and try their fortunes on the gold fields Ted came to wish them good-bye. He was not sober—he rarely was—but he wished them good luck, with his eyes all the time on Lotty's pretty face and with an expression on his own which savored somewhat of pity for himself.

This angered Dick; it was almost like making love to Lotty while her husband stood by. He could not boast of good looks, whereas Ted Brayley was really a fine, handsome fellow.

"Good-bye," said Ted, "and God bless you." "Good-bye," said Dick, adding under his breath, "and good riddance to you."

Lotty stood with her hand in Ted's. "Try and reform," she said, and added boldly, because it was said in innocence, "try and be a better man, so that I may think well of you."

"You and you only," said Ted, gloomily, "could have made me a better man. But I don't blame you, I don't blame you."

He turned away, and that was the last they saw of him in the old country. II. That was six years ago, and now Dick Million was squatting at the bottom of his shaft, delirious with excitement of his discovery. He had sunk the shaft alone, having only the occasional assistance of his wife, who had grown strong in the free air of the gold fields, and who would stand at the windlass for a couple of hours a day, hauling up the stuff which Dick had dislodged.

Under such conditions the digging of the shaft had been a laborious job, but Dick was the sort of a man who made light of difficulties. When his wife was not with him Dick would make the rope fast and lock the handle of the windlass, leaving sufficient loose rope hanging down the shaft to enable him to reach the bottom. Large foot holes in the sides of the shaft assisted his descent, and were of still greater assistance when he climbed back over hand from bottom to top. Controlling his excitement, Dick set to work upon a further examination of the golden gutter he had discovered. It was wide enough for riches, from eighteen to twenty-four inches, and every inch he laid bare sparkled with gold. He picked out a number of nuggets from a pennyweight to half an ounce, and presently he came upon one which could not have weighed less than seven or eight ounces.

"Poor Man's Gully, indeed!" said Dick. "Why, if this goes on long enough I shall be a millionaire!"

The fortunate discovery had come just in time, Dick being pretty well at the end of his resources; but he was all right now. He could make certain of a hundred ounces at least even if the lead ran out; if it did not, there was no telling what he would be worth before a month was over. At the end of an hour Dick prepared to climb upwards to the earth's surface. His pockets were filled with lumps of the golden gutter, and with small nuggets, which with the large one he had unearthed, would probably make up a total of twenty ounces. A capital beginning. Up he climbed, grasping the rope firmly with his clay-crusted hands, and scrambled to the surface.

It was now within an hour of sunset, and he believed himself to be alone. The canvas tent in which he and his wife and their little Georgie lived was a quarter of a mile away. In order that no one in his absence should be able to get without difficulty to the bottom of the shaft he detached the rope from the windlass and slung it across his shoulder. Then turning his face towards his tent he saw he was not alone. Upon a hillock of rubble, some ten yards from where he stood, sat a man, and by the man, gazing at her master with patient loving eyes, stood a dog.

"Hello mate," said Dick. "Hello," responded the man in a thick voice, and looking up revealed to Dick Million the face of Ted Brayley. "Why, Brayley!" cried Dick, who was in a good humor with himself and all the world.

"Dick Million!" cried Ted. The dog barked. "Be quiet, Miss Quilt." "Well," said Dick, "you're the last man I should have expected to see in these parts."

"Same to you," said Ted. He rose, and then Dick perceived that he was drunk. "Ah," said Dick, his bitter feelings against Ted reviving, "the same old game."

"Yes," said Ted, unsteadily, "the same old game. Won't last much longer, Dick. I'm booked." The man was a perfect wreck. His limbs trembled, his eyes were blood-shot, his lips twitched. Dick Million was in tatters, certainly, but they were honest, respectable tatters, of which no man need have been ashamed. Ted Brayley's tatters were disreputable to the last degree, and with his shaking limbs and bloodshot eyes proclaimed his degradation. All at once Ted observed a bottle sticking out of the pocket of Dick's blue gurnsey.

"I'm in luck," he said, "Give an old pal a drink."

"You're welcome," and with a grin handed Ted the bottle. "Ted put it to his lips and made a dry face."

"Tea!" he muttered, with a shudder of disgust. "Don't suit your complaint," said Dick.

"Not by a long way. Haven't you got any brandy?" "No, and if I had I wouldn't give it to you."

"Wouldn't you!" said Ted, without the least trace of resentment. "How's Lotty?" "You drunken beast!" cried Dick, with a sudden fury. "How dare you mention her name?"

"More I am—more I am; but how is she?" The answer came from the near distance. "Dick! Dick!"

It was Lotty's voice and there was a note of trouble in it. She traveled almost as quickly as her voice and reached her husband's side. She was in evident distress of mind, but Dick now thought of nothing but his discovery of the golden gutter. "Look here, Lotty, I have found the gutter. It will wash fifty ounces to the tub."

He pulled the nuggets from his pocket and held them out to her with joy in his face. Ted Brayley stood aside, tipsily observant. Lotty had not seen him.

"Never mind the gold, Dick," she said. "Where's Georgie?" "Where's Georgie?" he echoed. "Why, isn't she at home?"

"She hasn't been home all day," replied Lotty, rapidly, "and I've been so busy washing that I hardly missed her. She went away this morning saying she was coming to you, and she knows her way so well that I didn't stop her. She's done it before, you know."

"Yes," said Dick, gazing around in a bewildered fashion, "but I haven't seen her."

"My God!" cried Lotty. "She must be lost! It's four hours now since she went. O Georgie, Georgie!"

"Don't lose your head, Lotty," said Dick, thinking no more of his gold. "We'll soon find her. Come along."

They turned in the direction of their tent, and Ted, accompanied by his dog, Miss Quilt, followed them leisurely.

"Who's Georgie?" he asked of himself, as he went along unsteadily. "Miss Quilt, who's Georgie?"

Miss Quilt looked up into his face and wagged her tail.

By this time Dick and his wife were out of sight. "That's a nice way to treat an old friend," said Ted, pausing. "What do you say, Miss Quilt?"

Miss Quilt wagged her tail again. "There's a tent at the foot of the hill yonder," said Ted, still addressing his dog, "and when we passed it a couple of hours ago I saw a woman washing clothes. Her back was turned towards me, and I didn't know it was Lotty. If I had, I would have asked her for a drink. Let us go there, Miss Quilt. But who's Georgie, eh, my dog?"

In addition to the man's gait being unsteady he seemed to be in a weak condition; therefore they made but slow progress and it was quite half an hour before they reached Dick Million's tent.

"This is it, Miss Quilt," said Ted. "Let us see if she's at home."

No one was about. He called for Dick and then for Lotty, but received no answer. Unconsciously he lifted the canvas door and entered, Miss Quilt following him gravely. On the rough mantelshelf was a photograph of a little child. He took it in his hand and gazed at it in the uncertain light, for it was now sunset and night was coming fast.

"It looks like Lotty when she was a little child," he said. "Did you ever see a sweeter face?"

Miss Quilt gave an affirmative bark. "You're a dog of discernment, Miss Quilt. I'll match you against a human."

He put the photograph in his pocket. "Long ago, my dog, I lost my moral sense. Dick Million behaved like a brute to me, calling me a drunken beast. Well, that may be, but he might have wrapped it up civilly. They are happy together, Miss Quilt, and I don't intend to stay to introduce discord, nor will I stay where I'm not welcome. So away we go, you and I, before they come back. Where to eh, Miss Quilt? God knows! I've come to the end of my tender, my dog, and the game's up. Amen! I was never any good to anybody that I know of, and it is quite as well that I have reached the last page of an ill-written book. This picture, which is the picture of Lotty

when she was a little girl, I take away with me, having no right to it? It isn't an honorable action, is it? But I'm going to do it and risk the consequences. But it is really puzzling, is it not, who Georgie can be? What's this? Half a bottle of brandy! We're in luck, Miss Quilt. Spills of war. I appropriate it. Take a drink, Miss Quilt."

He went through the performance of pretending to give Miss Quilt a long pull at the bottle by putting it to her mouth with the cork in it. Miss Quilt, who stood on her hind legs to reach the corked bottle, dropped on all fours when the pretense was finished, and instantly began to roll about as though she were drunk. She lurched on one side, then lurched on the other, then rolled over, then dragged herself to her feet again, and stumbled tipsily about with a most perfect imitation of a dog who had taken more than was good for her.

Ted Brayley shook with laughter at the performance. "Well done, Miss Quilt—well done," he cried. "There's a fortune waiting for you on the stage. But you must reform your ways, my dog. This sort of thing will never do."

He took the cork from the bottle and put the liquor to his mouth. It was a long drink and he took a deep breath after it.

"That done, I am a man again. Come, Miss Quilt, let us go."

With the photograph in his pocket and hugging the bottle close, he went out of the tent, Miss Quilt, now somewhat recovered, treading at his heels. A digger ran towards the tent and stopped at sight of Ted and his dog.

"Has she come back?" asked the man breathlessly. "Has who come back?" inquired Ted.

"Georgie." "And who may Georgie be? It's what I've been asking Miss Quilt this last hour and more."

"Mrs. Million's little girl. She's lost—wandered away half-a-dozen hours ago. If she's got among the Nuggety Ranges, Lord have mercy upon her! Once you get in, there's no getting out, unless an angel shows you the way. Dick Million and his wife are almost mad. Every man in the gully is searching for the little one!"

III.

He was gone, and Ted and Miss Quilt were left alone. The bright colors of the sky were dying quickly away, but there was still sufficient light to enable Ted to see, hanging on some lines near him, a number of small garments such as a little child would wear. He touched them softly.

"Little Georgie's clothes, Miss Quilt—Lotty's daughter. The clothes Lotty was washing when we passed her. Miss Quilt there's work before us."

He took a small flannel petticoat off the line and gazed at it with much tenderness.

"No, this will not serve. The scent is washed out of it. Is there anything in the tent?"

He re-entered the tent, and lifted a hanging of green baize which divided the sleeping apartment from the living apartment. There were two beds in it, a little crib for Georgie, and a stretcher for Dick and his wife.

Under the pillow on the crib was a child's night-dress. He drew it forth, kissed it, and sat down on the stretcher. "Stand up, Miss Quilt."

The dog obeyed. "Listen, my faithful dog, to what I am going to say to you. A little child has wandered God knows where, and if she is not found to-night she will die. We must find her, if no one else does. Do you hear? Do you understand? Good dog, good dog! Now mark. We go from this tent, you and I, and if you don't lead me to little Georgie never look me in the face again."

He enveloped Miss Quilt's head in the night-dress, and when he removed it the dog whined restlessly, and looked intelligently at her master, then moved to the door.

"Can you do it, my dog?" Miss Quilt jumped up to his shoulder and barked, seizing his trousers with her teeth she pulled him towards the open door.

"Good. We will pay for the picture of little Georgie and for the liquor I have pilfered."

They passed out of the tent, the dog leading the way. It was not quite dark. For a moment Miss Quilt stopped, with nose in the air, and then she made a sudden bound forward. Ted followed her, but his movements were not so rapid as hers.

"Gently, Miss Quilt, gently. Remember I cannot see in the dark."

They met no one on their way. Those who were searching for the child were hunting in other directions. For an hour and more they walked on, Ted stumbled sometimes over obstructions he could not see, but always picking himself up cheerfully, and encouraging Miss Quilt by the sound of his voice, the growing weakness of which made no impression upon him. On they went, and another hour passed.

"Are you sure you are right, Miss Quilt? We have been out a long time now, and Lotty is growing more and more anxious. She is a mother, my dog, and we are going to find her child for her—we are, are we not? Thank you for that assuring bark. We are on the trail, I am sure. You are not the dog to deceive a master who loves you. I do love you, Miss Quilt—and Lotty—and little Georgie. What are you stopping for? Don't say you've lost it, or I'll never believe in dog or woman again, either in this world or the next. You don't think you have. You are preparing for something. What is it? A man's heart is as strong as a dog's, I

hope. Oh, a jump, is it? Here goes after you."

He jumped in a clumsy fashion because of his increasing weakness, after the dog, and fell floundering into a turbulent creek. He scrambled out as well as he could and reached the opposite bank.

They were mounting a steep and rocky range, and when they got to the top they plunged into a valley, covered with huge boulders; then up another range of similar kind, and down another valley. Many a wound did Ted receive as he followed Miss Quilt; the blood ran down his legs, but he did not feel the pain.

"We are among the Nuggety Ranges, I suppose. I remember reading of two strong men being found dead in these parts, having been entangled in this stony wilderness of valley and mount, and unable to find their way out. Poor little Georgie—poor little Georgie! O, the little tender feet, the bewilderment, the despair! What is this you are thrusting into my hand? A child's shoe! Georgie's! Then you are on the right road, my dog! O, Georgie, Georgie! O, my poor child! There is a light in the sky. Thank God, the moon is coming out. Come quickly—come quickly! Angels of mercy, drive it forth!"

The faint light broadened, grew brighter, and now the bright moon sailed forth in peace and majesty. The scene around them was indescribably wild and majestic. Far as he could see stretched great hills and valleys of disintegrated rocks, and so much alike as to baffle the judgment which sought to find a road to safety out of them.

They had been out now at least four hours and Ted's limbs trembled and his head fluttered at the thought that a child of tender years must surely meet her death in these wild regions. Happily their search was soon to come to an end.

Miss Quilt ran forward with the swiftness of a deer-hound, then ran back, and whined pitifully. Ted went forward, saw stretched upon the ground the body of a little girl. He fell upon his knees by her side.

Her clothing was literally torn from her; there was blood upon her; her sweet face was as white as death.

"O Georgie, Georgie! O, my poor, poor dear! But is she dead? O God, for Lotty's sake let her live!"

He rubbed her hands, her limbs, her body; he took the pilfered bottle of brandy from his pocket and chafed her with the spirit, and succeeded in forcing a few drops down her throat.

"Miss Quilt! Miss Quilt!" he cried, in a voice choked with joy. "She breathes—she moves—she will live! But I? Great God, what darkness is this that is coming upon me? Is it death? No, not yet! I must live—I must, till Lotty comes to receive her child. I cannot carry little Georgie back; my strength is gone. I am dying."

By a sheer force of will he arrested the coming stroke.

"Quilt, my dear doggie, listen to me. With you gets my salvation. With you rests my forgiveness for an ill-spent life. Take this shoe in my mouth. Good, my dog, good! Hurry swiftly to the tent and bring little Georgie's mother here. Hurry—hurry! Now, go!"

Miss Quilt sped back, leaping as though she were mad.

Ted pressed the form of the little girl to him, to give her warmth.

"Georgie, Georgie! Can you hear?"

"Yes," faintly whispered the little one.

"Who is it? I am so tired, so tired!"

"Mother will soon be here, pet. Have patience—patience! The brandy he administered to her overpowered her senses, and she lay in his arms asleep.

The night passed, the eastern skies were filled with light. Over the stormy ranges came the sound of anxious voices and the bark of a dog. But no voice answered them.

When Lotty bent over her sleeping child she saw that the man who had saved little Georgie had passed away. With her child in her arms, saved from an awful death, she kissed the face of Ted Brayley and bade God bless him.

They bore him back tenderly, and to this day his name is a treasured remembrance with her and her husband and little Georgie. The child often sits down with Miss Quilt's head in her lap and talks to her of the master whose flower-covered grave is within sight of the dwelling in which she is growing up to a fair and sweet womanhood.

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