The Parrish Luck.

The road from Loneville trailed hot and dusty in the afternoon heat. That part of the world always got its full measure of heat, for there were no hills to temper the sun's rays, which shone down relentless upon the burnt fields. The sky was clear save for two long bands of white which stretched across the western sky, where a portion of the sun peeped between, like a prisoner behind bars. All the beauty there was in the surroundings lay in the sky, the air, and the fields, not in the dingy-looking house, considerably the worse for paint and general repairs. There was an air of desolation about the place that bespoke poverty or shiftlessness or both.

Suddenly a girl came forth carrying a pail, and walked slowly over to the well. Drawing the water she left the pail on the stone flagging, and came over to the sagging gate that barred the way to the road. Here she stood for a while, and one saw that she was tall and well formed. Her face was lighted by a pair of large brown eyes and her well-rounded arms were bared to the elbow. Were it not for an expression of weariness about the mouth — an anxious troubled look that lurked about her every facial movement — one would have termed her decidedly prepossessing. Suddenly below the bend in the road there emerged the figure of a young man, whom the girl no sooner sighted than her whole expression changed. The mouth took on the pretty, well-moulded lines that belonged to it by right, while the eyes brightened with a sudden welcome. A moment ago she was a listless, tired girl, now she was all alert. Smilingly, she awaited the newcomer, who came straight to the gate. He was a good-looking young fellow, with a bright eye and close curling brown hair. He worked in the country store, and his name was Ernest Thompson.

"Well!" he said, "I've done it at last."

The girl's eyes widened, as though this was not quite the greeting she expected.

"You have?" she asked.

"Yes! I quit this place to-night for good."

"Oh! Ernest!" It was almost a reproach and the man turned impatiently, oblivious of the girl's whitened face.

"Oh! what! I told you I was getting sick of it here—that I couldn't stand it much longer, and—"

"But you promised the other night you'd stay for another year anyway."

"Well!—I won't! that settles it," retorted he somewhat ungraciously.

The girl clasped her hands, while he averted his eyes, continuing hurriedly, "I hate poverty! and I hate Loneville! I am going to-night—on the 8.10 train. You won't mind, Em, will you? Why there ain't nothing for a fellow here. Out there," he waved his hand to the setting sun, "I'll get to be something. And then —you and I—Em, we can live as we ought to live, and I'll write often and I'll come out whenever I can—and—" his farewell frittered away suddenly, while he took both her hands in his, stroking them in an absent sort of way. His eyes were filled with the ambition of other things and though he saw there were tears in hers it was with no great reciprocal sympathy.

"Then this is to be good-bye," she said after a moment, while the sun sank into the fields and a gray pallor spread over the landscape. iShe shivered slightly, as with a sudden chill, and the man looked away quickly.

"Yes, I suppose it is," he said. "It's getting dark, and I haven't much time left."

"Won't you come in and say good-bye to mother?" asked the girl, almost timidly.

"No," he replied, releasing her hands," what's the use. Why, you'd think I was going to the ends of the earth. I'll be back again, sure enough,—and I'll write and — well, good-bye!" He was off—gone!

The girl watched him with straining eyes till his figure merged itself in the gathering shadow. So he was gone. And how little he had seemed to care. How lightly he had said good-bye. And yet this man was her promised husband; they were to be married soon; it had been understood in an indefinite sort of way that it might be in the fall. And now? A hundred things that she ought to have asked him, and that he ought to have spoken of leaped to her mind. What few words they had said, and how simple and ordinary the whole thing seemed. Of course he would do better in the town, but—but—oh, why did it have to come just now, on top of all the day's bitter experiences. For she had not time to tell him that their troubles, already great, had multiplied. That very day her father, who was slowly recovering from an attack of fever, had received a curt note from Wilson & Co., that the mortgage of five hundred would have to be settled in ninety days at the farthest. This being the culmination of many previous warnings to a like effect Emma felt that the worst was really come to them at last. With burning eyes she walked back to the pail, picked it up, and entered the house. Her mother had made a light, and soon observed the distress in the girl's face.

"Emmy—what is the matter now? Don't let your father see you with that long face or he'll give in entirely. Ain't our troubles enough without a dwellin' on 'em as if it was a treat? I seen Ernest out there, why didn't he come in?"

"Oh, mother he's gone—he's gone away to do better, he says."

"Give up his place in Saunders?" demanded the elder woman. "Well that's sense I do declare! If that ain't a shame—a good place too, and Mr. Saunders so nice to me. What possessed him?"

"He never liked it—he hates the place—he wants to do something to make money—"

"And he left you like that," questioned her mother, "without any plans made for you? Well! My opinion ain't the same of Ernest Thompson. Lord knows where he'll find us, if he ever comes back—I don't! If ever I say—for after that, he's likely to do anything."

Mrs. Parrish was one of those women, who, at the first hint of trouble became filled with the prophecies as to the future. And yet she was fully convinced that she was the one member of the family who bore a cheerful air under any and all conditions. Mr. Parrish with his large and growing family, his ill-health, his wife and his demoralized farm, had a good deal to contend against. It was hardly a wonder he grew discouraged. Old Sol Hunter in talk at Saunders' store was wont to outline the poor man's difficulties in this wise:

"Parrish is one of them 'er durned critters what's allus up agin suthin hard and rocky the hull blamed time. I've knowed that feller years and years—and I never see'd him different. He's allus worked, yes, and worked hard—I tell yer mighty hard. I ain't done half as hard—and where's he to-day? up agin it with a dull thud! Yes, sir, stacked up agin a wife an' five children an' a mortgage that's got to be paid — and can't be—an' him sick as well! It's a case of opportunity an' other things bangin' him on the head an' contin' him out every time. He's an unlucky speciment. Some is born that way, some gets it, an' others agin has it thrust upon 'em. Parrish is one o' the triple-plated kind."

And so it seemed. With all his efforts everything went wrong. He had foreseen the loss of the farm from the first. He had also struggled to lessen the danger but without avail. Now he was not bewailing or bemoaning. He was staring the issue in the face. It had to come —they would have to go—somewhere! It hardly mattered where, and he did not care to think much about it. Emma was his constant help. She never despaired—to him anyway. His wife always did; so he got to confiding things to Emma who soon had her young shoulders burdened with the dreary weight. Emma was ambitious. She wanted to do a host of things. As a preliminary she had studied and worked hard to secure the appointment of teacher in the local district school but a personage with more influence and less brains had secured the place. There were two younger boys and two small girls. The boys were fifteen and sixteen respectively, bright and ambitious like herself; they did what little they could, but withal it was very little. It was Emma's constant regret that they could not receive more schooling, that they could not have many things. But there were limitations. She was thinking of all these things in a bitter way unusual with her as she went to her room that night. When she crept to bed it seemed as though the accumulated dreariness threatened to engulf her, and with a sudden sob she turned to her pillow and wept long and bitterly.

As for Ernest, he went "out there," which for him meant a large city with crowded streets and brilliant stores. In a week he was fortunate enough to secure a place as salesman in a leading dry goods house. This was his element and he revelled in it. His first letter, telling of the glories of the present, reached Emma as he had promised. It disparaged everything relating to Saunders and the country store at Loneville, and it lauded to the skies everything in the city. Emma sighed and tried to picture him in his new environment, with the new manners and ways that he spoke of. An unbidden thrill of resentment shot through her that he should so despise and belittle the past. There were some things in it that ought to be sweet to remember. They would never have changed with her. But Ernest's letter, explanatory though it was, did not tell her all. It could not tell her how quickly he picked up city ways, how well his new clothes became him, nor how fashionable in a small way his habits grew. A recital of them would have dazzled Loneville. He boarded at a rather well-kept boarding house. It was situated in a retired street surrounded by genteel neighbors, whose gentility impressed Ernest very much. So did Miss Ida Townley, the daughter of his landlady. Miss Ida was of the blonde type of beauty, the very reverse of Emma, who looked dingy by comparison. Ernest made that mental remark the first evening of his arrival, which was a dangerous beginning. He thought of Emma as he had seen her last, leaning with clasped hands on the rickety gate with the rickety house for a background and—contrasting her with this lovely creature in her frills and laces—he distinctly regretted ever being engaged. In his letters he adroitly avoided any mention of this circumstance, however, and when Miss Ida smiled almost forgot that he had ever known or cared for another girl. Being a bold and courageous young man and perceiving that Ida seemed not averse to him he redoubled his little attentions to her. Her mother remained a diffident observer not evincing any bias in either way, which proved her to be a diplomat. Not being in the confidence of his fellow-boarders, Ernest failed to hear the gossip which said that Miss Townley was only flirting with him for her own amusement and incidentally to tantalize another swain. He would not have believed it anyway, for his faith in Miss Townley grew day by day. Likewise his admiration. He was sure she liked him. If he might only claim her for his own he would be as happy as a king. He still wrote to Emma but it was a greater effort every time. The letters grew more and more uninteresting. He knew they must be, but he was growing reckless and did not care. The memory of his engagement galled him more and more every day. He had been an ass, a fool, to limit his prospects so. Meanwhile he took Ida to the theatre and whatever else his pocket could afford. Of course he had no time to run up to Loneville. Emma had looked for him at first, but gradually a conviction that he would not come came to her.

"Ain't it about time Ernest would come out?" her mother would say, and the poor girl's pride would force her to formulate some excuse that passed for the moment. Fortunately their troubles were great enough to take Ernest out of her mind at times. Their financial difficulties were as great as ever, and there remained but thirty days to pay the five hundred dollars. And they had not five hundred cents to spare.

"Guess be the looks o' things we'll be out o' this domicile by next month," the father said, one evening at the supper table. He had not eaten much, and though he made the announcement as he might have discussed the weather, Emma knew it was breaking his heart. She locked away with a sudden mist of tears in her eyes. That night she prayed as one prays once in a lifetime, and the next morning a letter came from Ernest. For a long time after she opened it she sat gazing stonily before her. It began:

Dear Em:—

You will forgive me when you understand as I do the necessity of this, but I find we two were not made for each other as we thought. I could never go back to Loneville under the same old circumstances. Time has changed everything for me, and I see now that we were foolish and unwise. It may seem harsh, but it is better so. I feel you will be far more happy with some one else. Under these circumstances you will surely agree with me that it is better to break our engagement now.

Ever your cordial friend,

ERNEST.

It was her mother's step that roused her and caused her to gather her wits and the letter together for the morning's mail, and so tried to dismiss him from her life. As for Ernest, now that the disagreeable task was done with he felt relieved. Thenceforth Loneville or him became but an abstract theory, the only thing that filled his thoughts being Ida Townley. That young person still smiled sweetly upon him and even the gossips admitted it was a pretty long flirtation.

About a week after the receipt of Ernest's letter Emma was sitting drearily and sleeplessly by her bedroom window, which being in the rear of the house gave upon the farm. It was past midnight and a warm, moonlit night. The girl had crept to the window to soothe the pain in her heart, if possible. Suddenly a huge dark shadow shot up out of the earth some distance from the house. It went to a great height and stood shimmering and trembling in the moonlight. A dull rushing roar accompanied this uncalled-for apparition and served to convince Emma that she was not dreaming. Alarmed, she watched it as if fascinated, while the huge body changed its outline every moment. What could it be? She leaned out of the window, and felt her cheek touched with a sudden moisture. At the same moment her father stepped out from below. She called down to him.

"What is it father? It frightened me, it sprang into the night so suddenly. What a noise it makes!"

"Hush child, I am going out to see." He stepped into the house and reappeared with the two boys. Emma hurriedly dressed and was soon beside them.

"It's—it's a waterspout sure," said one of her brothers. "It will drown the house out."

"It'll spoil them potatoes," said the other. "It's just in the patch I put in shape to-day—see! it's flooded it already."

As they walked toward the towering column the wind carried a shower of spray which quickly saturated their clothing.

"Ugh! It's grease— not water," said Emma suddenly.

"There comes old Hunter to see what's up," said her brother, as the figure of that worthy came hurrying across the fields in the moonlight.

"Well neighbor—what the dickens d'ye call this?" he began. "The n'ise o' the thing woke me up, thinks I this is suthin' uncommon so I just lit out."

For a moment the party gazed at it in silence. A huge geyser of mud and some black oily substance that smelled strongly of petroleum was shooting up into the moonlit sky, with a roar that was momentarily increasing, while the low-lying land below was already a miniature lake. Emma turned and looked at her father. His face was strangely white. Old Sol Hunter gave a sniff or two, then a whoop.

"Whoo! It's ile! By Jingo — it's ile! Ile —a bustin' out o' this field like fireworks! Gallons o' ile! Bar'l's —Yes sir—Bar'l's! I'll bet there's just a thousand a minute goin' up in the air. Ile! smell it. The Parrish luck, by ginger! but good luck this time. Joel, I'm proud to know ye—ye'll be a rich man before mornin'."

After a time the group went back to the house, the two sons and the father and daughter. On the threshold they turned again to watch that wonderful column.

"It seems too good, father; an hour ago we were almost beggars, now—"

"Now," he repeated. "Now, we are rich, child. Do you hear? Rich beyond our wildest dreams — and most of all—I thank God for your sake." He bowed his head for a moment, while the girl kissed him.

"Now, daughter, try and get some rest. We must wait till morning, before we get too sure 'bout anything. It may not be all we claim for it—though I think it is. There's your mother. Don't let her get too excited."

Emma turned away. There was her mother with the two little girls.

"Well! Joel Parrish," she began, "of all things! Not a soul left in the house but me and the little ones —and in the middle of the night too! Whatever has happened now?"

"Oh, mother, it's a great good fortune this time," began Emma.

"My!" cried her mother, catching sight of the geyser for the first time. "Joel—what is it?" She looked terrified until he explained, then she sank down overcome.

"And we'll be rich you say? Joel! Emma!—your sure you ain't jokin'. We won't have to pay that mortgage and me a lyin' awake splittin' my head thinkin' how we'd do it. We won't have to pay, you say?"

"We'll have to pay," said her husband, "but if this is oil,—and it seems to be—payin' 'll be easy."

Soon the moonlight began to wane and the column took on a dull brownish hue in the ghostly light of the new-born day. The family did no more sleeping, but spent the time walking from the new wonder to the house. By daylight a crowd of neighbors had gathered about to wonder, to speculate, and to jubilate. "Ile! Ile!" was heard on every side. The Parrish luck had changed with a vengeance. By dinner time Joel Parrish was a person to be deferred to. His ideas had to be respected. Three of the wealthiest neighbors made him successive offers for the potato patch, that given a day before would have turned his head. But he waved them aside. "I ain't sellin'," he said calmly. By evening all the papers of the country had "Parrish" printed in large letters on their front pages, and the world was talking of the new oil fields at Loneville. Before the week was out Joel had raised a loan and paid off the mortgage, while a horde of people,—speculators, gamblers, and what not—invaded the once lonely Texan farm. The "gusher" had come to stay. Experts pronounced the product petroleum of a good grade and marketable at a good price.

With the rest of the world Ernest read of the Parrish luck and in the privacy of his own room adjudged himself an idiot of the first order. "I'd cut my hand off to recall that letter," he observed mentally. It plunged him in such painful reminiscence that he even forgot Ida. When he went to bed he dreamed of "gushers," and Emma, and himself walking off down the Loneville road. He grew desperate and had the bad taste to compose a letter to Emma. It came back two days later with this inscription written across in a strange scrawl. "Don't advertise your fool ways like this—I wouldn't if I was you." He knew Emma had never seen it then, but doubtless her father had, and this was the result.

One day he was riding his wheel home to dinner. It was a crowded street, with carriages, pedestrians, and bicycles all inextricably mixed in an effort to get somewhere. A team of spirited horses loomed suddenly upon him and to save himself he sprawled into the gutter with his machine. Angrily he looked up. There was an impressive-looking coachman in gray on the box, and behind, in luxurious ease, were—Emma and her mother! Yes, Emma! and looking like a princess, now—the girl who might have been his! Both women saw him, and knew him, as the elder woman showed by the scornful curve of her lip. As for Emma, her face whitened for a moment, then she gazed straight ahead without a tremor. Then Ernest knowing he had lost her forever, picked himself up and slunk off in the crowd. He went back to Ida, but she changed her mind and took the other gentleman.

Emma Parrish has gone abroad to complete her studies, her father, as treasurer of the Banner Oil Company, being well able to afford this diversion; the boys are at college—and Ernest is still drawing fifteen a week at the dry goods store.— J. A. Schetty, in Donahoe's Magazine.

Our Boys and Girls.

LITTLE GIRL'S COMPOSITION. —An English paper says that a teacher in a country board school said to the class in English composition:

"I wish every one in this class to write out a conversation between a grocer and one of his customers, introducing some pathetic incident or reference."

Among the compositions handed in was the following by a sweet little girl:

"'What do you want?' asked the merchant.

"The lady replied: 'A pound of tea.'

"'Green or black?' asked the merchant.

"'I'll take black,' she said; 'it's for a funeral.'"

SCHOLARS PUZZLED. —A member of a rural school board, who takes a deep interest in the proper education of the young, recently visited one of the schools in the district for the purpose of putting the scholars through their facings, to ascertain if they were progressing in a satisfactory manner.

After inflicting a number of exercises in a fashion that astonished the teacher, he said:

"Now, boys and girls, I will give you a word to spell which I don't think any of you will do correctly. I saw it in a newspaper, and as it is an unusual word, I took particular notice of it. It is 'egg-wipped.'"

One bright boy at once gave "egg-whipped," but that wouldn't do. Another attempted it as the great man had pronounced it—"egg-whipped"—but that was also wrong. Another hazarded "eggwiped," but that also went to the wall; so also did "equipped;" and then a little girl, taking a lachrymose view of the situation, ventured on "eggwept."

"No, no, children," said the gentleman, "none of you are right. I don't think I could have spelt it myself if I hadn't seen it in that newspaper. To impress it on your memory I will write it on the blackboard, so that if you are ever asked the same question again you will be able to answer correctly."

He then turned up his cuff, got hold of a piece of chalk and produced:

"Egypt."

LITTLE DAN.—You see the people at the post office soon recognize faces and names, and after a man or woman has appeared at the general delivery window several times they are pretty well known. It is a real pleasure to hand out letters to some while the clerks care little for the calls of others to get hold of their epistles.

One day, a year or two ago, a funny-looking little woman, wearing faded garments, but having a tidy look, and a motherly face, appeared at the window and asked for a letter. There was one for her, sent from a distant city, and anybody could have told that an unlearned hand directed the envelope.

There was a little "d" in Detroit, with a big "T" to end the word, and it seemed wonderful that the letter ever reached its destination.

The old lady felt so good that tears started to her eyes, and yet trying to smile, she put her head to the window and said:

"Thanks. It's from my boy, Dan, and you don't know how much good it does me."

The lady delivery clerk rose up to look after the old woman, and when a second letter came she was looking and watching for "mother" a whole day before the letter was passed out.

"It's from my Dan again," cried the old woman, as she noted the superscription. "He's only a bit of a boy, and there was not a show for him in Detroit and besides he was running out of nights and going to the bad. I sent him away and he's working hard and trying to be good; God bless my Dan! I'm a lone widow with only him to love, and I hope he'll be good."

"I hope so, too," added the clerk, and after that the two were friends. Sometimes the letters were far between and when the old woman would worry over the delay and the big tears would fall, the clerk at the office would almost shed tears with her. "Mother" would open her letters at the window, and if Dan was feeling brave-hearted and getting along well both would rejoice, while both would be still anxious if he complained and was discouraged.

Almost every week for a year and a half the old lady received a letter, and just as regularly she came to post an answer. She wrote in a quaint, old hand, but the boy could make out every word, and once when he wrote that her writing was improving, she felt all the pride which a school girl could have shown. He improved as well. By and by he wrote "Detroit" plain and fair, and he took extra pains to commence his "Dear mother" with a grand flourish, and to add something extra after the words "Your son, Dan."

These letters were food and drink to the old lady, and she seemed to actually grow younger. Little Dan had many friends in the post office, and had the mother been ill, any carrier would have hunted till midnight to find her and hand her the looked-for letter. Three or four weeks ago, when she opened the letter, she wept and smiled as over the first. Dan wrote he was coming home for a week and her heart was full. She said she'd have the cottage looking like new for him, and she'd be at the depot to welcome him first of all. Everybody felt glad with her, and the lady clerk was to go up some evening and have tea with her and see her little Dan that was getting ready to come home. That was early in February, and he was to come early in March. The next Tuesday there was a letter, but the hand-writing was not little Dan's. It was a strange business hand, and the clerk felt a chill go over her as she turned it over. It might be good news, but she feared not. "Mother" came in at the usual hour, and she turned pale as she took the envelope. Her fingers trembled as she opened it, and she had to wipe the mist off of her eyes before she could decipher a word. She had not read over four or five lines when she uttered a moan and sank down like one crushed by some awful weight.

Dan was dead! The letter said he had been taken suddenly ill, and that nothing could save him. The blow was too heavy for one with her gray hair and childless heart, and her little house is without a tenant.

No more letters commencing "Dear Mother" came for the dead, and the trembling hands which used to linger so fondly over the words, "My Dear Boy, Dan," are folded over a lifeless breast, there to rest till the angels unclasp them.

TURKISH PROVERBS.

He who does not learn how to serve will also not know how to act as master.

God builds the nest of the blind bird.

Without trouble one eats no honey.

Patience is the key to joy.

He who wants a faultless friend will remain friendless.

A live fox is better than a dead lion.

A wife makes or breaks a house.

The wolf changes his coat but he does not change his nature.

Give up your head but not a secret.

He who tells the truth is turned out of nine cities.

The eye is a window which looks into the heart.

A faithful friend may be better than one's own relations.—Ave Maria.

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