

chilly feeling he had before experienced compelled him to put on all his wraps. Then he got up, took a sip of brandy, and went out upon the platform of the carriage to smoke.

"Oh, the cold nipping win', how it darted in between the carriages!" Bertie had to hold on to the hand-rail tightly. But what a scene it was! A vast white sheet had been spread o'er Nature's face and she lay as if dead beneath it. Every now and then a gentle swell or undulation in the surface looked like a heaving breast as the fiery monster hurried past. The invisible flakes fell thick and fast, and bore upon the angry blast the white veil closed around them. They knew it not, but as surely as the clouds were overhead, the mighty engine was rushing into a trap laid by winter, and the pure, white, gentle flakes of soft snow.

As the train flew along the track, little snow-storms came up from all the wheels in clouds of powdering dust. Bertie was fascinated. Past sleeping towns and villages, past black chimneys rising into the murky sky from white unsullied roofs, past close-shut windows 'neath whose sashes the yielding but resistless snow wormed itself like herring-bones, and hung outside in slow dissolving flakes for King Frost to weld closer. Past a huddled heap of humanity, beneath the shelter of the embankment, on which the merciless though tender falling winding-sheet was surely wrapped. Past all these, and many more sights, did the Pullman carriage rush and scream, and yet no stopping for the train.

But ten miles farther on the trap was laid. In a deep cutting, the northern wind and drifting cloud conspired to do battle with the boasting power of man. Lie closer still, O drift! blow fiercer still, O wind! Ye wait the daring monster who boasts he can out-strip the wind, and rattle wildly o'er the snow-clad fields.

A roar through a tunnel—Bertie had once again turned in—the train emerged; it slackened speed; a long deep whistle. The engine stopped dead short, and pushed up a six-foot mound of snow, melting it for one brief half-minute; the water dashed at its enemy fire, and hissed its vengeance in its burning ears. The fiery foe collapsed, the mighty monster lay imbedded in the drift, harmless as a fattered giant, but still noisy in its protests.

Clouds of steam anxious to be free from that fatal cutting rushed upwards and disappeared, or unable to escape, fell in warm tear-drops on the virgin snow-white carpet. The engineer let the boiler run empty, and sent his fireman back to the last station for assistance. Man was powerless against the snow.

The soft, the gentle snow!

The passengers awoke, and shivering came one by one out at the end platform of the train, asking questions and not waiting for replies. No need to ask what was the matter a second time. The helpless lighted-train glowed like a long lighthouse beneath the snow-clad embankment. A bank in front, a tunnel behind yawning darkly like an immense hole cut in white paper, a biting wind and driving snow, told the tale all too clearly.

Snowed up! Not a doubt of it. When could assistance arrive? Where there any ladies in the train? No ladies; only twenty-two travellers, and all men.

An hour passed. A scout who had gone ahead reported the drift almost impassible even on foot, and the wind at the end of the cutting rendered progress highly dangerous. They must camp where they were till day-light, at least. Better in the Pullman sleeping-car than upon the slopes of the fatal snow-drift, that winter night.

But Bertie was due at his Manchester office at nine o'clock that morning. It was now about a quarter to four. He must get on, and he expressed his determination aloud to his fellow-passengers.

"I will accompany you. Where are we, guard?"

"Atween Ambergate and Matlock—but don't know where though, gentlemen, exactly. Ask Ben."

"Ben," the engine driver, informed them that they were about an hour and a quarter's run from Manchester, and added a word of caution. But Bertie was determined to push on and, accompanied by two other passengers, he started on his venturesome expedition.

Once out of the cutting they trusted to be free. Surely the stoppage of the line would be telegraphed by this time and, perhaps, a train in waiting to take them on. So they stepped manfully

out, sinking deeply at every step, but still making progress.

The snow had ceased; the sky was clearing fast, and frosty-looking stars peeped out to view the desolation. The wind was bitterly cold. Every now and then the snow would be dashed in their faces, as by handfuls caught up by spirit-fingers to obstruct their progress.

For awhile they kept side by side. Struggling against the blast they pressed on till, unknowingly, they mounted the side of the cutting, and wandered far away across a level field, and over the distant hedge, covered up with newly-fallen snow.

The sudden ease with which they stepped now had the very opposite effect to what might reasonably have been expected. They knew they had strayed. Where was the railroad? They must regain it at any risk. But the two older travellers determined to remain where they were, sheltered comparatively behind the hedge, in only a foot of snow, till daybreak. Bertie rashly made up his mind to return in his tracks, which were plainly discernable, and against the advice of his comrades he acted upon his resolution.

His one idea was to reach Manchester. If he did not succeed in averting the impending crash there, all his prospects would be ruined. His hopes of ever winning his lady-love would be completely shattered, and what was life without love? He must succeed, though he perished in the attempt; he would do his duty whatever happened.

So he manfully struggled on—at times up to his knees in snow; once completely buried in the drift: he fell down, down, until nothing but a small star was visible overhead. The snow kept closing in. He breathed hard upwards towards the hole. (His hands were fastened to his sides by pressure of the drift.) By breathing hard at the tiny hole it became larger and larger. The snow melted and he got a hand free. At length he got his head out, and after a severe struggle he fell forward, half insensible from cold and nervous exhaustion. He rolled over the harder snow for a space; down, down—it seemed as if he would never stop—a hard substance received him—a crash of glass, or ice, a moment afterwards fell upon his half-unconscious ears, and he lay insensible on the ground. A light was burning steadily over his head.

The spirit remained in the body, but the clay tenement refused to acknowledge the presence of the master. Sense lay wrapped within the brain and behind the sullenly closed lids. Speech was there, but somehow it could not force its way through the stubborn lips. The ears were open to catch the slightest sound, and eagerly they drank it in; but the shaken nerves refused to listen, or at best only grudgingly as yet.

And thus lay Bertie in a trance—dead, and yet alive; ready to speak, dying to utter his thoughts, and yet dying because his speech was locked; the pressure on the brain was not yet unloosed, and Bertie lay there almost as he fell, it seemed to him.

But yet things were curious mixed up around him. He could move his hands and feel he was lying upon soft cushions. Dull to his ears arose the sound of those horrible whirling carriage-wheels. It seemed to him as if he were back again in the railway carriage, en route to Manchester.

Still people were about him. Feminine fingers ministered to him—that gentle touch just now was very different from the other tender finger-tips of some good Samaritan, probably a doctor.

The subtle odour of a lady's presence clung sweetly around Bertie as he lay sensible to what passed, but unable to form a word, or look his thanks, or even recognise the gentle care.

Once he essayed to open his eyes, and, oh! how the vision of that one fair face he loved hung over his half-conscious brows, and was for a second photographed upon his brain! No—it was gone—a moment more and the dull whirr of the revolving wheels, the even motion of the Pullman car, all seemed to hold him in thrall as he lay supine on the soft cushions.

But this could not last. By slow degrees the brain resumed its sway. He opened his eyes. Things were very dim to him, and the cold, chill hand of Death apparently was on him. He could not move his head, but as he gazed with dull half-open eyes, the vision of his love rose up to bid him welcome. Oh, lovely vision! it came nearer and nearer—it would touch him! yes, it bent down, and breathing a soft petition for his recovery, vanished.

Whirr—whirr—whirr!

Did he dream still? No; voices distinctly fell upon his ears. Where was he? A shrill whistle broke the monotonous sound; the undulating movement of the car he had felt, or fancied, seemed to cease.

"Hush!" some one spoke. Bertie opened his eyes. He was dreaming still. He lay upon a cushioned berth in a Pullman palace car. The lamp burned very dimly overhead. Daylight penetrated the curtains round him. He felt very weak and very cold, but he was not dreaming. How had he got there?—what had happened?—where was the snow?

He called out. A gentleman entered softly. "Where am I?" inquired Bertie, faintly.

"Hush, hush! quite safe; do not agitate yourself," replied the doctor, as Bertie fancied the new-comer to be. "We have got you round nicely."

"But where am I?" persisted Bertie.

"You are at Ambergate Junction."

"I must go to Manchester at once. Help me up, please."

"My dear sir, it is quite impossible to move you. You have had a very severe fall, and must be kept quite quiet. We have telegraphed particulars to Mr. Arteman. You cannot be moved."

This was decisive, and the doctor left the berth. Yet, as soon as his back was turned, Bertie made an effort to rise. With difficulty he repressed a scream; the pain was acute. He at once perceived that movement, even in bed, was out of the question at present, so wisely he determined to await events. His thoughts naturally dwelt upon the happy vision he had seen, and he foolishly accepted this as an omen favorable to his ultimate happiness. At length he fell asleep.

He awoke very hungry, and saw the doctor at his side. He put out his hand, which Bertie took and clasped warmly in his own. The kind doctor made a careful examination of his patient and then said—

"You are much better this evening, I am glad to tell you, and as soon as the stiffness wears off you will be all right again. I may tell you now that we have had a telegram from Mr. Arteman. He is at Manchester, so your natural anxiety may be allayed."

"Oh! thank you, thank you," exclaimed Bertie, with fervor. "You have indeed put my mind at ease."

"I was enabled to tell him there was no danger, so he went on this afternoon. He saw you while you were asleep."

Bertie stared, as well he might.

"Yes," continued the doctor, "you have slept for thirteen hours."

"Indeed!" was the patient's only reply. "But I say," he added, "how did I get here? I remember being in the snow, and I think I fell—"

"I should think you did," replied the doctor. "You came plump into this car—rolling in snow."

"I am afraid I am still confused, doctor, for I do not understand you now."

"You rolled down the embankment into the windows. We were snowed up in the great cutting on the up-line. Another train, yours, probably, was at the other end. You in your excursion tumbled into our windows. It was very fortunate for you that you didn't roll over the parapet into the river, my lad."

"And very lucky," said Bertie, graciously, "that you happened to be in the train, doctor."

"You have not to thank me so much as Mr. and Mrs. Patterson, sir; and they telegraphed to Mr. Arteman."

"Mr. and Mrs. who?" exclaimed Bertie, sitting up quite regardless of his bruises. "Patterson did you say?"

"Yes; do you know them! They did not appear to recognize you."

"Yes—no—I know a Miss Patterson—I—"

"Whew!" was all the doctor's answer. "What! Is there a Miss Patterson? Is she here? Is she—was she in the train? Alice is her name."

"That is the lady; she nursed you until I came. Her mother is an invalid rather. They were caught in the drift last night, like yourself."

"Where is she, doctor? Did she leave a message?"