

The man of wrath consigned the time card and all things appertaining thereto to the nether depths of an indescribable perdition with a horrifying accompaniment of profanity. But my good friend, the young Irishman, was still undaunted.

"Beg pardon, sorr, but now you're stopped here's his reverence the holy father goin to Lavarock and was wan minute too late for No. 7. If you wouldn't mind—it's purgatory that'll be yawnin for the best of us, and some day maybe you'll be wantin him to"—

The angry man turned upon me with an oath between his teeth, but he swallowed it in what I took to be some small measure of deference for the cloth—the Roman Catholic cloth.

"Oh, you're one of the Paulist Fathers, I suppose! Well, climb aboard, and I'll get you to Lavarock. A priest more or less won't make any difference."

It was ungracious enough and most humiliating to be obliged to sail under false colors. But there was no alternative. I obeyed, not without trepidation, since the adventure promised to be most temerarious, and took my seat on the side where there seemed to be the least amount of machinery. The fireman was shoveling coal into the boiler in frenzied haste, but he desisted at a shout from his superior.

"Johnnie, hand me down that oil can—lively now!"

The article in demand was quickly forthcoming, and I leaned out of the window to see what was to be done. There was no one on my side of the huge machine, but even as I looked the station agent ran around from the rear, lifted the lid of an iron box projecting beyond one of the wheels, poured a handful of sand into the receptacle, and disappeared as quickly as he had come. It struck me at the time as being a singular proceeding, but while I was still speculating upon its probable utility the great locomotive lunged forward, and the chase recommenced.

For the first mile the onrush of the huge iron monster was pleasantly exhilarating, but before many minutes had passed I began to wish myself, first in my cozy study, and a little later anywhere in the universe so I might be safely out of the mass of shrieking machinery hurled onward faster and faster and ever faster by the soot begrimed runniac, who seemed bent on accomplishing not only his own destruction, but that of the unfortunate fireman and myself as well. It was a hideous experience.

When the uproar was most deafening, and the promise of speedy deliverance by death seemed each instant about to be fulfilled, I chanced to look outward and backward and my horror was increased tenfold by the appalling sight of flames bursting apparently from one of the fast flying wheels. At the imminent risk of my life I got upon my feet and crept across to the side of the madman.

"Sir," said I, shouting at the top of my voice, "we are about to be consumed. This locomotive is afire!"

Thrusting me aside, he craned his neck out of the window which had lately been mine, sprang back with an oath, which resounded above the din of the machinery, and brought the shuddering monster to a stand. Then he leaped to the ground, yelling frantic orders to the fireman.

"Bucket of water! Quick, you imp of hades! That's it. More—more yet. Now get your 'ools and pack this box. Lively! Get a move! Here, give me that hook! Now then! More wastel

More oil—more yet!"

The conflagration was staid at length, and once more the terrible race was resumed. Five miles farther on the flaming wheel stopped us again, and when this had occurred a third and a fourth time I began to suspect that the handful of sand was in some manner accountable for it. Yet I dared not for my life so much as suggest this to the infuriated blackamoor, whose wrath mounted higher and grew more ungovernable with each fresh hindrance. More than once we came in sight of the train ahead, but as often as we did so the smoking machinery brought us to a stand, evoking new and more dreadful maledictions from the madman, cursings measured only by the comparative meagerness of his vocabulary.

Fortunately for my sanity, which was fast lapsing in the struggle for outward calm, the end came at length, and I stepped down from the hissing monster at the Lavarock platform, thankful to my finger tips that I was yet in the land of the living. We arrived but a few moments behind the train, and I caught a glimpse of my young scapegrace in earnest consultation with the agent, Hardwicke, as I passed the cab stand.

I walked into the hotel waiting room, meaning to go to supper with the other passengers, but I was not to escape so easily. It seems that Hardwicke, whether from malice or misunderstanding I have never been able to learn, made haste to tell the angry father that I was the clergyman who was to marry the runaways. If I had known this at the time, I might have been more charitable. Truly, it must have been a little less than maddening to reflect that he had unwittingly furthered the plans of the young fugitives by bringing me to Lavarock. But of this I knew nothing at the time, and when he shouldered through the throng in the waiting room and grasped my arm roughly I was pardonably annoyed.

"So you're the helper on this job, are you?" he shouted, and all ad sundry gaped to look and listen. "Nice business for a man of your age and a minister of the gospel, marrying runaway children! Worked me by setting up for a Catholic priest, too, didn't you? By heaven, sir, if I'd known it, I'd have pitched you out of the cab window, neck and heels, minister or no minister."

"You are the most unreasonable person I have ever had the misfortune to meet, sir," said I, looking at him fairly in the eyes. "I had no intention of deceiving you."

"Intentions be hanged!" he blustered. "What the dence do you suppose I care about your intentions? I say they shan't be married without my consent, and, by heaven, sir, I'd like to see 'em do it!"

It was more than was meet, and I gave him his answer hotly and in kind.

"One moment, sir, if you please"—he was turning away—"I was on the train with these young people, and I not only refused to aid them, but said what I might to turn them from their purpose. But since I have had the very questionable pleasure of meeting you I will say frankly that I shall be glad to assist them if they still desire it."

For an instant I thought he was going to strike me, but if he had any such intention he abandoned it when the crowd parted to admit the two young rebels to the little circle in which we were standing. They were in the last ditch and, knowing this, had the courage of despair, but of the twain I fancied the young woman was the more self possessed.

"I'll take you at your word, Mr. Penburton," said the young man promptly, handing me a folded paper and ignoring the angry blackamoor as best he might.

"You wish me to marry you and this young woman?" said I, glancing at the license.

"Yes."

"Here and now?"

He looked over his shoulder at the throng of curious onlookers as one who would have purchased privacy at a price, but he did not hesitate.

"Yes, here and now, if you please. We shan't lack witnesses anyway."

"It shall be as you desire," I said gravely, and when I had found my book I began.

"Dearly beloved"—

The men in the crowd uncovered reverently, and even the man of wrath stepped back and bowed his head. As the exhortation proceeded, however, he looked up again with a malicious twinkle in his eyes.

"Into this holy estate these two persons come now to be joined. If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace."

"My daughter is not of age. I forbid it!" said the father, with unnecessary vehemence.

A murmur of protest ran through the crowd, and I rebuked him promptly.

"Your objection, sir, is as ill timed as it is ineffectual. You know the law of this particular commonwealth, and you will oblige me by not again interrupting this ceremony."

Then came a diversion wholly unexpected and most embarrassing. The young woman bit her lip, burst into tears, and flung herself suddenly into her father's arms.

"Oh, poppa—I can't do it!" she sobbed, hiding her face on his shoulder. "I—I thought I could, but I can't. Please take me away—quick!"



"Oh, poppa—I can't do it!"

It was most embarrassing, as I have said, and my young Romeo blushed like a girl and made a hollow pretense of trying to look as if it was a part of the programme. The father grinned triumphantly and addressed himself to me.

"You see, it wasn't so blessed ineffectual after all. I said this young jackanapes here shouldn't marry my daughter without my consent, and I say it yet—I've come 120 miles on a wild engine to be in time to say it. Now, then, if you're entirely satisfied in your own mind that I am master in my household, you may go ahead with your job and finish it—and I'll give the bride away."

If the cacophonous blast from one of the locomotives outside which punctuated the sentence had been an explosion of dynamite the effect of this declaration could scarcely have been more startling. Two or three cowboys on the outskirts of the throng were moved to cheer lustily, but of those most nearly concerned the young man was the first to recover his presence of mind. Taking Mrs. Bostwick's hand, he looked up at me and said very modestly.

"I think maybe we're safe to go on now—that is, if you can make out to find the place again."

I take no shame in saying that I had to fight a sharp battle for equanimity, but, having won it, I went on with the ceremony with what shreds and fragments of dignity I could collect upon the spur of the moment.

At the proper question the bride's father played his part, apparently without a single thought of his superficial unfitness, though those who were nearest smiled in spite of themselves, and I could see that my young scapegrace was grinding his teeth to keep down the unseemly desire to laugh outright at his father-in-law's personal appearance.

When the ceremony was concluded, the man of machinery took matters in hand with hearty brusquerie.

"Now, Hardwicke, you tell Tony to get up a nice little hot supper for four—no, make it six, and go get your wife and join us. You two"—to the young rebels—"can take Dr. Penburton up stairs with you while I wash up. Between you you've managed to give me a (qualified) hard afternoon of it, but you didn't get much the best of the old man, after all. Now, then, clear out, and I'll go rinse a little of this gudgeon grease off."

The waiting room was clearing for the departure of the west bound train, and I began to make my excuses.

"No, you don't," said the blackamoor good naturedly. "If you're obliged to get to Carbonoro tonight, I'll send you over on a special engine, but you've got to stay and grace this marriage feast whether or no. You owe me that much for getting you here alive."

I yielded, not altogether reluctantly, it must be confessed, but I declined the special engine. I had had quite enough of that species of journeying to last me a lifetime.

On the stairs I overtook the runaways, and Roderick was saying:

"Well, all's well that ends that way, I suppose, but I'll have to admit I feel a bit aged, don't you, Ellie? When you throw up your hands and went over to the enemy, I wanted to drop through the floor. Whatever made you go back on me at the last moment that way?"

She smiled archly and slipped her arm two inches farther in his. "You're not particularly averse to this evening, are you, Alan, dear?" she said lightly. "You mustn't forget that I know your father-in-law a great deal better than you do."

Roderick stopped short and put his hands on her shoulders. "Look me in the eye and say that again," he commanded. "Do you mean to tell me—but I don't believe it. If I did, I'd go into politics tomorrow and make you a Mrs. Ambassador—that's what I'd do."

But to this day I believe he is not quite sore.

THE END

Measures.

Not what we get, but what we give,
Is the right measure of how we live.
Not what we say, but what we do, [true,
Is the test that tells if life's com rings