

ON THE ICE.

The sky is cloudless.
The air is clear.
The sunbeams glitter
O'er lake and mere.
And frost-gems glisten
On bough and leaf
In silvered splendour of beauty brief.

And like a swallow
O'er depths and deep
Where stream and river
Their treasures keep.
You skim and circle
The glistening floor.
Youth's hours for pleasure—no less, no more.

How bright eyes sparkle
And fair cheeks flush!
The cold air kisses
The warm rich blush
By mere and meadow
You fly along.
Life's hours but set to an endless song.

Of pain and sorrow
No thought's unrest:
Nor glad to morrow
Since all are blest:
For one day's pleasure
No mad regret
For Fate to measure or sin to fret.

Through sun and shadow
The whole glad day.
Your swift steps whirling
Their own swift way:
Your light heart beating
To lighter feet.
And youth and beauty to make life sweet.

What can be wanting?
What rests to say
Of hours the sweetest
In life's long day:
Too brief the brightness
Too long the night.
Yet dream they're deathless with all delight.

RITA.

[For the News.]

HOW KARL RIMMER BEGAN THE NEW YEAR.

By the Author of "Larg Dick," "Prose and Poetry," "Tom's Little Lass," etc.

CHAPTER I.

"Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
To thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

"I think it very unkind of you, very; you ought to have consulted me before taking the final step."

"But Essie," pleaded her companion, "when ever I attempted to do so you wouldn't listen."

"Of course not," womanlike and illogical, "as if it was likely I should give in to what I've set my face against from the beginning."

"I've only taken it for six months anyway."

"You shouldn't have taken it at all," short-

ly. "Now dearest," he pursued coaxingly, "you know the prospect isn't so bad after all. Six months, we'll hope it won't be longer; on the Bull Rock lighthouse, with a couple of hundred dollars at the end of them, is a good deal better than starving at home. It's going to be a hard winter for the fisher-folk, and no mistake! Then, when my time's out, I'm off to the fishing; and I hope and pray by next fall to have just enough to bring home a dear little tyrant, who shall rule us with a rod of iron to the end of my days." And the speaker's bright eyes shone yet brighter, as he endeavoured to capture a little hand toying with pebbles just picked up from the beach.

The owner thereof snatched it away immediately.

"I don't want any of your pretty speeches thank you; there isn't the least bit of truth in one of them."

"Oh Essie!" in such a hurt tone.

"No there isn't," she answered, proud and obstinate still; "you are doing what you know I strongly disapprove; I can't say I think that shows much regard for me, Mr. Hardy."

"Look here! I can't stand that!" cried the young man, flushing a dark crimson: "quarrel with me as an equal at any rate."

"I shouldn't take the trouble to quarrel with an inferior," with much scorn.

"Why won't you listen to reason?" began this sorely oppressed lover. "Don't you see it's for your sake I'm going to the light-house, and as you opposed me how could I be guided by you in the matter, when it would be cowardly to mind all your objections, and selfish enough into the bargain."

Pretty Essie Moore, the store-keeper's daughter, got up and turned away from the imploring eyes raised to hers, with a deeper colour on her face than was caused by the cold wind that blew in from the Atlantic. A spoiled child she had been from her cradle, with no brothers and sisters to share her rights and privileges, and come between her and her parents' unbounded indulgence.

"Selfish indeed!" she repeated sharply, "if it was only me you considered, you would have gone to the States."

The moment after speaking the words she would have given anything to recall them, for more is said in hot blood than our sober judgments altogether approve of. Harry Hardy sprang up, and was by her side in a moment.

"What do you mean by that?" he exclaimed, a painful suspicion forcing up its ugly head like a snake in the grass.

"What I say," she retorted. But she didn't. "I've been a fool," he said with some bitterness; "I thought it was your love for me that made you over-tender about the hardships and the loneliness of a life on the light-house. I beg your pardon for the mistake of supposing you had a heart."

"It doesn't prove I haven't one because you don't possess it," she answered in high anger. "That's true enough," he replied gloomily; "but was it fair then to do your best to gain mine?" Then reverting to the original cause of dispute, "Of course I must keep to my bargain now, but when the six months have gone by I will oblige you by going to the States immediately, though I have no opening there."

Now if Essie had answered as her conscience prompted and her good angel stooped to hear it would have been in this wise:

"Don't think so meanly of me Harry, when you know I love you truly, truly. I don't much want you to be better off. I only advised going to the States to tease you; and you know father would be glad if you were not so poor. I do hate that horrid light house out in the middle of the sea. I should go crazy thinking of you all by yourself through the long, lonely winter, not able to come ashore because of the ice; no one to mourn if you were sick or anything; and besides—besides Harry, you ought not to refuse anything to the girl you are in love with."

Then would Harry have made many fervent protestations to prove the sincerity of his attachment, quite overlooking that little bit of pardonable vanity at the close of his lady-love's confession. Both would have been the better for the disagreement, and Essie would have gone home and knitted him a comforter out of the best wool in her father's store; and it should have been a red one too, because that was her colour, and therefore it would always remind him of her when he put it on. But alas! this happy reconciliation failed to come about, because Essie was quite too proud to ask forgiveness when she herself was entirely in the wrong.

"I'm sure you're welcome to go or stay," she now observed carelessly; and Hardy's heart grew suddenly cold.

"Do you mean it is all over between us?" he said in a strange voice.

"We certainly can't be friends again for a long time. I'm sure I've a great mind not to speak to you till Christmas."

Many a time afterward she wondered how she could never be quite sure that if she had dared to look at Hardy she would not have instantly relented; but at that moment a firm footstep was heard crunching down the pebbles, and round the corner of a huge boulder came an active, strong-limbed, tall young fellow, with a face not half so handsome as Harry's, but with a manly, open expression, that more than atoned for the want of regular features.

"Good day to you Miss Moore," he began, lifting his cap from a mass of light brown curls; "glorious weather, isn't it? Have you been for a walk?"

He nodded carelessly to Hardy; rivals can never be pretty good friends. A second glance convinced the new-comer that something embarrassing had occurred; but since Essie turned to him with evident relief, and at once began to enter into conversation, he did not feel bound to take his departure.

"I'm just going home Mr. Rimmer," she replied shaking hands; "and it's late enough for me to hurry, so I'll say good-bye in the same breath."

"But mayn't I come too please," he rejoined gaily. "What if the bull should get out of the field?"

"In that case I should be very sorry to have left you behind," said Essie with a laugh and a shiver.

They walked on chatting gaily, Hardy falling rather behind, but within earshot of the conversation for all that.

"Are you glad to get back from Germany?" asked Essie by and by.

She admired Karl Rimmer extremely; he was so clever; had he not been sent home to college; and had she not heard his father boasting of his talents only the other day in the store, and telling her father of all the honours he had taken.

Nor did it detract from Karl's many attractions that, after his usual headlong fashion, he was smitten with her fair self, contrary to the wishes of his family.

"Germany is the jolliest hole of a place you can find anywhere," replied Karl promptly. "But I should have had a dreadful loss if I had stayed there long."

"What was that?" asked Essie with interest.

"I shouldn't have known you."

Essie blushed; it pleased her very much that he should say this, but she did not want Hardy to hear it too. They had now come to the steep cliff up which they must scramble to gain the road. Karl was only too ready to render all the assistance in his power. When they reached the top and looked round Hardy was gone.

"Good riddance!" sang Karl blithely; "what's up with the fellow? He looks as black as a thunder cloud."

"He's going to take charge of the lighthouse on Bull Rock," said Essie slowly.

"Well then, I forgive him, for it is a dreary lookout." Then he added roughly: "The worst part of it was saying good-bye to you, eh Miss Moore?"

"How do I know," she answered stiffly.

"Because that's something every lovely lady knows," exclaimed Karl, and again Essie was vastly pleased to be called a lady.

"Good-bye," said Karl at her door, and her father, seeing their friendly parting from a window, said to himself with pious thanksgiving:

"Well, thank the Lord, Essie's a sensible girl after all. I couldn't cross her if she set her heart on that poor devil Hardy, but it does me good to see her taking to Karl Rimmer, who belongs to the best family in the place."

That night, when she went to bed, Essie took a good long look in the glass to see if all the things Karl had said to her were true. She saw crimson cheeks, masses and masses of long hair, black as night, and brown, velvety eyes. No she couldn't well help being pretty. Harry Hardy had told her that dozens of times. Perhaps if her lovers had exercised more gracious self-restraint in the expression of their admiration, the poor child would have been better. Suddenly, at the remembrance of some adoring speech, not of Karl Rimmer's, but from Harry, she burst out crying and crept into bed.

CHAPTER II.

"What is she now! my dreams are bad. She may bring me a curse. No, there is fatter game on the moor; she will let me alone."

Thanks, for the best knows whether woman or man be the worse. I will bury myself in my books, and the devil may pipe at his own.

Picture to yourself a high rock, lifted some hundreds of feet above the level of the sea, facing the west, where flow miles and miles of the great gulf of green waters; in the rear another breadth of sea, and then a long, clearly defined coast line sprinkled with fishing hamlets. On the summit of this is perched the lighthouse, looking not unlike a great white sea-gull, through the fog. So steep is the precipitous edge of the rock that the ascent has to be made by means of a rope ladder.

Here was Hardy to be found day after day, nursing in solitude his wrath against Karl, and his mingled tenderness and resentment towards Essie. Had things turned out differently he would not have been unhappy, nor yet felt so keenly the loneliness of his life; for there would have been Essie to dream about and plan for, and his father's looks to pass the time with pleasantly, and profitably. Hardy was entirely a self-educated man; he had been left an orphan at a comparatively early age, but though his manner was characterized by a frank heartiness in his intercourse with those of his own calling, he held his head high, and never forgot that father had been a gentleman, though a poor one. The young man had fully intended going ashore occasionally before the navigation closed, when the days were fine, to solace himself for the coming separation from Essie by a few brief interviews. But now, since the repulse he had experienced, the idea of course had been abandoned, and he remained on the rock gloomy and dejected.

So it was not till some weeks later that, un-mooring his boat one sunny afternoon, he went over to the village. On his way back he passed within a stone's throw of two figures on the beach engaged in earnest conversation. Karl and Essie. It was not possible to mistake either. They did not see him though, and Hardy stopped rowing, and stared at them a moment with fierce, wild eyes. Then he raised one hand, and said in a low, deep, emphatic voice:

"Karl Rimmer, I curse the glib tongue that has wiled my love away from me. I curse you with all my heart."

And he lived to remember the curse!

Now Essie had nourished a secret hope that Hardy would quickly return to his allegiance when he saw young Rimmer in the field; but when day after day passed, and still he did not come, from being unreasonably angry with him in the beginning, she steeled her heart yet more against him, and straightaway began to flirt desperately with Karl. Why should she not like him the best of the two? he was cleverer, more agreeable, and so fond of her. But then poor Hardy had been fond of her too. Had been, ah, there was the sting! Well, she did not care, she could forget too; and she put on her new fur cap with the blue bow in it, (for the little coquette spotted Karl's colours now) and danced down to the shore, with a song on her lips, and a smile upon her pretty face, and who was to guess there was an ache in her heart. Not Karl certainly, who came to meet her with a beaming face, and made her forget all her troubles for a while with his flow of eager talk. This kind of thing went on for some time, and then Karl's sisters came to call on her; they had never let themselves down to paying a visit before to the store-keeper's daughter (though she was much richer than they) and Essie could not help feeling a little gleeful exultation.

One cold day in the end of October she sat out to walk to the post office. Down the gulf the winter sets in so early that there are sharp frosts in the end of August at night. It was nearly two months since Essie had parted from Hardy, and now, almost unknown to herself she was drifting into an engagement with Karl Rimmer. The thought now struck her, "What if Harry should write to her!" and she quickened her pace, but arriving at the post office found no letter awaiting her. Petulantly she turned, and outside met Karl.

"Why you look quite cross I declare, lady fair," he exclaimed. "Tell me what wrong you want righted?"

"I want letters written," said Essie, who was not without her own share of fun.

Karl laughed, and walked on by her side, but when they reached home he dropped his bantering tone, and asked:

"May I come in?"

"Do," rejoined Essie, with a glance of merry mischief; "and company is better than none at all."

When they were sitting before the fire, and Essie had removed her things, Karl suddenly rose, came to her side and said:

"I'm going to ask you something that you will say yes to, won't you Essie? and then I'll thank you forever and ever. Will you be my wife?"

"I—don't—know—" stammered Essie, growing very pale.

"But I do, you darling," rejoined Karl with deep delight, "that means consent," and he kissed her then and there.

It all came about in a few moments, and the next week a diamond ring shone on Essie's finger which so made the engagement public.

"I will take you to Germany, my beauty, my beauty," Karl told her in the first flush of his new joy; "and oh, shan't we be happy together?"

A pang shot through Essie's heart at his simple strong faith in her. She was in no hurry to be married, and would willingly have deferred the wedding till the following Spring, but Karl pleaded for not more than a two months' delay.

"Let us be married on New Year's day," he begged. "Do, Essie, there's a darling rose of girls! That's always been my lucky day, so, tenderly, that's the day I'd like to begin my heaven on earth."

After a brief resistance Essie yielded.

One day he came to her with a very grave sad face.

"Would you much mind not going to Germany next Summer?" he asked.

Essie minded for more reasons than she cared to name.

"Why?" she briefly inquired.

"I think we must put it off," he replied. "We ought to. You see there is so much distress this Winter. The fishermen have not been able to lay in enough provisions to last till the spring, so we better off folks must just help all we can. I don't like to let father give me so much money for a private pleasure when people will be wanting bread."

The tears came into Essie's eyes.

"Of course not," she answered. Then a sudden fear pierced her heart. "What will the lighthouse-keepers do?" she asked.

"Oh, they are all right," he said; "they have Government stores, you know."

But that night Essie had a strange dream.

She thought she lay in her tomb, cold and still, yet conscious all the while of what was happening to those she had known while alive. Suddenly she heard a rushing, striving wind, shaking the lonely lighthouse towers, and up in the lantern shone out Karl's face, wild and white. But while she was wondering, in sickening terror, what had become of Harry, she felt some one touching her hands, and lo! there he knelt at her feet, weeping his very life away, but taking no notice of her efforts to comfort him. Then great blocks of ice seemed to close round her and wall her in. With a choking scream she awoke.

The wind was dashing in a perfect hurricane against the panes. She sprang up, rushed to the window and peered out into the stormy darkness. The light shone on, burning calm and steady through the long, wild night, but a blinding snow was riding on the breast of the storm and hid it from her sight. With a low despairing sob Essie hurried back to bed again and cried herself to sleep. But her heart was awake at last, and she viewed with shrinking terror her approaching marriage. She grew so pale and thin, that Karl became terribly alarmed about her, and sought by every means in his power to restore her old gay spirits, but with little success.

One evening on his way home he passed two old crones gossiping as they went to the village. It was quite dark, so they did not observe him, but he heard one exclaim:

"Essie Moore, indeed! She's not good enough for either of 'em."

"Poor young Hardy," rejoined the other; "a likely lad he was before she played him false. Do you think Mr. Rimmer knows?"

"I guess she's beginning to repeat already," rejoined the first speaker, "to judge by her sick face."

Karl Rimmer had heard enough; he passed on hurriedly with a sore and angry heart. That his Essie, his pride, his true-hearted darling, should be the talk of the town! Worst thought of all, that truth might lie at the bottom of this gossip. And it only wanted a week to their wedding-day. He fancied his sisters looked at him with a kind of compassion, when he took his place at the tea-table. Had they heard anything too! He rose up presently, with a resolve rapidly forming in his mind, that was soon to blossom into a strange deed. He ran up to his room for a book of "Hans Andersen's Tales," which he had previously determined to read aloud to Essie. All day long he had promised himself such a delightful evening with Essie all to himself, her tired expression changed to one of keen interest, and that eager light in her dark eyes that he knew and loved so well.

When he sallied out again it was snowing. Large, white, feathery flakes falling soft and