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Our Own.

If I had known in the morning How wearily all the day, The words unkind Would trouble my mind, I said when you went away, I had been more careful, darling Nor given you needless pain; But we vex "our own" With looks and tone We might never take back again.

For though in the quiet evening You may give the kiss of peace, Yet will it might be That never for me The pain of heart should cease, How many go forth in the morning Who never come home at night; And hearts have broken From harsh words spoken, That sorrow can ne'er set right.

We have careful thought for the stranger, And smiles for the sometime guest, But oft for "our own" The bitter tone, Though we love our own the best. Ah! lips with the curve impatient; Ah! brows with the look of scorn, 'T were a cruel fate Were the night too late To undo the work of morn.

—Margaret E. Sangster.

A Night upon the Coast.

"God help all poor sailors this wild, stormy night!" said old Captain Carson, as he sat beside his blazing fire, one raging night in March, when the storm king had marshalled his forces by the shore and on the sea.

"Amen!" fervently responded the dear old woman opposite, beside whom stood a diminutive work-table, on which lay an open Bible.

"I am right glad that we are not expecting Ned this month," said the captain, after a pause. "And yet they are often safe when we think they are in the greatest danger; and when the winds are calm and hushed upon the coast, they are sometimes in the greatest danger. Only the good God above knows what comes to the sailor's heart in the time of peril."

Mrs. Carson looked up from her knitting work, and caught an expression on her husband's face that made her feel anxious.

"Surely, John, you would not think it possible that Edward could be on the coast? You will not deceive me about it, dear?" And the lady dropped her work and put her hand beseechingly on her husband's shoulder.

The captain returned the caress, and clearing his voice, which was somewhat husky, replied, "It is barely possible, but I hope not probable."

Mrs. Carson sat looking into the fire for some minutes before she again spoke.

"Mrs. Johnson was looking through her spy glass, just as the storm came on; and she declared that the ship which she saw off Norman's Woe, was the Cincinnatus."

"Did she? Well, although as a general thing she is wonderfully correct, I trust for once that she was mistaken. Ned's ship sails slow; there are three others expected before him—and now, wife, you must trust my judgment a little as well as old Mrs. Johnson's; who, although she has watched this bay for so many years, and knows all the vessels pretty well, yet she is liable to a mistake as well as the rest of us. I wish I had been where I could see it. I should have known it instantly, and then I could put your mind at rest at once. Come, nothing is better for low spirits than employment; I will hang on the kettle, and you shall make some cocoa and coffee, in case any one should be needing it in the storm. Thank heaven that Ned is not expected; but then there are other poor souls who may be cast upon the shore and need our attention."

"And they shall have it, for my Edward's sweet sake," answered his wife.

"And so they shall, my dear. Now just try to think that Ned is only half way across the Atlantic, and will not be here till the fifteenth of April. I wish all the poor fellows were as safe."

These words comforted the mother a little, and she went about her preparations. She even unlocked a chest and took out her thickest blankets, and hung them over a chair, roused up the fire until a more genial warmth diffused itself through the room, and then opened the door leading to the bedroom, that the surplus heat might warm that too.

It was the great equinoctial storm. Stout trees that had borne the weight of many tempests before, were now bent almost to the ground, and some wholly uprooted. Sheets of blinding rain deluged the streets, yet freezing into ice almost as soon as they fell; and everything on the wharves broke loose, and boards and even timbers were taken up by the fierce wind and carried to unknown distances.

It was evident that no vessel near the coast could ride out in such a gale uninjured. As if the wind and rain had not sufficient horrors to appall the stoutest hearts, there came on a fearful accompaniment of thunder and lightning. It broke upon the stillness and darkness of a momentary lull, as if the spirit of the storm were bent on exhibiting all his horrors at once.

In the midst of this terrible war of the elements, the outer door was softly opened, and a woman whose face was as pale as marble, entered. She looked like one coming from the shadowy land of spirits; so chill and stony was her face. Her wet garments scattered the rain drops on the floor, and her feet, hastily thrust into slippers, left a wet track upon the carpet. It was Ellen Carson, the wife of their only son, whose dwelling was just across the narrow yard that separated it from his father's house. As she stood there with her wet garments clinging to her figure, and the long, dripping hair which had escaped from its confinement and was hanging loosely over her shoulders, she seemed more like the embodied spirit of the storm than a human being.

Captain Carson led her to a seat beside the blazing fire. "Why, Helen! dear girl! how came you to venture out on such a night as this?" She could not answer, but the look of composure which she saw in his face reassured her. She laid her head upon her mother-in-law's lap and then the tears came to her relief.

"Oh, father, mother!" she whispered. "I have had such a dream about Edward. I lay down on the sofa, because I could not think of going to bed, and fell asleep. I cannot tell you what I dreamed—it was too terrible to repeat." The old captain soothed her, and she entreated them to let her stay there by the fire all night. "It is so dreary at home," she said, shuddering.

"Stay, certainly, yes, dear. I should have come in for you, if the thought that you might have gone to bed had not prevented me; and I was afraid of disturbing you."

All this time the loud thunder was shaking the walls of the dwelling, and the flashes of lightning came sharp and fast through the windows. One peal that almost stunned the listeners, succeeded a blinding flash, and then, in the brief pause of the storm, which gave it time to collect new forces, a voice was heard outside, calling for Captain Carson to come to the beach.

"Anything ashore, Wibur?" he asked of a man who hastily thrust his head in at the door.

"Ay, ay, plenty of 'em," said the man, and there's nobody there to tell the landmen what to do."

The captain waited only to don his pea-jacket and norwester and with the activity of the younger man, he set off for the beach.

Once only, as Mrs. Carson glanced at his arm which he had injured some years before, she was about to entreat him not to go, but a look from him silenced her.

"You are right John," she said. "Somebody's son is there, and needing the help that Edward may be needing elsewhere. Go!"

"Yes, go dear father," said Helen, "and let me go with you."

"No, indeed you are mad to think of such a thing."

He was gone in a moment, and the next minute Helen was in her own house and fastening around her a thick coat of her husband's and putting on her own little water-proof boots. A close hood and mittens, and a warm woolen comforter completed her dress, and then, by the flashes of lightning, she saw her way to the beach. Her mother-in-law did not oppose her going, for slight and delicate as Helen was

she had proved herself, more than once a very Grace Darling, in point of courage, in emergencies when others failed. So Mrs. Carson sat down to wait, calmly, if she could, their return.

In the pauses of the storm, she fancied that she heard voices, and running into the passage, she would peer out into the darkness. As the clock struck twelve, the rain ceased to fall the wind fell into a low murmur, the clouds passed, and gave a glimpse of the moon shining in the rifts. Once she looked out and saw a mass of moving figures indistinguishable in the distance and her heart beat with apprehension.

After all Edward's ship might have been near. She shivered as much with fear, as with cold, and went back to her warm fire again to busy herself with the preparations which she was always careful to make when there was any prospect of a wreck being near.

Soon she heard footsteps at the door, and some people brought in a woman and child, and laid them tenderly down on the warm carpet. Frail and delicate-looking creatures they both were, the child with its small limbs and white face, and the mother scarcely less pale, with her soft, wet ringlets mixed with sand, and streaming over her white neck from which the covering had been rudely torn by the rocks over which she was dragged by the waves.

Mrs. Carson took up the little child bathed and rubbed it poured some warm milk between its lips, and wrapping it in a warm flannel, laid it in her own bed, where a sweet natural sleep soon followed. The mother was less easily roused; but after great effort, she suddenly opened her eyes, and called feebly for her child.

Until now, Mrs. Carson had been so completely occupied with the stranger, that she had not noticed that her husband and Helen were still absent; but now, putting the mother in bed with her child, she went out herself into the cold to seek them.

The sound of the moaning deep came upon her ear, as if grieving for the work it had this night accomplished. Taking the path that led towards the beach, she looked eagerly forward, now straining her eyes to find out what was before her now pausing to hear if there was any sound save the murmuring of the chafed and angry waves.

As she approached nearer, she saw by the light of the moon, now riding serene and beautiful in the deep blue overhead, a group upon the sands, apparently watching the progress of a raft which bore slowly but steadily towards the shore. Beyond it, but still not far from the beach, was a ledge of rocks, on which lay the shattered remnants of a large vessel and all along the path over the sands lay the fragments of a vessel, broken spars, bits of wood with here and there a box or bale which had been flung on by the violence of the waves.

Passing these the aged woman picked her way to a group on the sands and recognized her husband and Helen among those who composed it. They did not hear her approach for every eye was intent upon the floating raft. Her foot stumbled upon some object and as she stooped to pick it up she saw by the light of the moon that it was a piece of dark wood with Cincinnatus painted in large white letters upon it.

"My Edward!" said the poor old woman. And she pressed on towards her husband with a quickened step, but with a sinking heart.

"Poor wife!" exclaimed Carson, as he saw who it was. "This is no place for you Helen, do go home and take her with you."

"Not until I know what can be known of Edward!" was her reply.

The men were throwing out great ropes and although the sea still rocked heavily and the wind blew high one or two adventurous young seamen had manned a boat and were already half way out to the raft. It was a scene for a painter—that group of hard-looking, weather-beaten sailors, and the two feeble and delicate women beside them all unconscious of the cold and their feet sinking in the wet sand, speechless and tearless, but not without hope in their faces as they were seen by the light of the moon.

Onward came the raft and in came the little boat and as they came side by side, one or two feeble figures were seen to pass slowly from the overcharged raft to the boat assisted by the boat's crew.

Swiftly now the boat came on, and was soon heard grating upon the sands. Tenderly were the poor fellows lifted out and kind hands wrapped them in dry clothes, and carried them on litters to the houses of the fishermen, where upon every hearth burned the warm and glowing fire. A

groan of disappointment burst from Carson's heart, and was echoed by his wife and daughter; but not a word was spoken.

Moments seemed hours now until the raft should arrive, guided as it evidently was only by weak and feeble hands. The wind had changed and was now blowing from shore; so that it was with difficulty that the raft floated on. Two or three figures stood feebly up, and voices were faintly heard amid the noise of the vexed waves, while below lay a mass of bodies, immovable and indistinguishable.

It reached the shore at length, and Helen, with all a loving woman's disregard of danger, where the beloved object is in peril, pressed close to the water's edge, her little feet crowding down the slippery seaweed that had thrown its slimy rosettes upon the beach. Carson drew her resolutely back; but oh, the face she lifted up to him beneath the moonlight! so full of tender and mournful sadness! and he had no heart left to bid her hope.

The ropes which the hardy fishermen held were now needed; and as they were made fast about the prostrate bodies, and dragged one after another through the surf to the shore, Helen cast a despairing glance upon each face, living or dead.

There was but one man left upon the raft to be drawn forth, and her horror became so great that she could not look upon that one.

"It is not Edward!" she said, as she leaned heavily against the weeping old man. Let us go!" And ere the words were fairly out of her mouth, she was in a dead swoon upon the beach.

Heart-stricken, Captain Carson laid her in the arms of a stout fisherman who bore her to her own cottage, where, in a deadly stupor, from which nothing could rouse her, Helen lay all night.

When the morning came, the solitary raft, entangled in the seaweed, lay still and immovable; and the brave little boat which had rendered service to many of the poor fellows, was fastened by a rope thrown around a huge log; and was now tossing like an eggshell.

Up and down the little ascent that led to the houses of Captain Carson and his son, people were passing and repassing all the morning with still anxious looks. At the captain's house the little delicate mother and child lay, tenderly cared for by the neighbors who had gone to supply Mrs. Carson's place.

On the hearth rug lay Edward's dog, which had followed Helen there, and had not been allowed to leave the house. Sometimes Lion would arouse himself and place both paws on the window sill would utter a low cry. When the door was opened he sprang out, knocking down a neighbor's child, and scarcely made three bounds to Helen's cottage. His cry arrested the attention of some one who let him in. His first move was to a low couch where a man lay with his feet and hands sorely wounded. Then he gave a joyful bark of recognition and then fell to licking the poor bleeding hands, until the bandages loosened and fell off. On the bed lay Helen to whom consciousness had not yet returned. Lion rushed to the bed, and his low cry awakened her slumbering senses; but as if all the agony of the night burst upon her recollections she cried out "Edward! Edward! dead! drowned!" The poor wounded hands were thrown up wildly at this cry, and a low moan answered it. Captain Carson approached the bed, and taking her tenderly in his arms, as if she were an infant he carried her to the couch.

Oh, could that pale, disfigured countenance and that long black hair, all wet with spray, and tangled with the berries of the seaweed, be her own Edward? The wounded arms were around her neck, and Edward's lips, parched, cracked and painful, were kissing her pale mouth. There was no word spoken until the aged mother came, and laying her hands on both their heads, she said solemnly, "God hath blessed you, my dear children, let us bless his holy name!"

Experiences of a Woman Canvasser

It was the sight of a poor, lonely little cent tucked away in the corner of my purse, with no companion to share its snug quarters (not silver ones) but a pocket-piece of foreign extraction, that induced me to lay aside all feelings of repugnance towards the work and become a lady canvasser. This decision was also based upon an offer to handle a really beautiful and artistic book published as a subscription work at a figure calculated to bring it within the reach of any one who really wanted it.

When I started on my mission the sky was overcast, the streets damp from the night's rain and the morning fog, and certainly my spirits were also dampened by these depressing atmospheric conditions. It was also a great inconvenience, for it necessitated holding my gown up on both sides, at the same time managing my umbrella and the package containing the

sample of my wares, so to speak.

Whatever experiences might fall to my lot, I determined not to forego my right to the title of "lady," which had been handed down to me through generations, from a Duke on one side of the family tree and a Marquis on the other, and which I felt I still could claim in spite of the undeserved opprobrium which in some people's minds attaches itself to the very name of "book agent."

As the first step towards the accomplishment of this preliminary aim, I donned most thoroughly appropriate and ladylike attire, my hat being "up-to-date" and apparently new, though really renovated after the previous year's wear, and again put into active service. My coat was "smart," and fitted perfectly over a tailor-made gown lined with silk (relic of former grandeur), and recently treated to a rejuvenating process, like the hat, showing not a sign of frayed-out edges—hence my care in protecting it from muddy streets and sidewalks. Shoes, gloves and umbrella were equally irreproachable in style and it was evident that if success depended at all upon appearances, no elements were lacking.

I am naturally a strong and self-reliant woman, but it must be confessed that on the morning in question there was a most peculiar but not altogether unaccountable sensation in the region of my knees, and a feeling farther up on my left side which strongly suggested heart-failure!

My field lay in an unfamiliar locality, and, after walking some distance, I turned into a street lined with handsome residences, and selecting one which from its general air of elegance promised well for the end I had in view, outwardly, boldly, but with inward quaking, I mounted the steps and rang the bell. The door was opened almost immediately by a neat maid in dainty cap and apron, and a hasty glance around the interior justified my estimate of the house, the same being further enforced by the sounds of a conversation over the telephone.

"Ah," said I, mentally, "here are people able and willing to surround themselves with luxuries, and of sufficient cultivation to enjoy the possession of a good book."

Around, meanwhile, I stated my business to the maid, whose face expressed a really well-bred surprise at my errand, her evident impression having been that I was on social purposes intent, which, in fact, was what I hoped the neighbors would think, if any watched my ascent of the steps.

As soon as the bell sounded for Central to cut off the connection, my hostess appeared on the stairs, received me most graciously, showed deep interest in the work, expressed her thorough appreciation of its merits, said she would really like to possess it, but—and then I learned that I, too, was a direct victim of the recent political situation. She had been cautioned by her husband not to spend a dollar that was not absolutely necessary until after the election, as he "could not tell on what platform he was standing, or how his affairs might turn." Of course I knew I must accept this as final, and after chatting amiably together for a few moments, I left, thanking her for her courtesy and feeling, though somewhat disappointed, not in the least chagrined, having met with polite consideration.

A succession of calls resulted in no subscribers, but plenty of enlivening incidents.

Doctors had already contracted for necessary medical works, and could not afford more; or as one of the fraternity assured me, he did not want the book for either reference or recreation, as all the entertainment he desired was contained in his medical journals.

"But," said I, "don't you want a change after dealing with people's ills all day?"

"Oh, no! almost any doctor will tell you he would rather read a medical journal than anything else."

Silenced but unconvinced, I concluded there was no accounting for tastes.

Writers were too busy making books themselves to care for those written by others, and one well-known author dismissed the subject through a servant's medium, without allowing me a glimpse of his illustrious self, by saying he could have no possible use for the work.

Some people were out; some were in, but evidently "not at home;" some too poor to subscribe, although their distress at not being able to gratify their longing to possess a copy was not overwhelming! Some were too rich to be bothered with subscription terms—would rather pay at once when the work was complete. Some wanted it and would subscribe later—but of what avail is a promise of that kind as the result of an agent's efforts?

Public libraries generally declined to subscribe, as it was against their rules to contract for a work until complete, al-

though two incitations the following day or two sent in their orders as a result of the first day's effort.

Two bits of advice may be apropos in this connection. First, to the agent. Don't be discouraged by a day of no apparent success; several orders may result from those efforts later on; as one remarked, "In this work there are wheels within wheels," and a circumstance like the following will give strength to the faint-hearted:

It was after a most fatiguing and disheartening day's work that I had on my list as my last call the name of a dear old judge who was known as a book-lover and book-buyer, and when I walked in, there he sat with both feet on his desk; but he removed them at once, and in about a dozen words the transaction was concluded and he had signed for an order in an expensive binding, which yielded a good return for the day's work—but in what breathless suspense I awaited his decision, and how faint I felt for a moment when I saw the signature (a thing of beauty and a joy forever to my eyes at that moment), he could never guess from me outwardly calm demeanor; but shall I ever forget it? For I was inexperienced and had not learned not to be excited or cast down by each day's failures or successes.

Now to the buyer: If you want it take it, and be glad it was brought to your attention, and look upon it as a business deal; if you do not want it, don't express your regret at your inability to help the agent. Of course, every order represents so much gain to us, but we are doing a legitimate business, and don't ask for assistance any more than the tradesman who solicits orders for things to satisfy your physical cravings, while we strive to supply you with mental food.

On a man whom I called, I knew to be a pawnbroker, but as his home was attractive and well-appointed, and he had two bright young children growing up, I thought my book might appeal to him for his library. His excuse for not subscribing was unique.

"Oh, no, you cannot interest me in it. I'll get it through my business."

"Feigning not to understand his meaning I said: 'Ah! but this book is not sold to the trade at all.' You see, I was bent upon forcing him to explain how he would get it."

"Well, I am in the loan business, and I'll get it in five or six months—I always do; I have all the best works that way."

"Well! well!" I thought, "that is a new way of looking at it, and a sad commentary on an apparently thriving community" and I signed for the probable face of some of my books.

Perhaps one of the funniest incidents in my experience was when, after ringing a door bell, it was answered quite promptly by a little, withered-up woman, who, through a narrow aperture, literally shot at me, without any preface, the surprising salutation:

"I'm one of them."

"What?" I gasped, not catching her meaning at once.

"I'm one of them, an agent myself, so I guess I don't want—"

"Oh, yes!—good-morning I blurted out before she had finished her sentence, and walked down the steps trying to collect the crushed atoms of a previously very dignified personality.

Was it only a fellow feeling which caused her to recognize the nature of my errand at once, or was it?—No, I could not believe it was evident from my general air, but many a laugh have I enjoyed since at the thought of her unerring aim.

One should always avoid a set formula in describing the beauties of a book or any other commodity, or one may be found in the predicament of the man at the World's Fair who was demonstrating the attractions of a certain article, and when asked to repeat a foregoing statement, stopped evidently bewildered, hesitated, and then said, "Excuse me, but I will have to begin over again."

Just before turning homeward on that memorable first day, an institute, bearing one of our own family names, loomed up before me, and seemed to afford a shelter if all else failed, for it declared itself to be a home for "Respectable, Aged, Indigent Females." Could anything have been more appropriate, and probably founded by some ancestor of mine? I knew I was respectable, I surely felt aged after my fatiguing experiences, and the condition of my finances declared me to be temporarily, at least, an indigent female, therefore perfectly eligible for admission!

However, before applying I decided to make a few more staggles to gain fortune first, then fame, if possible, as my aspirations for future greatness lay, not in canvassing, but in writing books for other people to sell, and still others to read; but while so employed one must live, and creature comforts require cash to supply them, and literary success does not always mean financial success—vide Raskin.

Incidents might be multiplied ad infinitum, but there has been enough said to give an idea to the uninitiated of the disappointments, also the rewards, of the work of a canvasser, and some of the methods employed; while those who have endured like experiences will feel a sympathetic interest in reading this account, as many things will appear to them between the lines. Perhaps it is best to close it with my final dismissal on the day in question, when a slowly mailed maid opened the door of a really nice-looking house announced immediately, "No, she don't want it at all," and ushered me out of the house with scant courtesy. "What an invaluable maid to know so thoroughly all the tastes and desires of her mistress without consulting her," I exclaimed inwardly, as I left. "She had not generalized in the least; she had not intimated that people of my calling were unwelcome visitors; she had simply asserted that her mistress did not want it, without being given an opportunity to see what it might be."