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MY AUTOGRAPH.



MY autograph she begged the night
When first her beauty filled my sight;
"Not just your name, you know," quoth she,
"But something nice beside, may-be
A poem or a maxim trite."

I yielded to the witching light
Of her soft eyes and did indite,
Entwined with flowers of poesy,
My autograph.

She perches on my knee to-night,
And in her eyes so clear and bright
The old light dwells—ah, woe is me!
My check-book in her hand I see,
And once again she begs me write
My autograph.

—Clarence H. Pearson, in America.

ALMOST A TRAGEDY.

What Happened from Leaving the Elevator Door Open.



I MUST begin by telling my readers that I am a nervous woman. Not nervous in the sense of starting at a sudden sound, but with that trying form of the malady which may be described as *apprehensiveness*, that cowardly shrinking from the future which Shakespeare ascribes to an evil conscience, but which is more correctly attributed by modern scientists to a delicate nervous organization, or a deranged condition of the liver. From the moment of their introduction I had a horror of elevators; and when my husband put one in his hardware store down town, I felt that he might be brought in any day or hour a mangled corpse. It was in vain that Mammy—the nurse of my tender years, the confidential friend of my latter—reminded me that "it wasn't no use takin' trouble on intrus." I had my fears invested at compound rates, and they were gradually doubling themselves.

"Remember, John," I called out as my husband was boarding a car one morning, "be home to dinner by six, so we will have time to get our tickets for the opera."

With all his good qualities I must confess that John is forgetful; but we didn't often indulge in an opera in those days of our early married life, and I did think he'd remember to be in time for such an unusual event.

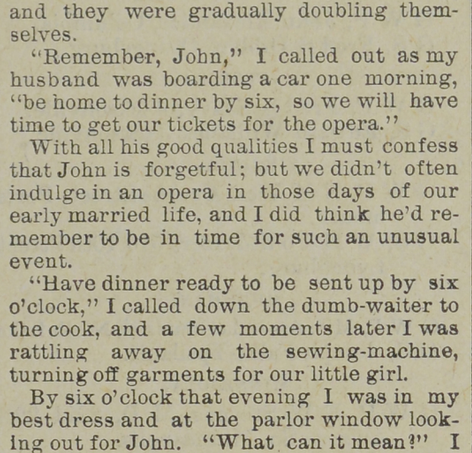
"Have dinner ready to be sent up by six o'clock," I called down the dumb-waiter to the cook, and a few moments later I was rattling away on the sewing-machine, turning off garments for our little girl.

By six o'clock that evening I was in my best dress and at the parlor window looking out for John. "What can it mean?" I wondered, as car after car jingled by without even a pause.

I had succeeded in working myself into quite a state of anxiety when Mammy came in with little Cora, who had been having an airing on the pavement.

"Do you know," I said, taking out my watch, "that it's a quarter of an hour past the time and John hasn't come yet? I'm really uneasy about him!"

"Lor, Miss Mary," said Mammy, encouragingly, "you know Mars John gwine stay



"IS HE STILL ALIVE?"

down to dat sto' twell de las' horn blow. 'Tain't worth while to make yourse'f oneasy 'bout him."

I was silenced but not relieved by Mammy's view of the subject, and continued my watch from the window, my fears increasing as the moments went by.

"There he is now," I said, starting from my seat, as a cessation of the bells showed me that a car had stopped.

"O Mammy!" I exclaimed, looking from the window, "it isn't John; it's a messenger boy. Look, he's coming up the steps! For heaven's sake see what he wants. O Mammy, Mammy, I knew something must have happened!"

There is nothing more contagious than fear, and Mammy's hands were trembling visibly, as, returning from the door, she placed a paper in my hand which contained these words: "The elevator door was left open."

"It's the elevator!" I cried, wringing my hands in an agony of grief. "I knew how it would end! O John, John; O my husband, I warned you, I *plead* with you, but you wouldn't listen!"

"Is he killed, Miss Mary," said Mammy, stooping over me and speaking in a hoarse whisper.

"It doesn't give the particulars," I moaned; "it only says it happened from the door being left open. Perhaps he's still alive! Perhaps I may see him once more! We must go to him, Mammy. O my husband, my poor husband!"

It was Mammy's dear, trembling, old hands that tied my bonnet under my chin; it was she—dear, faithful soul—who hailed a car, and put me, more dead than alive, into a seat.

"There," she said, soothingly, as, alarmed by the fixed expression of my countenance, she applied a bottle of camphor (caught up in our hasty exit) to my nose, "don't take it so hard. Maybe he ain't as bad as you think."

A few of my husband's employes hung about the store door when our destination was reached. Unmindful of the inquiring looks which they fixed upon us, or the curious gaze which our fellow travelers caston our retreating figures, I sat upon an empty goods box turned bottom upward on the pavement.

"We've come to see Mr. Henderson," said Mammy, addressing one of the men who had come forward, "ef," she added, "he's so as we *ken* see him."

"Have you gotten him out?" I gasped. "Is he still alive? Tell me, in pity tell me! I can bear *any* thing better than suspense."

"He *was* alive and as well as ever I saw him when he left the store an hour ago," replied the man, looking thoroughly bewildered. "Has any thing happened to him since!"

"'As well as you ever saw him?'" cried I; "then what did you mean by your message about the elevator door being left open. I thought my husband had been crushed in the elevator."

"O-o-o-h!" exclaimed the man, a light breaking over his face, and beginning to talk fast that I might not be kept in suspense, "I mean this: The elevator door (we call it so, though it's only a door that leads to the elevator from the side street) was fastened. Mr. Henderson went off with a man on business, taking the key with him. I suppose he thought he had locked the door before he left, but he hadn't, and feeling afraid to leave the store open, I sent a boy up for the key. I thought, of course, he would find Mr. Henderson at home."

"Then my husband isn't killed at all. He is safe," I cried, covering my face with my hands and weeping violently. "I expect you think I'm *crazy*," I said, looking up at last, and smiling through my tears.

"No, I don't," said the man, brushing the moisture from his own eyes. "I've got a wife at home that would do exactly the same way."

I don't know how my husband relished this interesting drama which I was so obliging as to get up for the entertainment of his employes and of which he was the hero. He *ought* to have been thankful that he had a wife who was so fond of him, but I'm not sure that he was. I'm afraid in his secret heart he was rather worried about it. Men are awfully funny. They don't (at least the best of them) like their women folks to make them the subject of scenes. But whatever he thought he has never told me that he didn't like it, *and he'd better not.*—Grace Willoughby, in Good Housekeeping.

THEY WENT HOME.

How an Old Man Was Deceived by His Degenerate Son.



T got noised around the hotel that an old man living out in the country twelve miles had come in to see Niagara Falls for the first time, although living that near it for over forty years. He had come in on the train with his son, and a number of us followed them into Prospect Park to hear the old man's impressions. As they walked he queried:

"Jim, have ye bin lyin' to me?"

"No, father," replied the boy; "the falls are right ahead of us."

"All right, Jim. Don't try to pass no grove off on me for falls, you know, for I won't stand it. What's that roarin', Jim?"

"The cataract, father."

"Don't ye lie! If it's the cataract, all right. If it's machinery, I'll wollop ye fur lying!"

He was led down to the Point, and for a minute or so he was speechless. Then he turned and queried:

"Is it real water, Jim?"

"Yes, father."

"Don't lie to me, Jim! If I find it's a panoramy or any made-up thing it'll be the worse fur ye!"

"Isn't it grand, father?"

"Sorter; but 'tain't no nine hundred feet high."

"Oh, no, of course not."

"'Tain't five miles across, either."

"No, it isn't."

HIS MISTAKE.

A Lad Who Couldn't Tell a Humorist from a Horse Thief.



FOUR or five mules had been stolen in and about Glen Cove, and the thief had been sharp enough and lucky enough to get off with them. The mountain people lose a razor-backed hog now and then and raise no row; but when a thief has the nerve to come along and run off a mule the situation assumes a serious aspect. The bulwarks of American liberty totter to their foundation, as it were, and it is high time that the American eagle be unchained to scream his loudest. Every farmer in the Cove was out at night to watch, and although they may have differed on religion or politics, all were agreed as to what should be done with the thief in case he returned after more mule meat and was captured.

The above, says M. Quad in the Detroit Free Press, can be imagined as scene first. Scene second opens with your humble servant approaching Glen Cove at ten o'clock of a starlight night. If I could have had my way about it, I should have done the approaching act several hours earlier, but a tow-headed boy, who was carrying fifty thousand freckles on his face, gave me a wrong steer on a short cut, and I was lost for two or three hours. I had heard nothing of the excitement at the Cove, and felt no fear, except of the farmer's dogs. The first building I came to looked to me like a large log house, and I turned off the trail and approached it. I was close up before discovering that it was a barn. I was about to turn away, when several men stepped into view, and a hearty voice sung out:

"Throw up yer hands or we'll riddle ye!"

The man who won't throw up his hands sooner than be riddled must want to get out of this world by a painful process.

"Now, then, some of ye tie him! Look out fur tricks. If he'un makes a move, be ready to bore him!"

I didn't attempt any tricks, and when they had tied my hands behind me and fastened a leading rope around my body, the leader said:

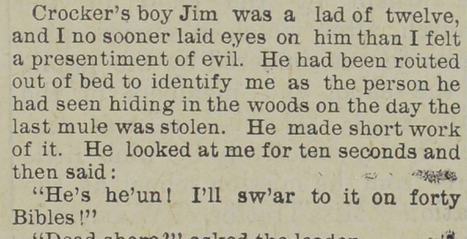
"We'll take him down to Crocker's and see if Jim's boy kin identify."

There were five sturdy mountaineers, each armed with a gun, and I wasn't saying a word. I realized the situation by the help of some remarks dropped as we passed along, and I felt that it was useless to protest unti. the proper moment came. About ten rods below Crocker's house was a fine, large tree, and, as we passed it, the leader of the band remarked:

"We'll dangle he'un from that ar' limb up thar'."

It was a nice, large limb, growing at a convenient height, and I would, no doubt, present a good appearance while doing the dangling act.

What may be called scene third took place at Crocker's. A gun was fired as we arrived, and in the course of a quarter of an hour five more farmers arrived. They had out on watch also, and



"NOW, SONNY."

signal to rally. It was while waiting for this rally that I asked one of those who had captured me:

"Do you suspect me of any crime? Are you looking for a robber or murderer?"

"Suspect! In course we suspect!" he replied.

"But isn't it possible that you have made a mistake?"

"Reckon not, but we can soon find out. Crocker's boy Jim got a fa'r sight of he'un by daylight, and he'll tell."

"Very well. If the boy says he ever saw me in these parts before you may go ahead and hang."

Great was the rejoicing when the other party arrived. Not a man of them had the least doubt that I was the party wanted, and two of them insisted that valuable time could be saved by hanging me at once.

"Yes, that's so," replied the leader, "but we'd cut the fun too short. Better save he'un for an hour or two. Bring him into the house."

Crocker's boy Jim was a lad of twelve, and I no sooner laid eyes on him than I felt a presentiment of evil. He had been routed out of bed to identify me as the person he had seen hiding in the woods on the day the last mule was stolen. He made short work of it. He looked at me for ten seconds and then said:

"He's he'un! I'll sw'ar to it on forty Bibles!"

"Dead shore?" asked the leader.

"Yes."

"That's 'nuff! Up he goes!"

It was high time for me to do some talking. I told them who I was, the route I had come, the people I had met, and I asked them to look over my papers. They said it would be throwing time away, and that it was selfish in me to want to delay matters, and I guess they would have had their say about it but for Mrs. Crocker. As they started to lead me out doors she said:

"Look yere, boys, don't make no mistake. Our Jim may hev mistook. He'un tells a smooth story, and it may be right. It hain't but fo' miles back to Dobson's, whar' he says he took supper, and one of ye' should ride over."

The men grumbled and growled, but it was finally decided that one of them should go. I was seated on a rude stool, the rope tied fast about my legs, and we sat there to await the return of the messenger. Jim was questioned again and again, but he stuck to his first declaration. I could give them my route for the last three weeks, and the name of every town, village and cove, and I had letters to prove I had been to those places. But for young Jim being so sure of my identity, I could have convinced them. They were doing the fair thing, however, by sending a messenger back, and I had no fears of the result. It was daylight before he returned, and he had two men with him. During the interval I was examined, cross-examined and turned wrong side out. The greatest doubter was an old man who had lost his two mules.

"Look at he'un," he exclaimed, pointing at me as I sat there. "Look at the build of his head—the look on his face—them suspishus eyes. He might fule a young man, but he needn't try it on me. Whar's my mewls, ye onery villain?"

Ten minutes after the men rode up I was cast loose and apologized to. I could realize how naturally the mistake came about, and the men were not to blame. It was all right with every body except young Jim and the old man. The latter had bragged of his cuteness and his defeat annoyed him. He went off shaking his head and predicting that I was up to some trick. I had forgotten the boy when, half an hour after breakfast, I heard a terrible racket behind the corn-crib. Word came that I was wanted, and I went out to find Jim tied by the leg and his father trimming the second "gad."

"Now, sonny," said the father, as he got ready to use it, "take a good look at that 'ere stump befo' ye. Two days hence ye may be axed to identify it, and ye may sw'ar up and down that it's a blooming cheery tree! You jist cum powerful nigh o' gettin' all this Cove in a scrape, and I'm a goin' to improve yer eye-sight!"

And Jim received the nicest, most thorough and lasting licking ever given to a boy south of the Ohio river.

Thin Board.

"Good morning, Mrs. Hashley," said Jones, cautiously approaching his landlady, "will you give me my shingle bill for the last ten days?"

"Excuse me, Mr. Jones," replied Mrs. H., looking him over suspiciously; "I don't understand you."

"Why, that's plain enough. I want to pay for what I got here for the last ten days."

"Oh, yes, I see; you mean your board bill. What a funny man you are, Mr. Jones," and the landlady laughed half hysterically.

"No, I don't, either," he said in a heartless tone. "I mean just what I said. It's too darned thin to call it board."—Washington Critic.

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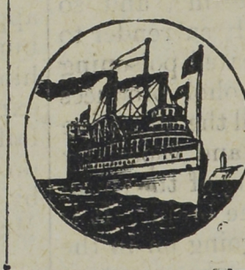
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