

Select Poetry

Of the one bright sun that shined light;
An' made a river of the sky;
When on the willow bank we sat that night;
My lifetime love and I;

Miscellaneous

A TRUE NARRATIVE

RE A WESTERN LADY

During the winter of 1866-7, I boarded with a western family in the State of Illinois. The gentleman of the house, permit me to call him Mr. Haines, and his wife were young married people.

The winter was a severe one; and as their house was located upon a prairie, the unobstructed winds were so penetrating, that the female part of the family usually remained within the house.

My home was in New York, and Mrs. Haines had formerly resided in the State of Connecticut. One evening, while Mr. Haines was away on business, and Mrs. Haines and myself were seated at the fire and the little one sleeping in the cradle, Mrs. Haines related to me the following story—

Her father, Mr. Church, had four children—one son and three daughters, Esther, Stephen, Lizzie and May. While they lived at the east, Esther, the eldest of the family, married a wealthy merchant and settled in her native town.

After this Mr. Church emigrated to the West, taking with him his wife and three children. He went to the State of Illinois and purchased a small farm near the beautiful town of Edna—(villages are called towns at the west)—

home to spend the remaining part of the day in her society. When the sun had declined in the western horizon, and the heat of the day had subsided, they would wander over the beautiful prairies and gather wild flowers which bloomed in every variety beneath their feet.

Her parents were extremely pleased with Mr. Rayman, and their interest for his welfare and prosperity in life was very much increased when they learned of their daughter's and his engagement.

As soon as possible, all was joy and happiness. May was now looking forward with golden anticipations, for she was soon to become the bride of Charles Rayman. But we know not what an hour, a day or a year may bring forth.

But time reveals the ratures of Mr. Church began to grow mistrustful of Charles Rayman, for things had assumed a different aspect since their last meeting.

Her father was very much pleased with this, and in order to divert her attention, so as to banish all thoughts of him from her mind, he engaged a school for her.

Her attention was now wholly absorbed with her employment. She was much loved by her pupils, by their parents and guardians.

Mr. Church forbade the young man to enter his house; but after the family had retired for the night, she would steal unknown from them, go cautiously to the parlor window, and admit him. He would spend the evening with her, and then return to the village.

One afternoon while Mr. Church was away from home, Mr. Rayman

came to his house and invited May to accompany him on a walk. She accepted the invitation. As soon as her father returned he was informed of her departure, and he immediately pursued them.

There he visited her occasionally. In the meantime she prepared her things for housekeeping. One day he came to Mr. McCay's and informed her that he was going East on a visit to his father, should be gone four weeks, and on his return they would be married, and to prepare her wedding apparel during his absence.

She carried them to May, who at once recognized the pictures, as one of them was the same Rayman presented her when she received the intelligence that he was the betrothed of a young lady at the East.

Her confidence in him was now forever lost. She arose from her bed, although sick and feeble, and said, "I am going to my father's."

When she arrived at her father's house she was received kindly, but being so exhausted by her long walk, while in such a feeble condition, she was taken to her room never more to go out.

A few weeks passed. The new came—May is dead! Yes, May and her child were entombed in the same new made grave.

Charles Rayman was her murderer. Thus died the young, accomplished May Church, an ignoble death.

When will daughters learn to listen

to the advice of parents, and shun those heartless villains who seek to destroy both body and soul? But to return to our story. A mob arose and would have dealt justice to Rayman, had he not made his escape to parts unknown.

The old conductor smiled, and knocked the ashes from his cigar. "Well, said he, 'I believe almost everybody has had that feeling at one time or another. There is something fascinating to a sober business man in the idea of doing business and earning your living at 30 miles an hour, and the spice of danger that you may at any moment be sent to kingdom come by 'lightning express,' is just vague enough to not frighten, but attract. But to a conductor it's a prosaic business enough."

So it is to engineers and brakemen. Don't you remember that at the inquest over the Norwich Bridge accident, it was shown that the engineer was in the habit of opening every thing, and then reading a newspaper? He was neglecting his business, of course; but it shows what habit will do.

It's a queer existence, too, running day after day through a lot of little places that you don't take any interest in, or know anything about, more than that the stations are called such stations. It isn't such a dangerous life, either. Accident insurance companies don't rate passenger conductors very high, but if ever you want to feel how helpless a mortal you are in the hands of the Almighty, just get on an express engine, and get the engineer to 'open everything' on a dark night.

When a conductor runs a train out town and runs another in again the same day, it isn't such a queer life as queer life as when he runs a train out one day and in the next. Then he lives two lives. One night he's a married man at one place; the next night he's a bachelor at another place, and the

next night a married man again—and so on, and so on. There's a kind of feeling of responsibility, having three or four hundred lives in your keeping. But then, there's the rule. If you keep to them, if anything happens it isn't your fault. When you are out of time and have to wait, you're sure to be cross, and sure to be badgered by questions.

"A foreigner once told me that one of the most surprising things he'd seen in America was the respect paid to conductors and the way they were obeyed by passengers. But passengers will ask questions when you are waiting, and it's provoking. One day I was up of time, and ran off a switch to wait for either the down train or a telegram to come on. By and by, a pompous man comes to me as I was sitting on the fence.

"Mr. Conductor," says he, "what are we waiting for?"

"For the down train—we're out of time. There's a single-track here, and she has the right of way."

"But suppose the down train is behind, too?"

"Then I'll get a telegram."

"But suppose they don't telegraph you, how long will you wait?"

"I'll wait the wheels rust off," said I.

"He was the new superintendent, a young fellow whom I had never seen because he'd just come onto the road. He was courting a girl on the line of the road, and afterwards found out, and had an engagement to go to a ball with her that night, which this 'lay-over' interfered with.

"So he says, very quickly, 'No they ain't,' and when I looked surprised, he says, 'I'm the superintendent of this road, and I tell you you've time to get over this bit of single-track and have three minutes to spare before the down train reaches it. I have calculated and know.'

"I've got my printed orders, Mr. Superintendent," says I, and he broke right in—

"Never mind your printed orders. I order you to go ahead."

"Well, I wouldn't and he was awfully mad, and swore that I shouldn't run a week longer on that road. Probably, after he had cooled down he would have never said a word about the matter, for he was clearly in the wrong. Three minutes is too close a shave on time when six or seven hundred people's lives are interested, and regular printed orders are issued. But I thought at first he'd complain to the President, and I was bound to have the first talk, if possible.

"The President heard my story, and sent for the superintendent. He decided that he had ordered me at all, or made any threats, but said that he had told me I had ten minutes to spare. So it was a question of veracity, and I began to think I would have sent back to run my train, and that running a train on that road wouldn't be my business very long.

"All at once a gentleman who had been sitting with a newspaper held in front of his face at the back of the office, came forward.

"President," said he, "I happened to be standing by these two men when they had that talk. The conductor is right and the other man lies. If the train had gone on I had made up my

mind to walk back to the last station the chance of an accident seemed great."

"Then the President was mad. 'Why, good heavens!' said he, 'wife and family were on that train. Mr. Superintendent, go next month, wages to the first of next month, leave the road now.'

"But sometimes a conductor is in such a position that the won't guide him. Then the responsibility is very great. I remember being so placed, and I thought at times that my hair ought to have turned white that night with anxiety."