

WHEN PEGGY TRAVELED INCOG.

By ANNIE HAMILTON DONNELL.

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In the intervals of trade—and the intervals came often and lingered, when the thermometer registered 92 degrees—the clerks at Bruce's drifted together in sparse groups to talk. It was all there was to do. The notion entered the stocking counter and Old Adam—everybody at Bruce's called him Old Adam—conversed sociably with Gregory Knox. They were the oldest clerks in the store and were getting gray in the service.

"My! hot, ain't it? Stockin's ain't runnin' real spry today!" Old Adam said with a cheerful laugh. He leaned over the counter and fanned his round, red face with a "Nothin'" palm leaf.

"Well, I guess not. All the swells are out of town and poor folks can go barefoot this weather. What's the matter with you, old man? You don't look happy."

"I guess I look as peart's I feel," Gregory Knox answered.

"You're played out, sonny. What you need's a week or two off. You tackle the boss tonight and see what you can do."

A smile curved the other man's lips. It would have been a bitter smile if there had been time enough before the patient lines settled back into place. The white pallid, weary face was patient.

"I've been gettin' my courage screwed. Oh, I'll tackle him, but what's the use?" He shrugged his spare shoulders under the rusty sweater.

"You goin' to try it, Adam?"

"Me? Oh, I'm all right. I get aboard my wheel at close-up and skate out into the country a ways. Nothin' like it—not in this world! That's all the country I need. Get a wheel, man, get a wheel!"

"Again the bitter smile that lost itself in insanity. Gregory Knox was thinking of the wheel he was trying to get for Peggy. Both of the other girls had it. He had one of his whimsical fancies that perhaps his chance might come when he got to the streets of gold.

The slow afternoon crawled toward close-up. Instantly, at the stroke of 6, the clerks hurried toward the great doors that swung between them and freedom. But Gregory Knox took another walk.

"Wish you luck, old man," called Old Adam after him. But good luck looked doubtful. The boss—in Bruce's dialect—was out of temper. The heat and confinement roused him.

"Ez! A week off! Man alive, are you daff?" he cried sharply. "Don't you know we're short-handed now? The young cubs have to go—can't hold 'em in. But you old chaps are our standbys. You've had your fling."

"Yes—yes," murmured Gregory Knox absently. When had he had his fling? He was watching the boss fold up a trout pole, eyes roamed to the litter of flies and lines and sinkers on the desk. He had been thinking of a trout pole all day long—quizzical. But his head was a muddle. A little thread of shadowy water, rippling under willow trees. He gazed away out of the window, and instead of listless-moving crowds a barefoot boy with a string of trout crossed his retina.

"There, sir, that's the sweetest troutin' outfit there'll be in the Adirondacks this summer! You can't beat it," the boss said, in brotherly tone.

"No, sir—Oh, no," Gregory Knox said. "But then, it's pretty surprisin' that a string of fish you can't hold 'em in, but you old chaps are our standbys. You've had your fling."

When he turned away a moment later the boss called him back.

"Oh, I say, Knox!" he called. "I take it we can let you off for a day—say, tomorrow. We'll manage somehow. Not at all—not at all—no thanks, man! Wish you good luck."

ever is. I guess daddy'll be glad to see me and I've got enough of this place. I'm too young to flirt around with the girls and I'm too old to die in the sand with the babies. That's what I'd like—to have a little real trail and a shovel and dig. That's living. But as long as I can't, I guess I'll go home. I'm going upstairs now and pack up."

"Ma folded down the corner of a leaf to keep her place. She was used to Peggy's whims and was unastonished.

"But, Peggy, it's only half through the month—there's two whole weeks left," she said, slowly. In her heart ma was relieved. Peggy's ways were apt to be disappointing and she was sure that a week with pa, she'd be company for him, too—poor pa!

Without any objection Peggy was allowed to put her things together and go. When the train was well under way she went ahead to daddy's car to arrange him. He was sitting by himself in the front of the car. The paper bag of lunch remnants was in his hand and he was absently twisting and untwisting it. Peggy saw the tragedy coming. She got there just in time to see daddy regarding the torn bag in dismay, while fragments of ham sandwiches oozed out and dropped to the floor.

"I'll pick it up—don't stoop, daddy," she said, quickly.

"Peggy Knox" cried daddy.

"Don't mention it," she said. "I'm traveling incog," whispered Peggy. Then they both laughed and settled comfortably for the trip home. Peggy explained rather ambiguously that she thought she'd run up home for a day.

"Take my day off, you know, daddy," she said, gaily. "You won't mind having me keep house for you a day, will you? I can boil tea to perfection and I'll make you fritters for breakfast. Then I can do some shopping between things. If you're a very good old daddy indeed, I'll buy my stockings of you."

On the next morning but one daddy went down to Bruce's with a long face. It was the morning Peggy was going back to ma and the girls. He had taken it for granted and it filled him with homesick misery. It had been so pleasant to have the child at home. She had taken his lonely old heart by storm.

He hung up his hat and began mechanically straightening the boxes in one of the tiers behind the counter. He had not thought to say good morning to Adam, as usual. It was Peggy—gay little harum-scurum Peggy—daddy was thinking of.

"Oh, I say, Mr. Knox, good-day to you, sir!" some one called out to him from the back. He looked over the counter and pulled his sleeve. "I say, Knox, you don't look pulled together yet. You need another day off. Why not take—say, a fortnight, and go somewhere—say, to Europe. It'll do you good. You'll be all right when you get back. Might as well go today—why not?"

He was gone before the astonished little man behind the stocking counter had recovered himself. Old Adam was regarding him with a grin.

"Got your walkin' ticket, eh?" he drawled.

"Well, you deserve it! You won't be half a man till you get out into the woods some where and holler. Put in for all your worth—you need it! Let yourself get old, sir, for once. I'd like to see you get an engagement with my wheel. I say, man, I'm powerful glad the boss has come around. He ain't half bad. Now put on your hat and start—shoo!"

It was half past eight—there was time to get to the 10 o'clock train that was straight toward the little dark woods under the willows. There was time!—time!—time!

If Peggy had only stayed long enough to know! It would please Peggy.

On the 10 o'clock train Gregory Knox sat back in his seat and wished again that Peggy could know. He looked at his watch and graph her, but on second thought decided to wait and write from Sim's. He could tell Peggy so many things that would be interesting, then—how her Uncle Simon looked, and how the old place had stood the wear and tear of thirty years. He thought of the tall tree apples tasted as good as they used to—and if the trout were biting well, he would write Peggy a long letter—the first letter he had ever written to one of the girls. He was glad the first one would be to Peggy.

Two weeks later Gregory Knox, brown and happy, got off the train in the crowded city station. He walked away with a spry stride that fitted his little stooped figure oddly. People turned to look again at his happy face.

He could not resist the temptation to look at the stockin' counter. He saw that it was empty. He looked at the clock and saw that it was 10:15. He looked at the door and saw that it was open. He looked at the floor and saw that it was clean. He looked at the ceiling and saw that it was high. He looked at the walls and saw that they were white. He looked at the floor and saw that it was clean. He looked at the ceiling and saw that it was high. He looked at the walls and saw that they were white.

DEATHS FROM LIGHTNING

More Than One Hundred Lives Are Annually Taken This Way.

ECCENTRIC BEHAVIOR OF THUNDERBOLT

Interesting Facts and Observations Noted by the National Weather Bureau—Precautions to Be Observed.

An American periodical devoted to electrical interests recently expressed the opinion that, although much damage is done to property by lightning every year, not more than 100 lives are lost from the same cause. Hence, it was argued, there is a good deal of needless popular apprehension on this score. The conclusion is eminently correct, comments the New York Tribune, but the premises on which it is based are not altogether sound.

A report has just been issued by the United States weather bureau on the thunderstorm of 1899. It is announced that the number of fatal cases of lightning stroke in this country of which the bureau has received information was 142, and that 820 persons were struck, but did not die in consequence. Here is a total close to 1,000, and if allowance is made for unreported cases it is credible that no less than 1,500 persons are annually killed or injured by lightning in the United States annually, and that about three-eighths of them are killed outright.

It is asserted that the fatalities from this cause in 1899 were more numerous than usual. It is probable, however, that the increase is apparent rather than real, and that it simply represents improved facilities for getting information. A similar development was noticed during the first few years when tornadoes were observed and reported in this country. At least, although the lightning statistics here quoted are collected with commendable diligence and certainly possess a definite value, one should be cautious about drawing hasty inferences from a comparison of one year's figures with another's.

Of the fatal cases of 1899 about one-tenth, fifty-six, are credited to Pennsylvania, forty-one to Illinois, thirty-four to Ohio, twenty-eight to Indiana, twenty-four to Minnesota, and only twenty-three to New York. At least, however, the statistics here quoted are collected with commendable diligence and certainly possess a definite value, one should be cautious about drawing hasty inferences from a comparison of one year's figures with another's.

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