

THE WANDER-LUST.

With book and bundle on my back, and knotty staff in hand,
I fare along the dusty road through wood and meadow-land;
Or, gazing from the flying train, behold the starry night,
Or, leaning from the vessel, watch the wake of creamy white.

On, on through sleeping villages with curtained panes I pass,
By many a silent, moonlit field knee-deep in fragrant grass.
Though in some green and pleasant spot I chance a while to stay,
The fire of travel in my blood soon urges me away.

I see the flash of gilded domes beside a turquoise flood,
And vineyards purpling in the sun, and alices in the bud;
Before me from the mountain tops, by ancient tower and town,
An angel clad in golden mail, the morning, marches down.

A pilgrim of the earth am I, no narrow walls confine
My soul, as in a rusty sheath, the horizon is mine;
The joy of motion leads my feet untired o'er vale and hill,
And from the shadows and the mist new prospects beckon still.

—Four-Track News.

The Artfulness of Jeremiah, Jr.

HERE was a knock on the door of second floor side (in lodging house terms, the accent is always on the last word), and when it was opened by a gray-eyed, fluffy-haired girl of twenty, Mary—Mary of the broom and mop, of the fresh face and insinuating smile, imparted the information that her sister's youngest was "took bad." Remembering her recent attack of la grippe, in which Mary had figured as a ministering angel, second-floor-side said most heartily, "And you want to go to your sister; go right along. I shall be in until evening service, and can answer the bell just as well as not."

"Oh thank you, miss," declared the grateful Mary. "You see, miss, she won't be home till nine o'clock; would two hours be too long, miss?"

"No, indeed, stay three or four. Are many of the people in?"

"No, miss, they'll not be many rings, unless, its the top floor front, them girls is always forgetting their keys, they're that light-headed; the clove is away over Sunday; the second-floor-back is out on a case; only the second-floor-back is in." (There was a little puckering of eyebrows at this, but Mary did not notice.) "Not forgetting the top-floor-back, the night-reporter, miss, but he sleeps 'til five. And if you'd not mention it to her, miss, I think she'd not be liking me to leave the house."

Mary was assured that not for worlds would Mrs. Brown be informed, and Mary departed basement-wards. "I'll see that the fires is alright, miss," were her last words, and her smile now in the shadow of the stairway was broad and beaming for one so harassed by sudden and serious family illness.

Second-floor-back could not avoid hearing this conversation. One of his window's was up; evidently his neighbor's one window was also up. He had just come in from dinner and, as in the act of removing his coat, what could cause his sudden indignation, also that pleased chuckle, the queer pantomime and that crafty look, but seemed so ill suited to such an open, honest face? In a word, second-floor-back had been making the most diplomatic efforts to get upon speaking terms with his shy but interesting neighbor, with results, say, the usual results where a really nice girl is concerned. Here was the opportunity of a lifetime. Only an idiot would allow it to pass by. He posted himself at the window until he saw Mary's ample form disappear through the alley gate. Then he put on his hat and went downstairs.

Second-floor-side, deep in "Avery," heard the front door bang. "Thank goodness," she said. Her relief was short-lived, for in exactly ten minutes there was another bang, a masculine mounding of stairs, and next an ostentatious rattling of newspaper floated through the open windows. "Been buying a paper," she thought. She was just beginning the last fascinating chapter when there came the warning click from a radiator, not hers, for like nearly all side rooms, this was sufficiently heated from the hall.

"Oh, I'm afraid Mary forgot the steam!"

As if in affirmative came another and a sharper click, then the regular "chug-chug" of expanding iron.

"Oh dear, I'm sure she has!"

"Chug-chug, chug," came the answer, now loud enough to be located. It came from the second-floor-back.

"And it's almost like summer, today, not the slightest need of a fire!"

"Chug-chug, snap," came in corroboration. The housekeeper, pro tem, opened her door softly, and listened.

From behind closed doors came the same alarming sound, several of them, only more muffled. "That poor night-reporter," she wailed, "why did I tell Mary she could stay so long?"

"Chug-er-ty-chug—chug." That miserable radiator in the next room seem-

ed in demonic possession. She could hear the occupant adjusting the valve. "I hope he's good and mad." She might have meant the radiator.

"Chug-chug, snap!" And now came the accompanying hiss of steam from somewhere; remembering an occasion of neglect on the part of Mary's predecessor, which resulted in sopping carpets and a ruined ceiling, to say nothing of said predecessor's dismissal, second-floor-side became desperate and started pell mell for the basement.

When she opened the door of the boiler-room a cloud of steam sent her flying backward with all possible haste. The little room was nearly white with steam, which issued sputteringly from the very dangerous looking wheels, and away up in a maze of pipes near the ceiling a valve was whistling merrily. There was steam enough to heat a good-sized hotel, but of this she was ignorant, as ignorant as she was of the various wheels and rods. "Oh, if it were only a furnace!" she moaned, her eyes fairly bulging

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at the hissing, spitting monster, which seemed like some living creature ready for instant destruction of itself, of Mrs. Brown's domicile, of the entire block. She hesitated but a moment, then shutting the door, she sped up three flights of stairs, straight to the door of second-floor-back and knocked smartly. She was breathless frightened and rosy, a fact which did not escape the observation of second-floor-back, who opened his door with a face of Sabbath calm.

"I beg your pardon, but will you come quickly," she said, "something is the matter with the steam."

"Very unlike the Miss Prim who passes me in the hall with such frigid little nods," is what he wanted to say as he followed her downstairs. What he did say was, "I should think so, by the racket going on," then, very innocently, "Where's the management?"

"I, I am keeping house, you see, and I don't know the slightest thing about steam; Mary was to fix the fires all right before she left," was the troubled explanation. "There!" they were passing the big radiator of the lower hall, it seemed about bursting with concentrated energy. "Oh, do you think it will blow up?" Unconsciously she drew nearer.

Second-floor-back's smile was wicked, but the hall was dark. "Pray do not be alarmed," he said in the most assuring tone, "there must be a safety valve; that will have to blow off before any serious danger can threaten. But do not come down. I know a little about steam, I'll get things fixed."

"But I'd rather not stay, stay alone," and she led the way down the narrow basement stairs. "Here is the door, just see the steam! Are you sure it is safe to go in?"

The steam already hid his face.

"Absolutely, don't feel troubled about me," came the cheerful reply. "Ah, it's a Winchester," his voice expressed great surprise. "How lucky! And every draught open, and the water gauge, too," surprise gave way to amazement. He screwed up two small

wheels, the hissing stopped and the air began to clear.

Second-floor-back watched him breathlessly as he moved about, shutting a door here, opening one there, pulling a rod, and lastly opening the feed door, from which the fire, burned to a white heat, sent out a rush of hot air.

"How easy it all looks! You get to work as if you, you—"

"Were in the business? So I am." He fumbled in his vest pocket and presented a small card. It bore the announcement of

Norcross Brothers,
Plumbing and Heating,
Represented by Jeremiah J. Penrose,
Jr.

"How lucky that you were in." She accepted the card, also the chair that Jeremiah, Jr., brought from the laundry. "I cannot think what made Mary go off and leave it. It was very careless."

"Very," was the emphatic reply. "Now watch the indicator, fifteen, fourteen, fourteen-and-a-half; see how quickly it goes down. We'll let it cool off to about three pounds, then I'll have to put on a little more coal, the life is burned out of this." Fifteen minutes later, the heater having been declared tractable, they went upstairs.

"I really don't know how to thank you," she told him gratefully.

"I do," was the unexpected reply. "You've never lived in Boston before, have you?"

"How do you know?" It was her turn to look surprised.

"Oh, by the way you treat us all, as though we were thieves or cut-throats, especially myself."

Second-floor-back laughed. "Is it as bad as that? Mother was particular to—"

"I know; I came from a small place myself. You'll get over it; for really there are lots of nice people here; and you won't cut me dead the next time you meet me? Honestly I never wanted to know any one as much as I do you."

"Why?" was her unexpected question.

"Why? why, because." His confusion prevented everything but the old childish reason.

"Just because?"

He felt she was laughing at him, and squaring his shoulders, he looked her straight in the eyes. "Well," he said soberly, "there are three reasons, one is, I like to overcome a prejudice, you were prejudiced against me?" She nodded, and there was a gleam of fun in her eyes. "You were so, so—"

"I know, I was too anxious to get acquainted, you mean. I hope I am going to be forgiven?" He waited a moment. Her smile was reassuring. "The second reason—I thought you were sometimes tired and homesick, and needed cheering up. I did not know, and yet I did know. Can you understand such a contradiction?"

"Yes, and you are very kind. I am tired, awfully, sometimes, my work is new to me; as for being homesick," she swallowed hard, and Jeremiah, Jr., looked considerably out of the window of the parlor, where they had paused to talk, until she said: "But you haven't told me the third reason?"

He shook his head. "I don't think I can, now."

There was something in his "now" that caused her to change the subject. "We'll not tell on Mary, will we?" she asked.

"No, indeed, she might lose her place. I am not sure," continued he, artfully, "that we had better mention it to Mary—that she forgot the fire, I mean. Of course she thought she left it all right."

"That is so, it might make her feel badly, and thanks to you, no harm was done. Goodby," for they were at their landing.

"Goodby—Miss—" there was a challenge in his voice.

"Miss Noble, Amy Noble." She laughed and went into her room. "A thief and cut-throat, how ridiculous!" she said behind her closed door there.

"He is nice." She was still smiling, when looking from her window she saw Mary ahead of time and not alone. A stalwart fellow in shining Sunday apparel was following her into the yard and he had that air which plainly suggested that he had come to spend the evening. "That's why Mary forgot," was Miss Amy Noble's wise conclusion.

But that is not all of the story? Oh, no. There were weekly installments, a cunningly arranged tete-a-tete in Mrs. Brown's cosy parlor, a chance meeting on the street after office hours, occasionally the theater or a concert, and then Jeremiah, Jr., had his mother and sister down for a few days, ostensibly for the Easter services, but the end, beg pardon, the beginning, came sooner than the one most interested dared hope. Norcross Bros., decided to open a branch establishment in B—a flourishing little town twenty miles out, and Penrose was selected to take charge.

"It means living out there, I suppose?" he asked the senior member with whom he was talking.

"Yes, it would scarcely pay you to go back and forth. Why, what's the

matter?" noticing the puzzled lines upon his employe's face.

"Why, living there; that's the sticker just now," confessed Jeremiah, Jr.

"Oh, that's it! Well, can't you take her along? Of course we expect to give you a raise." Then followed a conversation relating solely to dollars and cents, with the result that on the following Sunday afternoon the occupant of the second floor side was beguiled into a trip to B—to see "a neat little job we have just finished."

They found the new cottage a marvel of modern architecture, and Miss Amy Noble's appreciation was evidenced by delighted little "Ohs" and "Ahs." After explaining the latest improvements above cellar, Jeremiah, Jr., said: "Now let us take a look at the heater."

"Why, how nice and wide the stairs are! Rather an improvement upon Mrs. Brown's, and how nice and light the cellar is. Why, it's a Winchester." She read the name and date aloud.

"Of course; do you suppose I'd have anything else?"

"You? Is this your house?"

There was a pause, then Jeremiah, Jr., said: "That is for you to decide."

She could not fail to understand his meaning. She did not exactly feel faint, but somehow she wanted to sit down. He anticipated her wish and dragged up a box which the carpenters had left. It was large enough for two.

"Here is the proposition," Jeremiah, Jr., tried to make his voice business-like. "I have been assigned to this place. I can rent this house for \$20 a month. I earn \$25 a week—and have a little nest-egg besides. Can you, will you—little girl, say something to me?" he begged.

Like most girls, Amy Noble had her own plans and specifications regarding the proposal which the only man in the world, when he came, was to make to her. This, it must be confessed, did not bear a striking resemblance to said proposal; but the voice in her ear was terribly in earnest; she dared not look up, for she knew his eyes were even more terribly in earnest; moreover, the hand that had just closed on hers was big, strong and firm; there was something in it to clasp. But why continue? Amy Noble was a sensible girl and made up her mind in exactly thirty seconds. "And this is that other reason, the one you would not tell me?" she asked in a very low voice.

"That I loved you almost from the first? Yes, I have read of such things. I rather think I laughed at them—until you came."

They were married in early autumn, but it was not until a chilly night in October when the master of the new house was getting up steam for the first time that he made his little confession. The fire was going merrily, and he had explained the intricacies of the heater, in the event of his being absent any length of time.

"There, I think that is all I can hold in my head for the first lesson. I shall get it all mixed up if you tell me any more," the new mistress declared.

"Mrs. Jerry"—this is what he delighted to call her—his voice was solemn, and he dropped down on one knee in a droll attempt at supplication. "Mrs. Jerry, I am reminded of something I must tell you."

Her eyes danced in a way he particularly approved.

"I believe you know exactly what I am going to say," he declared in chagrin.

"Certainly," her voice took on mock severity, "that you opened the draughts of Mrs. Brown's heater, that day."

Jeremiah, Jr., collapsed, mentally and physically, and Mrs. Jerry's laughter rang out musically. "Oh, Jerry, do get up; you are getting yourself covered with dust."

"Never mind the dust," he said, as he scrambled up from all fours. "Now, madam, will you kindly inform me how, when and where you found me out?"

"The very next day, sir, when I saw Mary. You were not cute enough to leave things exactly as you found them; then I was silly enough to drop the card you gave me. 'Murder will out!'"

"How did you explain matters?"

"Oh, I let her think you must have been burning up old letters, or something."

"Mrs. Jerry, you should have been a man! Your shrewdness would have earned you nothing short of Washington. Honestly now, weren't you afraid to trust yourself to such a base deceiver?"

It might have been what she said, it might have been her way of saying it; however that may be, Mrs. Jerry suddenly found herself picked up bodily, and carried off through the "nice clean cellar," over the "nice, wide stairs," through the spotless kitchen, and into the cosy sitting-room. At first she kicked and struggled, then she laughed, and then, she did exactly what was proper under the circumstances, she put her two plump white arms around a firm, brown

column of a neck and "held on for dear life," until she was deposited in her pet rocking chair.—American Cultivator.

"CREEPING" RAILROAD TRACKS.

Conditions Under Which Rails Work Along Beneath the Trains.

That rails, apparently tired of lying still in the same place, sometimes emulate the trains that pass over them by starting off on excursions of their own, is a fact well known to railroad men. The lengthwise motion of the rail, while of course very slow, is often irresistible; nothing avails to stop it. Authorities differ regarding causes and remedies, and according to the Railway Age a recent exhaustive study of civil engineers does not seem to have settled the question. Says a writer in that paper:

"We knew better before, and scarcely know more now, that rails creep with the direction of traffic except on heavy grades; that trestles and unstable embankments are favorable to the creeping of rails; that rails creep more under fast traffic or a heavy traffic than they do under a slow or a light traffic.

"There are several points upon which there is a virtual agreement, and these consist, first, in ascribing the creeping of rails largely to an unstable condition of the track, which arises from two causes—a loose foundation and the comparative shortness of the pieces of rail. Indeed, several of the men who discussed the question lay particular emphasis upon this point, and even Mr. Lidenthal, who does not believe thoroughly in this theory, admits that discontinuous high, stiff girders on solid continuous bearings, probably would creep less than the present form of track.

"There is absolute agreement on the futility of spiking in slot holes, or frequent strap connections with the cross-ties, for any but the least serious cases, and the only practicable method now suggested is one which long has been in practice, and is the insertion of a split point in the rail, with substitute rails of varying lengths to suit the changed conditions.

"One correspondent names a case where the track was carried over a swamp on a gravel embankment from six to eight feet high, and here the splice plates were broken at the center and the rails separated from six to twelve inches; where the plates failed to break, the bolts were sheared off, and this gentleman, F. S. Stevens, ascribes the trouble not wholly to the swamp, but quite as much to the general looseness of the track construction.

"This is a view so largely taken in the discussion that the observer must be impressed by it, and the cure resolves itself merely into a better form of track construction. It must be many years before any great improvement in method can take place, but with so many criticisms of our prevailing forms—short rails, isolated supports, inefficient spikes and insufficient splices—there would seem to be a growing sentiment for the greater stability which will attach to a continuously supported rail."

CAT'S LONG RIDE ON ENGINE.

Animal Perched Underneath Refused to Be Dislodged.

The driver of the 9:15 p. m. mail train from Paddington to Swindon had an unauthorized passenger on his engine, says the London Express, and he believes that he will be lucky for the rest of his life in consequence.

Just before the train was due out the driver went beneath his engine with his oil can. Suddenly the oil can dropped from his hand. He scrambled out hurriedly and told his comrades that he had seen a pair of fiery eyes glaring at him from the darkness.

Investigation with the aid of a lamp revealed a black cat, which had taken up a position between the engine and tender. The cat was invited to come forth, but declined to move. A cleaner went beneath the engine and made an attack upon the position, but the cat had the advantage of higher ground, and repelled with such good effect that the cleaner retired in confusion.

An attack by porters with mops was easily beaten off. The driver blew his whistle and let off steam, but without effect. Even the tempting lure of a saucerful of milk was treated with scorn.

"Time" was up, and the 9:15 started with the cat still in position. When he reached Swindon the driver found it in the same place, covered with oil and coal dust, but still defiant.

When the train returned to Paddington next morning the feline traveler alighted, bedraggled but triumphant. With something like a swagger he walked past the astounded porters and collectors, and disappeared in Eastbourne terrace, to tell the tale of his 154-mile journey to his friends.

A Cannibalistic Invitation.

Mary Jackowski came to the door to call her brother to supper.

"Michael Jackowski," she shrieked out, "come in and eat yourself. Your mother she's on the table and your father he's half et already."—Judge.



"WOULD TWO HOURS BE TOO LONG?"