

My life is full of scented fruits,
My garden blooms with stocks and
cloves;
Yet o'er the wall my fancy shoots,
And hankers after harsher loves.
Ah! why—my foolish heart repines—
Was I not housed within a waste?
These velvet flowers and syrup vines
Are sweet, but are not to my taste.
A howling moor, a wattled hut,
A piercing smoke of sodden peat,
The savor of a russet nut,
Would make my weary pulses beat.
O stupid brain that blindly swerves!
O heart that strives not, nor endures!
Since flowers are hardships to your nerves,
Thank heaven a garden-lot is yours!
—Edmund Gosse, in the Athenæum.

SAM'S STRATEGY.

She was very pretty, this bright-eyed New England damsel. Fred Jones had loved her ever since they were children together, and Captain Logan, who had come down to spend a few weeks with his cousins, the Kendricks, had become so fond of those bright blue eyes and golden hair that he prolonged his visit.

"Pon my word, she's a regular beauty," said the captain, staring through the tiny window panes at the retreating figure of Miss Brown.

Fred Jones looked quickly up at him, as if he would have liked to knock him over in the fireplace, but he refrained from any such demonstration.

"A beauty," went on the captain, "and it's a thousand pities she should be wasted on any of the country bumpkins who vegetate among these wildernesses. Sam, you young villain, are those boots of mine blacked yet?"

Farmer Kendrick's hired boy, who had just come in to warm his purple hands at the merry red blaze, looked glum.

"No, they ain't," said Sam, crossly. "Well, what's the reason?"

"Cause I ain't 'ad time." "See you find time, then, and that quick, too," said the captain. And Sam glowered after him as he went gaily up the stairs.

"Just wish I had the firin' of him out," said the boy, gloomily. "It's 'Sam, do this,' and 'Sam, do that,' and 'Sam, where's the warm water?' and 'Sam, what the deuce do you mean by lettin' my fire go out?' and not a red cent has he giv me yet—no, nor so much as a pleasant word. I wonder if he means to stay here always."

The next night came—a perfect night for sleighing expeditions and rustic love-making, the roads hard and well packed and a glorious moon shining down whitely, as if a rain of silver were deluging the whole world.

"Couldn't be better weather," said the captain. "Sam, where are the sleigh-bells?"

"Dunno," said Sam. "There's them old jinglers in the garret that used to belong to Deacon Joe Kendrick that was in the Revolutionary war, and there's the two cow-bells that Mary Jane might scour up with ashes—"

"Pshaw!" said the Captain. "Do you take me for Rip Van Winkle? There's a pretty little string somewhere, for I saw them when Mrs. Kendrick went out day before yesterday."

"I hain't seen nothin' on 'em," said Sam, stolidly.

"Come, come, Sam, don't make yourself out any stupider than you be by nature," said the farmer, laughing nevertheless, for the captain's airs were fast wearing out his welcome, and he secretly sympathized with the much abused Sam.

"I guess they're out in the barn chamber. You better go with him, captain, if you expect to find 'em—our Sam's dreadful thick-headed when he chooses to be."

"Come along, my fine fellow," said the captain, collaring Sam, and marching him off in the direction of the old red barn. "We don't need any lan-

tern in this moonlight, that is one comfort."

"Where are the stairs?" demanded the captain as they entered the barn. "Ain't none," said Sam, "it's a ladder."

"Up with you, then," said Logan, but Sam shrunk back.

"I wouldn't, not for \$50," said Sam. "Old John Kendrick hanged himself from the middle beam fourteen years ago, and folks say he stands up there with a rope round his neck every moonlight night."

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried the captain in accents of contempt. "You cowardly lout, stay where you are, then, and I'll go myself."

He sprang lightly up the rounds of the ladder and disappeared through the trap door.

"Where is it?" he called. "The ghost? Right under the middle beam by the windy was the place where—"

"Blockhead! I mean the string of bells."

"Look for 'em yourself," said Sam, sulkily. "I don't know where they be, and what's more, I don't care."

"I'll settle with you, my fine fellow, when I come down," said the captain, threateningly, as he groped about in the dim light which came through a cobweb-draped window at either end of the barn chamber.

"Don't hurry yourself, cap'n," rejoined Sam, in a jeering tone.

As the captain plunged into a dark corner there was a jingle and the string of bells suspended from a nail, hit him directly on the neck, so like the grasp of death-cold fingers that he could not but start.

"Oh!" said the captain nervously. "Here they are. Catch 'em Sam! Hallo! Where's the trap door?"

And it took the worthy captain fully sixty seconds or more to realize that the trap door was closed and fastened on the lower side. He rushed to the window and threw it up only to see Sam speeding up the hill.

"Hal-lo-o-a!" yelled Capt. Logan. "Come back, you scoundrel!—you ill-conditioned lout!—you imp of evil!"

Sam turned around and executed that peculiar gyration of the fingers in connection with the nasal organ, which is supposed to express the extremity of scorn.

"You'll find the ladder on the barn floor, cap'n," hooted this young rebel, "an' don't be afraid of the ghost; it's very harmless if you let it alone."

"But, Sam—Sam, come back! I'm to be at Mr. Brown's at 7:30."

"Don't worry!" bawled Sam. "Miss Carrie won't wait long before Mr. Fred'll be on hand."

The captain danced up and down on the floor in an ecstasy of rage as Sam disappeared over the crest of the hill. He knew very well if he possessed the lungs of Boreas he could make no one hear.

He sat shivering down on the hay, starting nervously at the sound of horses' feet below, and thinking how disagreeably a bar of moonlight which streamed down from a crack in the roof, resembled a tall, white figure standing under the center beam. He could almost fancy the rope round its neck. Pshaw! And the captain jumped up again, with starting dew on his temples, even in the freezing atmosphere of the barn chamber.

"What is to be done?" he asked himself. And echo, if echo had had any common sense, would have answered: "Just nothing at all!"

Sam had outwitted him. And pretty Carrie and Fred Jones, with his red cutter and great chestnut-colored horse! The captain was wild at the thought, surely he was vanquished.

"I won't wait another minute for him," said Carrie Brown, coloring up, with the tears in her blue eyes. "Go on, girls, I shall spend the evening at home."

"There's plenty of room for you in our sleigh, Carrie," coaxed her brother. "Bessie Andrews will be

glad to have you along."

"No, she wont either," pouted Carrie. "As if I would spoil all her fun! No; if I can't have an escort of my own I'll stay at home and mend stockings; and I never, never will speak to Capt. Logan again."

Charlie Brown was on the point of arguing the matter with his sister, when the door opened and in walked Fred Jones.

"Not gone yet, Carrie? Where is the captain?"

"I don't know," said Carrie, tartly. "and I don't care. Am I Capt. Logan's keeper?"

"Will you go with me?"

"Yes, I will," said Carrie, her eyes lighting and shy smiles dimpling her face.

"Of course," said Fred. "I can't expect to make myself as agreeable as the city captain, but—"

"The captain, the captain!" cried Carrie, a little irritably. "I'm sick of the sound of his name. I never want to see him again. What a nice new cutter this is, and how easy the wolf robes are!"

"Carrie," whispered Fred, as he touched up the horses and felt her nestling close to him, "is it for always?"

"Yes, always," she answered.

"Jerusalem!" said Farmer Kendrick. It was past 10 o'clock at night, and the old gentleman had come out as usual before retiring to rest to see that the dumb members of his family were all safe and comfortable. "I do believe that's old John Kendrick's ghost come to life again, poundin' like all possessed on the barn chamber floor!"

"It's me-e! It's me-e!" bawled the captain. "Unfasten the trap door and let me out!"

Slowly the farmer lifted the ladder to its place. With rheumatic awkwardness he climbed the creaking rounds and undid the hook from its hasp.

"How in all creation came you here?" he demanded. "Why, I thought you was out a-sleigh ridin' with the gals."

"It was all the doing of that villain, Sam!" gasped the infuriated captain, his teeth chattering with mingled rage and cold. "I won't stand this sort of thing. I'll leave the place to-morrow."

"As you please," said the farmer, to whom the prospect of losing his guest was not unpleasant. "I'm dreadful sorry this should have happened, though, and I'll talk seriously to Sam."

"So will I," gnashed the captain. "I'll break every bone in his body."

But Sam had taken particular care to go over to his grandmother's, six miles across the snowy fields, to spend the night, and the only person the captain saw was old Mrs. Kendrick sitting by the kitchen fire.

"You've lost your chance, captain," said she, good humoredly. "Dorcas Smith has just gone by on her way home from the sleighing party and she says Fred Jones brought Carrie Brown in his new cutter, and they're engaged."

The captain left next day, and Mrs. Fred Jones has never seen him since. And when the affair came off Sam got a piece of wedding cake big enough to give him the dyspepsia for a week. —Boston News.

Endowment Order That Won't Last.

Mrs. Hicks—Do you and your husband belong to one of the mutual societies?

Mrs. Dix—No; what gave you that idea?

Mrs. Hicks—Husband said he thought you were charter members of a mutual admiration society.—New York Herald.

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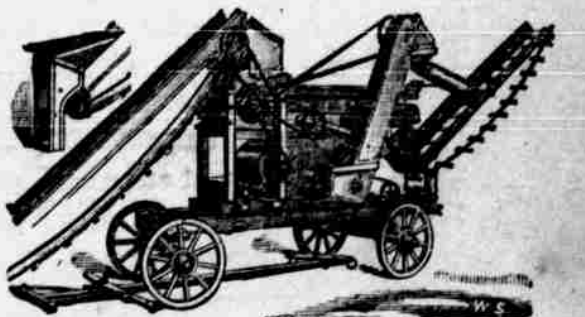
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