

TENDER THOUGHTS.

I hear the wind, I hear the rain, I see the lightning's fiery chain, The storm is swelling through the trees, The waves are roaring on the seas; I hear the awful thunder crash That follows on the lightning's flash— But though all things seem to creep, I cannot think of aught but thee.

HAND CAR 412, C. P. R.

For the last hour the construction train had been traveling slowly; for a whole hour it had cautiously stumbled over the loosened splines with a monotonous chugging clug, chunky clunk that had long ceased to awaken any interest, sympathetic or otherwise, in our drowsy minds.

But the time passed, the train still waited, and we began to feel stoutly, wondering why, in the name of various places and things, they chose to dally in such a dismal, godforsaken spot. It was raining at Rat Crossing; in fact it had been raining slowly, steadily, for two days with a certain desperate pertinacity.

Notwithstanding this lavish excess of water the air seemed no fresher than before the storm, when the thermometer in the caboose registered 57 degs. on the shady side of the track.

The view from the car was not interesting. To the left, as far as we could see, a "usual" endless, unfolding curtain of rain, a "usual" misty swamp stretched away to the south.

The first six miles passed quickly; to right and left the road and the trees flew back, and nothing was heard but the short, quick panting of the engine, the rattle of the wheels over the fish plates.

When they came back they found Jim Reeves' body by the broken lever of the switch; Long Mike, too, they picked up beside him, with a shattered leg and an ugly gash across the forehead.

"I tell you, Morton, that man Matt Murphy was the biggest coward that ever walked this earth, now don't you forget it!"

"That's a—— lie!" The speaker, Jack Collins, was the quietest man on the staff and had acquired a certain reputation for minding nobody's business but his own.

For a moment after his usually emphatic denial no one spoke; the stranger had risen at once, but seeing that Jack did not move he sat down again, filled a fresh pipe, and waited. Jack was sitting on the floor at the end of the car looking down, pensively at the revolver that hung from his belt; after a short pause he looked up at the ceiling, and in his usual slow way he told us the story of Matt Murphy's last work on the road.

It had happened two years before; Murphy was then road master at Campbell's Point, and far from being thought a coward, he was looked upon as the only man on the line who had pluck enough to run a snow plow at the head of five engines into a choked cut, and stand firm when every plank fairly quivered under the strain.

"There's a bush fire below the long bridge, Mr. Murphy," he called out; "the wind is this way, and the Pacific Emigrant is due in an hour. What the devil shall we do?"

"Drunk, you blamed idiot!" cried Nolan indignantly; "his wife and kids are on that train. Get out of here, you scanted squirrel, and blame quick, too, or I'll make your empty head so blessed sore you couldn't see daylight through a leader!"

"Boys," he cried in a voice that seemed to rasp in his throat, "boys, look a-here! I want three good men to go to hell with me! I'll haul up a pump—!"

He was the first on the car and took the rear handle behind the brake; Long Mike the Finlander, Jim Reeves and "Dumb Dick" jumped on after him, an oil can, a monkey wrench and an ax were thrown on; the men gave them a shove to start, and away they went down the long grade, fifteen miles an hour.

Instinctively—for they merely knew that there was a fire below the bridge and that the train was soon due—instinctively Murphy's three companions had understood what he had before them. They were old hands and knew that this was a desperate venture, a forlorn hope, and that their only chance of success lay in their working well together.

Matt leaned over and slipped the key of the switch to Jim Reeves, who was in front. "If we haven't time to unlock her, Jim," he said so quietly that it hurt the ears to hear him, "jump on the lever and break the chain. Now, fellows, heave away for all you're worth!"

The top of the grade was reached; then came a level run of two miles before the curve to the bridge. Ahead of them on each side of the track the workmen, apprehending some disaster from the enormous volume of smoke that was blowing toward them in purple clouds rimmed with golden sunlight, had assembled before the Falls station; and as Murphy's gang came along, up and down, up and down, every man in that crowd felt his eyes grow moist and his throat dry.

"Boys," he said, "that gang's a-goin' to everlastin' destruction as plucky as any fellows I ever see, every blamed man of them, and I'll bet a barrel of high-wines to a cup of tea they know it, too. Matt Murphy knows it, sure."

For once, although they had their customary effect of bearing prompt compliance with his orders, Dan's threats were superfluous; for once his wishes coincided with the wishes of his men, and from those 500 throats there burst such a cry that the flames ahead seemed to halt for a moment in their forward rush.

the very midst of it. Then the struggle began. The smoke ran along the embankment toward them in great flying gusts, so dense they could barely see the platform of the car; the heat became intense, but they never wavered. Perhaps it was because women were few in the dismal country which had become their home, and that, as is usual in purely male communities, every man invested the gentler sex collectively with a romantic halo, in exact proportion to the distance of their individuality; perhaps it was because some lingering spark of chivalry, driven into the west by the sneers of a higher civilization, had flamed up suddenly in the hearts of these rough journeymen; or perhaps it was merely the humane hope of saving the wives and children of men who had slept under the same blanket, worked in the same ditch, and shared the same biscuit; but, whatever the cause, it was sufficient to silence selfish consideration and make them look upon the sacrifice of their lives as no more than the fulfillment of a necessary duty.

"Steady, boys, steady!" they plunged into it resolutely with the desperation of a wounded bull charging on the spade's blade. "Steady, my men! Up and down, up and down! Stick to her, lads; it'll soon be over now!"

Then the flames closed upon them, and as they lowered their heads before the whirlwind of fire and smoke that was hurled at them they shivered at the crisp precipitation of their hair and beard and felt the hot grip of the fire fasten on them as they writhed in pain. Something struck the car and it reeled for a moment.

"Steady, boys, steady there!" They grasped the handles again and struggled on; by the hollow sound of the wheels they knew that they were on the bridge at last, and it lent them fresh strength. Then something struck them again. "Hard, hard at work there! Jim, Mike, Dick, all of you—pump away, for God's sake, boys! you are nearly there. Turn the handle, and the lever will do the switch! All together now, heave!"

When they came back they found Jim Reeves' body by the broken lever of the switch; Long Mike, too, they picked up beside him, with a shattered leg and an ugly gash across the forehead.

"You want to know where I heard all this?" he asked. "Oh! I am 'Dumb Dick.' To be frank with you, boys, I have been a special detective on the C. P. R. for several years, and if you're going to be honest, my contract is up as soon as I have handed over Mr. James Bowles over there. Don't you move!"

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They Prefer Chinese Husbands. Now you will be surprised when I tell you that the ambition of every Hawaiian girl is to become 15 years old and marry a Chinaman.

Death to Malaria. A decidedly hard frost always puts an end, for that season, to the danger of exposure to malarial influence in the region where it occurs.

A DESPAIR STRUCK CHILD.

A Little Boy's First Taste of Life's Bitterness—Aude Awakening. Everywhere the gloomy truth of Schopenhauer's summary of life is felt and seen, but it remained for a Detroit small boy aged 3 years to work out the last analysis of the mockery and the misery of this existence.

His fond mamma was gone down town. The small boy sat on one of the steps to his paternal avenue home in impatient waiting for that fond mamma's return. The moments sped and she came not. To the untutored soul of that small boy seconds expanded into ages—nay, eons of time. The intervals between horse cars (on one of which the looked for mother was to come) fulfilled the child's conception of unlimited duration—by which phrase the old arithmeticians defined eternity.

Overpressure in the Schools. Passing to the main question, overpressure in the schools is a fact to the same degree that overpressure in other departments of American life is a fact. Here I see no reason to throw aside or modify the conclusion that I have drawn in my previous articles, which is the substance: Our inherited Saxon push, our national environment, our boundless opportunities, and our free institutions, in respect to courage, audacity, enterprise, and many forms of achievement, make us a people by ourselves.

Journalism is for the Young. The prominent figures here at the heads of the great metropolitan journals are, almost without exception, men in their prime. Bennett is very little, if any, more than 30. Pulitzer has in a gray hair in his head. Whiteley is in about the same quarter with both of these. Dana is old, but Amos Cummings, who edits The Evening Sun and is really the moving spirit there, is still a young man. George Jones is not yet past his prime. John Cockerill is still young, and Eggleston, who edits The Commercial Advertiser, is grizzled about the temples, but still on the right side of the hill, and his staff are all very young men.

Things Asked of Actors. John Drew was shown a letter in which the authorship of "The Taming of the Shrew" is attributed to Augustin Daly. Mr. Drew said he was not very much surprised. "Why, the other day in New York," continued the comedian, "a real estate broker to whom I was introduced said: 'If I could talk as well in my business as you do in yours, Mr. Drew, I would be a rich man. I can't understand how you manage to think of all those funny things just on the spur of the moment.'"

Consumption of Railroad Spikes. There are 200,000 miles of railroad in the United States and it takes five kegs of railroad spikes per mile to keep up repairs, which makes an annual consumption of 1,000,000 kegs. To this must be added three and a half tons per mile for the 12,000 miles of new road which is built annually.—Chicago Herald.

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