

## THE OLD FARM.

Out in the meadows the farm-house lies,  
Old and gray, and fronting the west.  
Many a swallow thither flies,  
Twittering under the evening skies.  
In the old chimneys builds her nest.  
Ah! how the sounds make our old hearts swell!  
Send them again on an eager quest;  
Bid the sweet winds of heaven tell  
Those we have loved so long and well  
Come again home to the dear old nest.  
When the gray evening, cool and still,  
Flushes the brain and heart to rest,  
Memory comes with a joyous thrill,  
Brings the young children back at will,  
Calls them all home to the gray old nest.  
Patient we wait till the golden morn  
Rise on our weariness half-confessed;  
Till, with the chill and darkness gone,  
Hope shall arise with another dawn,  
And a new day to the sad old nest.  
Soon shall we see all the eager east  
Bright with the Day-star, at Heaven's be-  
hest;  
Soon, from the bondage of clay released,  
Kiss to the Palace the King's own feast,  
Birds of flight from the last year's nest.  
—Clara B. Tronebridge.

## "LAL" RYDQUIST;

## A Story of the Land and Sea.

BY WALTER DEBANT AND JAMES RICE.

True Love and Woman's Devotion—Heroic Self-Sacrifice—The Happy Reward of Sorrow Borne Bravely, of Faith, Loyalty, Courage and Patient Trust.

(From All the Year Round.)

## CHAPTER I.

## THE MESSAGE OF THE MUTE.

Perhaps the most eventful day in the story of which I have to tell was that on which the veil of doubt and misery which had hung before the eyes of Lal Rydquist for three long years was partly lifted. It was so eventful that I venture to relate what happened on that day first of all, even though it tells half the story at the very beginning. That we need not care much to consider, because, although it is the story of a great calamity long dreaded and happily averted, it is a story of sorrow borne bravely, of faith, loyalty and courage. A story such as one loves to tell, because, in the world of fiction, at least, virtue should always triumph, and true hearts be rewarded. Wherefore, if there be any who love to read of the mockeries of fate, the wasting of good women's love, the success of craft and treachery, instances of which are not wanting in the world, let them go elsewhere, or make a Christmas tale for themselves, and their joy bells, if they like it, shall be the funeral knell, and their howls a dirge beside the grave of ruined and despairing innocence, and for their feast they may have the bread and water of affliction.

The name of the girl of whom we are to speak was Alicia Rydquist, called by all her friends Lal; the place of her birth and home was a certain little-known suburb of London, called Rotherhithe. She was not at all an aristocratic person, being nothing but the daughter of a Swedish sea captain, and an English wife. Her father was dead, and, after his death, the widow kept a Captains' boarding-house, which of late, for reasons which will presently appear, had greatly risen in repute.

The day which opens my story, the day big with fate, the day from which everything that follows in Lal's life, whether that be short or long, will be dated, was the fourteenth of October, in the grievous year of rain and ruin, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-nine. And though the summer was that year clean forgotten, so that there was no summer at all, but only the rain and cold of a continual and ungracious April, yet there were vouchsafed a few gracious days of consolation in the autumn, whereof this was one, in which the sun was as bright and warm as if he had been doing his duty like a British sailor all the summer long.

At eleven o'clock in the forenoon both the door and the window belonging to the kitchen of the last house of the row, called "Seven Houses," were standing open for the air and the sunshine.

As to the window, which had a warm south aspect, it looked upon a churchyard. A grape vine grew upon the side of the house, and some of its branches trailed across the upper panes, making a green drapery which was pleasant to look upon, though none of its leaves this year were able to grow to their usual generous amplitude, by reason of the ungenerous season.

It is difficult to explain why this churchyard, more than others, is a pleasant spot; partly, perhaps, on account of the bright and cheerful look of the place in which it stands; then, there are not many graves in it, and these are mostly covered or honored by gray tombstones, partly moss-grown. On this day the sunshine fell upon them gently, with intervals of shifting shade through the branches; and though the place around was beset with noises, yet, as these were always the same, and never ceased except at night, they were not regarded by those who lived there, and so the churchyard seemed full of peace and quiet. The dead men who lie there are of that blameless race who venture themselves upon the unquiet ocean. The dead women are the wives of the men, their anxieties now over and done. When such men are gone, they are, for the most part, spoken of with good will, because they have never harmed any others but themselves, and have been kind-hearted to the weak. And so, from all these causes together, from the trees and the sunshine, and the memory of the dead sailors, it is a churchyard which suggested peaceful thoughts.

At all events it did not sadden the children when they came out from the school, built in one corner of it, nor did its presence ever disturb or sadden the mind of the girl who was making a pudding in the kitchen. There were sparrows in the branches, and in one tree sat a blackbird, now and then, late as it was, delivering himself of one note, just to remind himself of the past, and to keep his voice in practice against next spring.

The girl was fair to look upon, and while she made her pudding, with sleeves turned back and flecks of white flour upon her white arms, and a white apron tied round her waist, stretching from chin to feet like a child's pinafore or a long bib, she sang snatches of songs, yet finished none of them, and when you came to look closer into her face you saw that her cheeks were thin and her eyes sorrowful, and that her lips trembled from time to time. Yet she was not thinking out her sad thoughts to their full capabilities of bitterness, as some women are wont to do—as, in fact, her own mother had done for close upon twenty years, and was still doing, having a like cause for plaint and lamentation; only the sad thoughts came and went across her mind, as birds fly across a garden, while she continued deftly and swiftly to carry on her work.

At this house, which was none other than the well-known Captains' boarding-house, sometimes called "Rydquist's, of Rotherhithe," the puddings and pastry were her special and daily charge. The making of puddings is the poetry of simple cookery. One is born, not made, for puddings. To make a pudding worthy of the name requires not only that special gift of nature, a light and cool hand, but also a clear intelligence and the power of concentrated attention, a gift in itself, as many lament when the sermon is over and they remember none of it. If the thoughts wander, even for a minute, the work is ruined. The instinctive feeling of right proportion in the matter of flour, lemon-peel, currants, sugar, allspice, eggs, butter, bread-crumbs, the natural eye for color, form and symmetry, which are required before one can ever begin even to think of becoming a maker of puddings, are all lost and thrown away, unless the attention is fixed resolutely upon the progress of the work. Now, there was one pudding, a certain kind of plum-duff, made by these hands, the recollection of which was wont to fill the hearts of those Captains who were privileged to eat of it with tender yearnings whenever they thought upon it, whether far away on southern seas, or on the broad Pacific, or in the shallow Baltic; and it nerved their hearts when battling with the gales while yet a thousand knots at least lay between their plunging bows and the Commercial Docks, to think that they were homeward bound, and that Lal would greet them with that pudding.

As the girl rolled her dough upon the white board and looked thoughtfully upon the little heaps of ingredients, she sang, as I have said, little scraps of songs; but this was just as a man at work, as a carpenter at his bench or a cobbler over his boot, will whistle scraps of tunes, not because his mind is touched with the beauty of the melody, but because this little action relieves the tension of the brain for a moment without diverting the attention or disturbing the current of thought. She was dressed—behind the big apron—in a cotton print, made up by her own hands, which were as clever with the needle as with the rolling-pin. It was a dress made of a sympathetic stuff—there are many such tissues in every draper's shop—which, on being cut out, sewn up and converted into a feminine garment, immediately proceeds, of its own accord, to interpret and illustrate the character of its owner; so that for a shrew it becomes draggle-tailed, and for a lady careless of her figure, or conscious that it is no longer any use pretending to have a figure, it rolls itself up in unlovely folds, or becomes a miracle of flatness; and for a lady of stiff temperament it arranges itself into stiff vertical lines, and for an old lady, if she is a nice old lady, it wrinkles itself into ten thousand lines, which cross and recross each other like the lines upon her dear old face; and all to bring her more respect and greater consideration; but for a girl whose figure is tall and well-formed, this accommodating material becomes as clinging as the ivy, and its lines are every one of them an exact copy of Hogarth's line of beauty, due allowance being made for the radius of curvature.

I do not think I can give a better or clearer account of this maiden's dress, even if I were to say how-much-and-eleven-pence-three-farthings it was a yard and where it was bought.

That is what she had on. As for herself, she was a tall girl; her figure was slight and graceful, yet she was strong; her waist measured just exactly the same number of inches as that of her grandmother Eve, whom she greatly resembled in beauty. Eve, as we cannot but believe, was the most lovely of women ever known, even including Rachel, Esther, Helen of Troy, Ayesha, and fair Bertha with-the-big-feet. The color of her hair depended a good deal upon the weather; when it was cloudy it was a dark brown; when the sunlight fell upon it her hair was golden; there was quite enough of it to lie about her waist for a girdle if she was so minded; and she was so little of a fine lady that she would rather have had it brown in all weathers, and was half ashamed of its golden tint.

It soothes the heart to speak of a beautiful woman; the contemplation of one respectfully, is in itself, to all rightly-constituted masculine minds, a splendid moral lesson.

"Here," says the moralist to himself,

"is the greatest prize that the earth has to offer to the sons of Adam. One must make oneself worthy of such a prize; no one should possess a goddess who is not himself godlike."

The door of the kitchen opened upon the garden, which was not broad, being only a few feet broader than the width of the house, but was long. It was planted with all manner of herbs and vegetables. As for flowers, they were nearly over for the year, but there were trailing nasturtiums, long sprigs of faint mignonette, and one great bully hollyhock; there were also in boxes, painted green, creeping-jenny, bachelors'-button, thrift, ragged-robin, stocks and candy-tuft, but all over for the season. There was a cherry-tree trained against the wall, and beside it a peach; there were also a Siberian crab, a medlar, and a mulberry-tree. A few raspberry-canes were standing for show, because among them all there had not been that year enough fruit to fill a plate. The garden was separated from the churchyard by wooden palings painted green; this made it look larger than it there had been a wall. It was, in fact, a garden in which not one inch of ground was wasted; the paths were only six inches wide, and wherever a plant could be coaxed to grow, there it stood in its allotted space. There were live creatures in the garden, too. On half-a-dozen crossbars, painted green, were just so many parrots. They were all trained parrots, who could talk, and did talk, not all together, as is the use of parrots, who too often give way to the selfishness of the old Adam, but one at a time, and deliberately, as if they were instructing mankind in some new and great truth, or delighting them with some fresh and striking poetical ejaculation. One would cough slowly, and then dash his buttons. If ladies were not in hearing he would remember other expressions savoring of fo'k'sle rather than of quarter-deck. Another would box the compass as if for an exercise in the art of navigation. Another seldom spoke except when his mistress came and stroked his feathers with her soft and dainty fingers. The bird was growing old now, and his feathers were dropping out, and what this bird said you shall presently hear.

Next there was a great kangaroo hound, something under six feet high when he walked. Now he was lying asleep. Beside him was a little Maltese dog, white and curly, and in a corner—the warmest corner—there was an old and toothless bull-dog. Other things there were—some in boxes, some in partial confinement, or by a string tied to one leg; some running about, such as tortoises, hedgehogs, Persian cats, Angola cats, lemurs, ferrets, Madagascar cats. But they were not all in the garden, some of them, including a mongoose and a flying-fox, having their abode on the roof, where they were tended faithfully by Captain Zachariasen. In the kitchen, also, which was warm, there resided a chameleon.

Now, all these things—the parrots, the dogs, the cats, the lemurs, and the rest of them—were gifts and presents brought across the seas by amorous Captains to be laid at the shrine of one Venus—of course, I know that there never can be more than one Venus at a time to any well-regulated male mind—whom all wood and none could win. There were many other gifts, but these were within doors, safely bestowed. They may also be remarked that Venus never refuses to accept offerings which are laid upon her altar with becoming reverence. Thus there were the fragile coral fingers, named after the goddess, from the Philippine Islands; there were chests of the rich and fragrant tea which China grows for Russia. You cannot buy it at all here, and in Hong Kong only as a favor, and at unheard-of prices. There were cups and saucers from Japan; fans of the coco de mer from the Seychelles; carved ivory boxes and sandal-wood boxes from China and India; weapons of strange aspect from Malay Islands; idols from Ceylon; praying tackle brought down to Calcutta by some wandering Tibetan; with fans, glasses, mats, carpets, pictures, chairs, desks, tables, and even beds, from lands d'outre mer, inasmuch that the house looked like a great museum or curiosity shop. And everything, if you please, brought across the sea and presented by the original importers to the beautiful Alicia Rydquist, commonly called Lal by those who were her friends, and Miss Lal by those who wished to be, but were not, and had to remain outside, so to speak, and all going, in consequence, green with envy.

On this morning there were also in the garden two men. One of them was a very old man—so old that there was nothing left of him but was puckered and creased, and his face was like one of those too faithful maps which want to give every detail of the country, even the smallest. This was Captain Zachariasen, a Dane by birth, but since the age of eight on an English ship, so that he had clean forgotten his native language. He had been for many years in the timber trade between the ports of Bergen and London. He was now, in the protracted evening of his days, enjoying an annuity purchased out of his savings. He resided constantly in the house, and was the dean, or oldest member among the boarders. He said himself sometimes that he was eighty-five, and sometimes he said he was ninety, but old age is apt to boast. One would not balk him of a single year, and certainly he was very, very old.

This morning he sat on a green box half-way down the garden—all the boxes, cages, railings, shutters and doors of the house were painted a bright navy-green—with a hammer and nails in his hand, and sometimes he drove in a nail, but slowly and with consideration, as if noise and haste would confuse that nail's head, and

make it go loose, like a screw. Between each tap he gazed around and smiled with pleased benevolence. The younger man, who was about thirty years of age, was weeding. That is, he said so. He had a spud with which to conduct that operation, but there were no weeds. He also had a pair of scissors, with which he cut off dead leaves. This was Captain Holstius, also of the mercantile marine, and a Norwegian. He was a smartly-dressed sailor—wore a blue cloth jacket, with trousers of the same; a red silk handkerchief was round his waist; his cap had a gold band round it, and a heavy steel chain guarded his watch. His face was kind to look upon. One noticed, especially, a grayish bloom upon a ruddy cheek. It was an oval face, such as you may see in far-off Bamberg, or on Holy Island, with blue eyes; and he had a gentle voice.

A remarkable thing about that garden was that if you looked to the north, over the garden walls of the Seven Houses, you obtained, through a kind of narrow lane, a glimpse of a narrow breadth of water, with houses on either side to make a frame. It was like a little strip of some panorama which never stops, because up and down the water there moved perpetually steamers, sailing ships, barges, boats and crafts of all kinds. Then, if you turned completely round, and looked south, you saw beyond the trees in the churchyard a great assemblage of yard-arms, masts, ropes, hanging sails and rigging. And from this quarter there was heard continually the noise of labor that ceaseth not, the labor of hammers, saws and hatchets; the labor of lifting heavy burdens with the encouraging "Yo-ho!" the labor of men who load ships and unload them; the ringing of bells which call to labor; the agitation which is caused in the air when men are gathered together to work. Yet the place, as has been already stated, was peaceful. The calm of the garden was equalled by the repose of the open place on which the windows of the house looked, and by the peace of the churchyard. The noise was without; it affected no one's nerves; it was continuous, and, therefore, was not felt any more than the ticking of a watch or the beating of the pulse.

The old man presently laid down his hammer, and spoke, saying softly:

"Nor-wee-gee."

"Ay, ay, Captain Zachariasen," replied the other, pronouncing the name with a foreign accent, and speaking a pure English, something like a Welshman's English. They both whispered because the kitchen door was open, and Lal might hear. But they were both too far down the garden for her to overhear their talk.

"Any luck this spell, lad?"

The old man spoke in a meaning way, with a piping voice, and he winked both his eyes hard, as if he was trying to stretch the wrinkles out of his face.

Captain Holstius replied, evasively, that he had not sought for luck, and, therefore, had no reason to complain of unsuccess.

"I mean, lad," whispered the old man, "have you spoke the bark which once we called the Saucy Lal? And if not," because here the young man shook his head, while his rosy cheek showed a deeper red—"if not, why not?"

"Because," said Captain Holstius, speaking slowly—"because I spoke her six months ago, and she told me—"

Here he sighed heavily.

"What did she tell you, my lad? Did she say that she wanted to be carried off and married, whether she liked it or not?"

"No, she did not."

"That was my way, when I was young. I always carried 'em off. I married 'em first and axed 'em afterward. Sixty year ago, that was. Ay, nigh upon seventy, which makes it the more comfortable a thing for a man in his old age to remember."

"Lal tells me that she will wait five years more before she gives him up, and even then she will marry no one, but put on mourning and go in widow's weeds—being not even a wife."

"Five years!" said Captain Zachariasen. "'Tis a long time for a woman to wait for a man. Five years will take the bloom off of her pretty cheeks, and the plumpness off of her lines, which is now in the height of their curliness. Five years to wait! Why, there won't be a smile left on her rosy lips. Whereas, if you'd the heart of a loblolly boy, Cap'n Holstius, you'd ha' run her round to the church long ago, spoke to the clerk, whistled for the parson, while she was still occupied with the pudding and had her thoughts far away, and—well, there, in five years' time she'd be playin' with a four-year old, or may be twins, as happy as if there hadn't never been no Cap'n Armiger at all."

"Five years," Captain Holstius echoed, "is a long time to wait. But any man would wait longer than that for Lal, even if he did not get her, after all."

"Five years! It will be eight, counting the three she has already waited for her dead sweetheart. No woman, in the old days, was ever expected to cry more than one. Not in my day. No woman ever waited for me, nor dropped one tear, for more than one twelvemonth, sixty years ago, when I was dr—"

Here he recollected that he could never have been drowned, so far back as his memory served. That experience had been denied him. He stopped short.

"She thinks of him," Captain Holstius went on, seating himself on another box, face to face with the old man, "all day; she dreams of him all night; there is no moment that he is not in her thought—I know because I have watched her; she does not speak of him, even if she sings at her work, her heart is always sad."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Celebrating the Open Fire.

There is one delightful luxury which the majority of country people may have, if there is no other within their reach, and that is an open wood fire. I know of some—perhaps there are more—who think a coal-stove is a "great deal nicer," and who heat their rooms with base-burners, which might well be called headache machines, and throughout the entire year never experience the charm of an open wood fire, the most cheerful, wholesome, beautiful, social, genial, welcoming and fascinating fire under the sun. And I know all about its "drawbacks"—the "litter" it makes; how the sparks snap up and burn holes in my frocks and in the rugs, and sometimes leap so far out over the fender as to take a seat on the sofa, on the opposite side of the room; and how the kitchen maid scowls at having so much brass "toggerly" to polish every week; and how the light ashes fly up and light on the bric-a-brac of the mantelpiece. But with all its faults, I adore it still; and when Anaximander asks what I would take for the old-fashioned Franklin stove if I couldn't get another, he proposes a poser. I don't think money could buy it. I put wood on the brass andirons fully sixteen times a day, and "brush up" the hearth ditto, and thousands of minutes go into that open fire, to say nothing of the time spent in "poking it," which is the very quintessence of enjoyment, and nobody can be very miserable who has an open fire to poke.

Of course, in this land of ours with its varying climate, we need something more than open wood fires to keep our houses duly heated; but with a large coal stove in the hall, for a central heater, or one of those abominations in the cellar called a furnace, one can do very well with an open fire in the living room, which of all rooms should possess one. The open fire is a magician, and transforms the meanest room into something attractive. It stimulates the imagination, and it is difficult to think of boys or girls growing up into the gifts of poetry, who are reared in homes without a hearth-stone. The old-time yawning fireplace with its swinging crane for pots was a grand sight to see on a cold winter night, with its great logs bathed in flame, and the light dancing out on the bare floor and walls. With the income of many of our "civilized" methods, there has been an outgo of some very winsome features that glorified the days and the nights of our forefathers and our foremothers, and of all of these outgoes none is more to be deplored than the open fire—the crackling wood fire. To sit around it when the day is done, and tell fairy tales and ghost stories, and discuss the newspaper news, and dream, if you like, or pick out pictures in the coals—oh, me! Can you mention anything more delightful? Then, too, it is a luxury that it is so cheap in the blessed country—in cities only the rich feel that they can afford it—and another item not to be ignored is the consoling thought that by having an open fire you will live a great many years longer, because of its healthfulness. Then why not have it?—Mary Wager-Fisher, in N. Y. Tribune.

## VENUS.

On the 20th of February, Venus came into superior conjunction with the sun. The sun was then directly between us and Venus; the earth, the sun and Venus being in a straight line. She was then at her nearest point to the sun, "joined to him," as the word conjunction implies, "on his outer side," as the word superior implies.

After conjunction, Venus passes to the eastern side of the sun, and becomes evening star. At conjunction, and for a month or two after, she is too near the sun to be visible, being completely hidden in his rays. In April, a careful observer may find her, a serenely beautiful star, shining in the glow of twilight for a short time after sunset. She will soon become a brilliant object in the western sky, and will continue so until her inferior conjunction on the 6th of December.

A great event marks the coming inferior conjunction. The orbit in which Venus moves around the sun is inclined to the ecliptic or sun's path. The two orbits are not on the same plane or level, so that when she passes between us and the sun she is usually above or below him, and we do not see the passage. Next December she passes directly between us and the sun, and makes a transit; that is, she passes across the sun's disc like a black dot or ball. This is the most important astronomical event of the present year, and owes its importance to two causes, its extreme rarity, and the fact that it furnishes probably the best means of finding out the sun's distance from the earth.

It will be visible throughout the Western hemisphere, and many astronomers from the Eastern hemisphere will visit America to view the grand phenomenon. There was a transit of Venus in 1874, visible in the Eastern hemisphere, but after the coming transit has passed, there will not be another till the year 2004, when every human being now on the earth will have passed away.

The transit may possibly be seen by keen-eyed observers with the naked eye as a black point on the sun's disc. But to observers with a good telescope, Venus will look like a black sphere, nearly as large as the full moon, passing over the sun's surface. She will be six hours in making the passage, and will thus afford a fine opportunity for observation to those having access to telescopes.

It is well to take the superior conjunction of Venus as a starting point, and become familiar with the laws that rule her movements, and that will result in the long expected transit of 1882. —Youth's Companion.