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POETRY

THE COTTAGE CHILD.

Within a cottage window smiled,
With happy eyes, a cottage child.
The southern wind, so soft and sweet,
Scattered the rose leaves at her feet;
While climbing flower and leaf of green
Laughed sunnily the hours between,
And o'er her glowed the tender dyes
Or summer skies.

Sweet were her lifted eyes—sun-bright
With light of joyous innocence—
And at her glance a dream of peace
Stole o'er the sluggish tide of sense.
I knew not whether blight or dew
Fell on the flowers; I only knew
That some long-sought, divine delight,
Filled all my soul, and at the night
Twould still be light.

A little nearer to the child
I crept—her brow serene and mild,
Her dark eyes wells of holy light;
Fair cheeks than rose more fairly bright;
Her dimpled chin, her smiling mouth,
The tender, transient charm of youth,
All pleased me; yet twas none of these
That made her, like a flower there,
To adorn the air.

Pure little flower, aloft to God
Thy fragrance rose from humgle sod,
The soul of sweetness kept thee from
The taints that to another come;
For in my kneeling-place I heard
That timid, soft entreating word:
"Our Father!" This it was that made
The forest smile, a dewy glade;
That every leaf and flower arrayed
In blithe colors; lent the bee
Its summer song of ecstasy;
That sent my soul its dream of peace;
Tha', sin-sick, brought me sweet release;
That gave me faith aloud to cry:
"Father, have pity, lea: I die!"
My Father—hers and mine! Behold!
The heavens shine, a sea of gold;
The fair earth blossoms, and Day smiles
Like happy shores of sunset isles.

SENT BY EXPRESS;

OR,

WHAT FRANK EVANS MISSED.

Marian Harlan was alone in the world—her mother just buried.

She was a beautiful, brown-haired girl, with soft, shy eyes of violet gray, and rosy lips compressed to a firmness far beyond her years. For after all she was scarcely seventeen, and so deacon Gray was telling her, as he sat by the fire spreading his huge hands over the tardy blaze, and asked:

'But what are you goin' to do to earn your bread and butter, child?'

'I don't know—I havn't thought. Mamma had an uncle in New York, who——"

'Yes, yes—I've heerd tell about *him*—he was mad 'cause your mother didn't marry just exactly to suit him, wasn't it?'

Marian was silent. Deacon Gray waited a few minutes, hoping she would admit him into her secret meditations; but she did not, and the deacon went away home, to tell his wife 'that Harlan gal was the very queerest creetur he ever had come across.'

In the meanwhile Marian was busy packing her few scantly things into a little carpet-bag, by the weird, flickering light of the dying wood fire.'

'I will go to New York,' she said to herself, setting her small pearly teeth firmly together. 'My mother's uncle *shall* hear my cause pleaded through my own lips. Oh, I wish my heart would not throb so wildly! I am no longer meek Minnie Harlan I am an orphan, all alone in the world, who must fight life's battles with her own single hands.'

Lower Broadway, at seven o'clock in the evening! What a Babel of crushing wheels, hurrying humanity, and conglomerate noises it was! Minnie Harlan sat in the corner of an express office, under the flare gaslight, surrounded by boxes, and wondered whether people ever went crazed in this perpetual din and tumult. Her dress was very plain—gray poplin, with a shabby, old-fashioned little straw bonnet tied with black ribbons, and a blue veil, while her only article of baggage, the carpet bag, lay in her lap. She had sat there two hours, and was very, very tired.

'Poor little thing!' thought the dark-haired young clerk nearest her, who inhabited a sort of wire cage under a circlet of gaslights. And then he took up his pen and plunged into a perfect Atlantic ocean of accounts.

"Mr. Evans.'

'Sir.'

The dark-haired clerk emerged from his cage with his pen behind his ear, in obedience to the beckoning finger of his superior.

'I have noticed that young woman sitting here for some time—how came she here?'

'Expressed on, sir, from Millington, Iowa,—arrived this afternoon.'

As though poor Minnie Harlan were a box or a paper parcel.

'Who for?'

'Consigned to Walter Harrington, Esq.'

'And why hasn't she been for?'

'I sent up to Mr. Harrington's address to notify him some time ago; I expect an answer every moment.'

'Very odd,' sad the grey haired gentleman taking up his newspaper.

'Yes, sir, rather.'

Some three-quarters of an hour afterward, Frank Evans came to the pale girl's side with indescribable pity in his hazel eyes.

'Miss Harlan, we have sent to Mr. Harrington's residence——'

'Minnie looked up with a feverish red upon her cheek, and her hands clasped tightly on the handle of a faded carpet bag.

'And we regret to inform you that he sailed for Europe at twelve o'clock this day.

A sudden blur came over Minnie's eyes—she trembled like a leaf. In all her calculations she had made no allowance for an exigency like this.

'Can we do anything further for you?' questioned the young clerk, politely.

'Nothing—no one can do anything *now!*'

Frank Evans had been turning away, but something in the piteous tones of her voice appealed to every manly instinct within him.

Shall I send to any other of your friends?'

'I have no friends.'

'Perhaps I can have your things sent to some quiet family hotel?'

Minnie opened her little leather purse and showed him two ten-cent pieces, with a smile that was almost a tear.

This is all the money I have in the world, sir!'

'So young, so beautiful, and so desolate! Frank Evans had been a New Yorker all his life, but he had never met with an exactly parallel case to this. He bit the end of his pen in dire perplexity.'

'But what are you going to do?'

'I don't know, sir. Isn't there a workhouse, or some such place I could go to, until I could find something to do?'

'Hardly.' Frank Evans could scarcely help smiling at poor Minnie's simplicity.

'They are putting out the lights and preparing to close the office,' said Minnie, starting nervously to her feet. 'I must go—somewhere.'

'Miss Harlan,' said Frank, quietly, 'my home is a very poor one—I am only a five hundred dollar clerk—but I am sure my mother will receive you under her roof for a day or two, if you can trust me.'

'Trust you?' Minnie looked at him through violet eyes obscured in tears. 'Oh, sir, I should be so thankful!

* * * * * *

'How late you are, Frank! Here—give me your overcoat—it is all powdered with snow, and——'

But Frank interrupted his bustling, cherry-cheeked little mother, as she stood on tip-toe to take off his outer wrappings.

'Hush, mother; there is a young lady down stairs.'

'A young lady, Frank?'

'Yes, mother; expressed on from Iowa to old Harrington, the rich merchant. He sailed for Europe this morning, and she is left entirely alone. Mother, she looks like poor Blanche, and I knew you wouldn't refuse her a corner here until she could find something to do.'

Mrs. Evans went to the door and called cheerfully out:

'Come up stairs, my dear—you're as welcome as the flowers in May! Frank, you did quite right; you always do.'

The days and weeks passed on, and still Minnie Harlan remained an inmate of Mrs. Evans' humble dwelling.

'It seems just as though she had taken our dead Blanche's place,' said the cosy little widow; 'and she is so useful about the house. I don't know how I ever managed without her. Now, Minnie, you are not in earnest about leaving us to-morrow?'

'I must, dear Mrs. Evans. Only think—I have been here two months to-morrow, and the situation of governess is very advantageous.'

'Very well. I shall tell Frank how obstinate you are.'

'Dearest Mrs. Evans, please don't. Please keep my secret.'

'What secret is it that is to be so religiously kept?' asked Mr. Frank Evans, coolly walking into the midst of the discussion, with his dark hair tossed about by the wind, and his hazel brown eyes sparkling archly.

'Secret!' repeated Mrs. Evans, energetically wiping her dim spectacle glasses. Why, Marian is determined to leave us to-morrow.

'Minnie!'

'I must, Frank. I have no right further to trespass on your kindness.'

'No right, eh? Minnie, do you know that the old house has been a different house since you came into it? Do you suppose we want to lose our little sunbeam?

Minnie smiled sadly, but her hand felt very cold and passive in Frank's warm grasp.

'You'll stay, Minnie?'

'No.'

She shook her head determinedly.

'Then you must be *made* to stay,' said Frank. 'I've missed something of great value lately, and I hereby arrest you on suspicion of the theft!'

Missed something?

Minnie rose turning red and white.

'Oh, Frank, you can never suspect me!'

'But I do suspect you. In fact, I am quite sure that the article is in your possession.'

'The article!'

'My heart, Miss Minnie! Now look here—I know I am very young and very poor, but I love you, Minnie Harlan, and I will be a good and true husband to you. Stay and be my little wife!'

So Minnie Harlan, instead of going out as a governess, according to the programme, married the dark-haired young clerk in Ellison's express office, New York.

They were very quietly married, early in the morning, and Frank took Minnie home to his mother, and then went calmly about his business in the wire cage, under the circlet of gaslights.

'Evans!'

'Yes, sir.'

Frank with his pen behind his ear as of yore, quietly obeyed the behests of the gray-headed official.

'Do you remember the young woman who was expressed on from Millington, Iowa, two months since?'

'Yes, sir—I remember her.'

A tall, silver-haired gentleman here interposed with eager quickness:

'Where is she? I am her uncle, Walter Harrington. I have just returned from Paris, when the news of her arrival reached me. I want her, she is the only living relative left me.'

'Ah! but, sir,' said Frank, 'you can't have her.'

'Can't have her? What do you mean? Has anything happened?'

'Yes, sir, something has happened. Miss Harlan was married to me this morning'

Walter Harrington stared.

'Take me to her,' he said, hoarsely; 'I can't be parted from my only living relative for a mere whim.'

'I wonder if he calls the marriage service and wedding ring mere whims, thought honest Frank; but he obeyed in silence.

'Minnie,' said the old man, in faltering accents, 'you will come to me and be the daughter of my old age? I am rich, Minnie, and you are all I have in the world.'

But Minnie stole her hand through her husband's arm.

'Dearest uncle, *he* was kind to me when I was most desolate and alone. I cannot leave my husband, Uncle Walter—I love him!'

'Then you must both of you come and be my children,' said the old man, doggedly; 'and you must come now, for the great house is as lonely as a tomb.'

Frank Evans is an express clerk no longer, and pretty Minnie moves in velvet and diamonds; but they are quite as happy as they were in the old days, and that is saying enough. Uncle Walter Harrington grows older and feebler every day, and his two children are the sunshine of his declining life.

A MATCH NOT MADE IN HEAVEN.

My mother was determined I should 'make a good match,' and on short notice she married me to a Mexican, Don Pedro Aldezo, one reputed of immense wealth—a lion at Saratogo, where first we met.

He wore diamonds enough for a prince's ransom, and letters of credit were unlimited.

My mother informed me 'her mind was made,' the day we returned to New York. Six months later I was the wife of Don Pedro Aldezo, and had accompanied him to his native land.

To my surprise, after spending a few days in each of several Mexican cities, including the capital, Don Pedro had conveyed me to a lonely hacienda, situated on the broad, wild slope that stretches inland toward the mountain regions.

He told me this was a temporary residence until some repairs could be made upon his ancestrial palace, to fit it for my abode.

I made no objections to this plan, lonely and monotonous as it was, for the truth was, the little love I had felt for my husband had ere this been lost in the intense but mysterious fear with which he inspired me.

No thought of disputing his will entered my mind, and life seemed but a sheer dead monotony. of self-sacrifice as the early age of an eighteenth birthday.

But as the weeks grew into months, I began to question why we did not remove from that rude hacienda. I had no books, no newspapers, no letters, and my only resort was the final question.

My only answer was a slow lifting of the fringed eyelids, and one of the lurid baleful glances that always drove me dumb with terror. Never again did I allude to the pallace, nor did I ever behold it.

I was much alone in the hacienda; few travelers ever visited us; my only society being half-breed servants, a dirty, ignorant, qualid set, sunk in the lowest depth of social degradation. My husband would mount his horse and ride away over the plains, and often days would elapse before his return, and then sometimes he would appear followed by a numerous retinue of travelers, as he informed me, whom he would feast in that distant portion of the straggling hacienda set apart as the dwelling place of his retainers, where the loud discordance of their revelry would make the night hideous to my ears.

One day when he was absent two travelers stopped at the door of this building, and asked for food. I saw them as they arrived, and something familiar in their air and gait attracted my attention. The servants, who seemed to know them well, set food before them, which presently I saw them eating in the open air within the court.

As I looked memory strengthened, and I knew them for a couple of vile fellows who had annoyed me at Staratoga two years before, and with whom I had seen Don Pedro conversing. They loitered about all day, as I learned, for my husband's return.

At nightfall he came, and he held a long conversation with them, before he came to greet me.

As the moon arose they galloped out of the court mounted on two of my husband's best horses, and struck straight across the plain.

I saw my husband watching me, as if to detect my knowledge of these visitors.

But I had long ceased to question him; he seemed satisfied with my silence, and no allusion was made to the strange guests.

All the next day he wandered about the place, moody and sullen, and evidently brooding over bitter thoughts.

Some crisis in my fate, I felt, drew nigh.

My suspicions—long active, but vague—now rested on the fact of his fellowship with those prowling villians who had just left us.

That mysterious fellowship was sufficient to brand him with crime, though of what nature I dared not hazard a guess.

I felt danger and my whole soul cried out for help and mercy.

At midnight the tramp of horses and jingle of bells was heard, and amid the furious yelping of dogs a party rode into the court.

My husband arose and went out to meet his guests. I detected among the voices those of our strange visitors.

My husband returned and feigned sleep; while I feeling some great event awaited me, still kept silent watch.

My breakfast was brought to my room, and when I would have gone forth, I found myself a prisoner.

The long, weary day passed at last and the horrible night came on.

My husband did not present himself, but his voice was heard mingling with the revels.

Midnight came and all was hushed. I could not sleep, and wrapped securely in a dark shawl, I sat at my window behind the sheltering jalousies, and gazed out upon the wondrous beauty of the night.

I had sat thus an hour when low voices attracted my attention. One I detected—my husband's voice; the other a woman's, unfamiliar to my ear, and hoarse, as if the speaker struggled to repress some profound emotion.

'Why did you come?' I heard my husband say. 'I forbid you, and if Helena should learn of this, she would prove troublesome, patient an subdued as she now appears.

So you have crushed the white bird's fluttering wings, have you, Pedro?' the woman answered. 'You well know how to perform such feats.'

Ha—ha! Well said; but yours was never crushed, my proud Lorena. You will go at noon, will you not.

'Oh, no! I must remain one day more I have come so far and waited so long to see you.'

'But Helena——'

'Oh, I pity her! I must stay, but I pity her!

'You need not. I tire of the puny, pale, spiritless creatue. She'll die some day—disappear as many others have done; and then you shall come back and reign sole mistress.'

'What stain that pearly skin with her life blood?'

'Ha—ha! Who, I say can stand in my path, when I wish them removed? But hist! yonder is her window—speak lower——'

And they moved on, while I, sick with horror, crailed to my couch, to lie and think shudderingly what I had heard.

'Hist—hist!'

There surely my name was whispered under the window. I crept through the lattice. A note was pushed through the jalousies, and a dark figure glided away.

It turned at a distance, and the rays of the moon fell upon an uplifted face. Oh, horror! It was the face of a cuban lady, whom also I had seen at Saratoga, a reigning belle at the time I met my husband.

When the first dawn of morning appeared, I read my note.

'I am a woman, like yourself,' it said, 'and once I was innocent. But now I am guilty and would risk much to win back that devil you call husband. Be ready to-morrow at midnight, and I will aid your escape from this den of robbers and send you to your friends.'

How the hours dragged on in their interminable length. Presently at midnight my doors wung open. I followed the dark figure to where our spirited animals were tied, and in the deep stillness of the night we sped with an arrow-like swiftness over the plain.

In three days we reached a sea-port. A vessel was ready to sail for New York. My companion accompanied me on board.

On my twentieth birth-day I drove to my mother's home, and 'tis not strange she failed to recognize the blooming girl she consigned to a fate worse than death. I am now twenty-five, but I look as though fifty winters had shed their snows upon me. The brilliant match I made was to a notorious robber chief—a terror and dread to all the land.

Mothers, this is no fancy sketch, but a true tale and remember, in making your daughter's future, look to true worth and less glitter.

[From the Detroit Free Press.]

"Little Dan."

You see, the people at the Post Office soon recognize faces and names, and after a man or woman has appeared at the general-delivery window three or four times, they are pretty well known. It is a real pleasure to hand out letters to some, while the clerks care little for the calls of others to get hold of their letters.

One day a year or two ago, a funny-looking little old woman, wearing faded garments, but having a tidy look and a motherly face, appeared at the window and asked for a letter. There was one for her, sent from a distant city, and any one could have told that an unlearned boy directed the envelope. There was a little "d" in "Detroit," with a big "T" to end the word and it seemed wonderful that the letter ever reached its destination.

The old lady felt so good that tears in her eyes, and yet trying hard to smile, she put her head into the window and said:

'Thanks! It's from my boy Dan, and you don't know how good it does me!'

The lady delivery clerk rose to look after the old woman, and when a second letter came she was looking and watching for 'mother' a whole day before the letter was passed out.

'It's from my boy Dan, again!' cried the old woman, as she noted the superscription. 'He's in Buffalo, learning a trade. He's only a bit of a boy, and there wasn't a show for him in Detroit, and, besides, he was running out at nights, and going to the bad. I sent him away, and he's working hard and trying to be good. God bless my Dan! I'm a lone widow, with only him to love, and I hope he'll be good!'

'I hope so, too,' added the clerk, and after that the two were friends. Sometimes the letters were far between, and when the old woman would worry over the delay, and the big tears would fall, the lady would almost shed tears with her. 'Mother' would open her letters at the window, and if Dan was feeling brave-hearted and getting along well both would rejoice, while both would still be anxious if he complained and was discouraged.

Almost every week for a year and a half the old lady received a letter, and just as regularly she came to post an answer. She wrote in a quaint old hand, but the boy could make out every word, and once when he wrote that her writing was improving she felt all the pride which a schoolgirl could have shown. He improved as well. By and by he wrote 'Detroit' plain and fair, and he took extra pains to commence his 'Dear Mother' with a grand flourish, and to add something extra after the words: 'Your Son Dan.'

These letters were food and drink to the old lady, and she seemed to actually grow younger. Little Dan had many friends in the Post-office, and had the mother been ill any carrier would have hunted till midnight to find her and hand her the looked-for letter. Three or four weeks ago she wept and smiled as over the first. Dan wrote that he was coming home for a week, and her heart was full. She said she'd have the cottage looking like new for him, and she'd be at the depot to welcome him first of all. Everybody felt glad with her, and the lady clerk was to go up some evening and have tea with her; and see little Dan, and praise and encourage him, for the more kind words a boy can have the better will he seek to do.

There was no letter the next Tuesday, but the two excused its absence by saying that Dan was getting ready to come home. That was early in February, and he was to come about the first of March. The next Tuesday there was a letter, but the handwriting was not little Dan's. It was a strange, business hand, and the clerk felt a chill go over her as she turned it over. It might be good news, but she feared not. 'Mother' came in at the regular hour, and she turned pale as she took the envelope. Her fingers trembled as she opened it, and she had to wipe the mist out of her eyes before she could decipher a word. She hadn't read over four or five lines when she uttered a moan, and sank right down, like one crushed by some awful weight. They lifted her up and took her home, the letter clasped in her stiff fingers, and though she came out of the faint after a while her heart was broken, and in a week she was in her grave.

Dan was dead! The letter said that he had been taken suddenly ill, and that nothing could save him. The blow was too heavy for one with her gray hairs and childish heart, and her little old cottage is without a tenant.

No more letters commencing 'Dear Mother,' come for the dead, and the trembling hands which used to linger fondly over the words: 'My dear boy, Dan,' were folded over a lifeless breast, there to rest till the angels unclasp them.

A Ghost Story.

Somewhere about the beginning of the last century, an Edinburgh clergyman was called out of his bed at midnight, on the pretext that he was wanted to pray with a person at the point of death. The good man obeyed the summons without hesitation, but wishing he had not done so when, upon his sedan chair reaching an out-of-the way part of the city, its bearers insisted upon his being blindfolded, and cut his protestations short by threatening to blow his brains out if he refused to do their bidding. Like the sensible man he was, he submitted without further parley, and the sedan moved on again.

By and by, he felt he was being carried up stairs; the chair stopped, the clergyman was handed out, his eyes uncovered, and his attention directed to a young and beautiful lady, lying in a bed, with an infant by her side. Not seeing any signs of dying about her, he ventured to say so, but was commanded to lose no time in offering up such prayers as were fitting for a person at the last extremity. Having done his office, he was put into a chair and taken down stairs, a pistol shot startling his ears on the way. He soon found himself safe at home, a purse of gold in his hand, and his ears still ringing with the warning he had received, that if he said one word about the transaction, his life would pay for the indiscretion. At last he fell off to sleep, to be awakened by a servant with the news that a certain great house in the Cannongate had been burned down, and the daughter of its owner perished in the flames. The clergyman had been long dead, when a fire broke out on the very same spot, and there, amid the flames, was seen a beautiful woman, in an extraordinary rich nightdress of the fashion of half a century before. While the awe-struck spectators gazed in wonder, the apparition cried, 'Anes burned, twice burned; the third time I'll scare you all!'

As a Council Bluffs woman was doing her washing, one of her children fell into a kettle of water. The mother seized the infant, whose heart-rending cries indicated the terrible nature of its injuries, and deposited it upon a bed, while she ran to a neighbor's to get him to run for a doctor. Before the doctor arrived, all the neighbors had gathered, and among them had undressed the screaming infant—very carefully, so that the scalded skin should not peel off—and sprinkled it with flour. At length the doctor arrived, almost at the same moment with the terror-stricken husband, whom also the messenger had found and big to 'go home and prepare for the saddest news.' The doctor made a careful examination of the infant, and promptly advised the mother to put a shirt or something on the child, so it might not freeze to death. The assembled neighbors one after another, felt of the water in the kettle, found it icy cold, and quietly separated.

An interesting collection of stone mining tools, discovered last year at Alderley Edge, in Cheshire, has recently been exhibited before the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester, by Prof. Boyd Dawkins. The tools, which are chiefly hammers formed of stone boulders, appear to have been used in working the copper ores of this locality. It is difficult to determine the precise period at which they were in use, but it appears safe to carry their date back to pre-Roman times, and thus to class them among pre-historic relics.

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