

ONLY A FARE.

BY MARY KYLE DALLAS.

'Fare, ma'am,' said the conductor. The passenger took no notice. She was a shabby-looking old woman, in rather rusty-looking black, with a frayed lace scarf around her neck, and an old-fashioned, heavily worked lace veil fastened about her bonnet brim.

'Fare!' repeated the conductor again. The passenger looked at him, dipped her hand into her pocket, rummaged in a queer little reticule she carried, and after exhausting all the patience of which a car conductor is supposed to be possessed, said, slowly: 'I haven't got a penny. I suppose I've lost the change, or else I've had my pocket picked, and I'm going to street, too.'

There was a pause. The conductor looked at the passenger and hesitated. It was a damp, misty evening. The streets were ankle deep with mire. It was three miles to street, and the car was not half full. It seemed only common humanity to permit an old woman to ride to her destination, whether she had her fare or not. But there on the platform, staring through the glass door, our conductor saw the face of a car spy—a spotter, the men called him—who was watching him with eager, green eyes, anxious to catch him tripping.

Poor as his place was, twenty men were waiting for it. His receipts must tally with the number of passengers recorded on the dial provided by the company for that purpose, or off went his head on Saturday night. Still he could not put the old woman off his car; only one alternative remained—he could pay her fare.

Now a fare on the road was only five cents, but six o'clock was coming and he was hungry, and the supper he would have just time to snatch before his evening trips began, would cost him ten cents—five cents for bread and cheese, five cents for a cup of coffee. He gave up one of these if he paid that old woman's fare. You see there was another old woman whom he called granny to be cared for, and clothes of some sort must be worn, and there were no pennies to spare. But it was the memory of old Granny that arose in his heart as he dropped in the coin, touched the bell, and nodded "all right" to his passenger; and, as he stepped from his car to take his brief rest, he handed the old woman to the curbstone, and saw her safe upon her way.

'No, I don't want anything but the coffee,' he said, waving away the restaurant keeper's boy, as he pressed the basket of rolls and sandwiches upon him. 'Take that stuff away.' The bread was out of reach before he felt quite safe, he was so very, very hungry.

At that moment an old woman touched the car-starter upon her arm.

'Tell me the name of the conductor on car number five?' she said. 'There he sits under the shed, drinking some coffee.'

'That's Varnham—Tom Varnham,' replied the starter, rather eagerly, for he had a relative waiting for a place. 'If you have any complaint to make, there's the office.' But the old woman toddled away.

Oh, the long, long winter, cold and cruel—a winter full of terrible storms of snow and sleet. Two drivers on the line were badly frozen. Many died of lung complaints. The conductors suffered too, though not so terribly, and Granny had been sick, and there was money to be spent for medicine and nourishing luxuries, and Tom Varnham's old great coat was stolen one night by a thief who made his way into the crowded lodging house.

After that he went without it, and he often wondered what it would be to be warm, and to sit at a satisfying meal. Life seemed very hard, but to give up that poor situation and seek for better was not to be thought of, with Granny on his hands.

The passengers who rode in car number five often snubbed their conductor, took him to task for the inconveniences they suffered, and abused him at their dinner tables, or as they sat before their warm grates, toasting their toes, while he shivered on the car platform. Perhaps the shabby old woman with the worked lace veil may have done it also, for she rode in the car very often, though she never found herself again without a fare.

'What's the matter?' asked a passenger.

'Three cars ahead stopped—some one hurt,' replied the other. 'What is it, conductor?'

'Conductor of number five dropped down,' was the response. 'Some say he's dead.'

Tom Varnham lay in the midst of a little crowd, quite senseless and very pale. The men were talking about him. 'He's been starving himself and freezing, too,' said one. 'A sick grandmother on his hands; and he was a clerk or something, never used to out-of-door work. I've seen this coming for days.'

'You are the doctor sir,' asked a shabby old woman, laying her hand on the arm of a gentleman who knelt beside poor Tom. The gentleman looked up.

'You said last week that I did not deserve to be called one, Madam Hoyer,' he said, demurely.

'Oh! Dr. Jones! Well, that was when you couldn't cure me of the neuralgia,' replied the old lady. 'But I want you to do something for me. Have this young man brought to my house; he did me a favor once, and do your best for him, and send the bill to me.'

The doctor nodded, and when Tom Varnham came to himself he lay in a great old-fashioned feather bed, in a room he had never seen before, and the old woman whose fare he had paid rocked to and fro beside his bed.

'You are not to talk,' she said, waving a black fan at him, 'but everything is all right. Your grandmother's board is paid to that rapacious old woman, and you needn't trouble your mind about anything. Go to sleep. You went without your bread and butter to give me a ride once, and I shan't forget it, though I happen to be a rich old woman instead of a poor one, as you'd thought me.'

Tom listened, found himself incapable of making any remark, and fell asleep again. But hard times were over for the poor fellow. When he was able to work again there was a fine position open for him in a great wholesale house, and he was able to keep a pretty suite of rooms and a servant for old Granny, and to live with her, to her great joy. And, moreover, it is well known that old Madam Hoyer, who has neither relative nor hobby, has made her will, leaving all her great fortune to Tom Varnham.

'Don't ask me why,' she said to the lawyer. 'Perhaps you wouldn't think it much to go hungry on a stormy winter evening for the sake of a poor old woman. I could have called a coach, and I'd only lost my purse, but he didn't know that, and I always remembered just how he looked when he sent that bread away. I knew he was a good fellow, and so he is, and I've a right to leave my money according to my fancy.'

Sentiment versus Justice.

The trial of Marie Biersse has been one of the recent sensations of Paris. This woman, described as a somewhat handsome person, about 32 years old, was trained as a singer, appeared before the public with considerable success, lost her reputation, and resolved upon revenge. She waited for hours in a cab outside her faithless lover's house, and shot at him as he stepped into the street, seriously wounding though not killing him. After three months imprisonment she is brought before a French jury, with Maitre Lachaud as her advocate. He tried to prove that her mind had been unhinged by the treacherous treatment to which she had been subjected. The public prosecutor did not press for the extreme penalty awarded by the law; he merely asked for a verdict of guilty, 'with extenuating circumstances.' Upon this, naturally, counsel for the prisoner joined issue, declaring that the finding must be one of 'not guilty' altogether. It must have been a 'bad quarter of an hour' for M. Gentien while Maitre Machaud was speaking, and a perplexing moment for the court when he concluded by referring to the unhappy woman as one 'whom the law might consider guilty, but in whom human conscience would only see the martyr to her own heart.' The president summed up, and the jury retired. In five minutes they came back with a verdict of complete acquittal. Marie Biersse, on her part, kissed the triumphant advocate, and was set free. Such a spectacle might appear an exaggeration if set forth upon the stage.

Russian Superstition.

Not only does the vast majority of Russian peasants believe firmly in witchcraft, but the name of its superstitions is legion. There is now scarcely a village in Russia without its 'Jarodiva,' or inspired idiot, its 'Kaldunja,' or sorceress, and its 'Klikusha,' a hysterical screaming woman subject to fits, who is an especial object of fear and reverence to her neighbors. A strange illness, attributed by some of the eminent Russian pathologists to the effect produced upon the nerves by all these silly superstitions, has made its appearance in several of the provinces of the empire among the hardy and robust rural populations. No efficacious method has as yet been devised for treatment in this malady, which generally culminates in insanity. The village priests regard it with indifference, and never try to discourage the demoralizing credulity in which it originates. The district surgeons shrug their shoulders over it, and confess their inability to comprehend the phenomena of its genesis and incubation. Meanwhile, it appears to be rapidly spreading, and largely recruiting the ranks of the 'Chlisti,' a fanatical sect which practices fasting and self-castigation with the most shocking results to its followers, especially those of the female sex.

A LEGEND OF THE RHINE.

HE WAITED, BUT TOO LONG—A BROKEN HEART AND A CREEPING VINE.

Once upon a time there lived beside the Rhine a beautiful young lady. She had a lover who loved her, and whom she loved in return. But after he had wooed her—not one year but three—he asked her to marry him; and she, anxious to show her power, merely answered: "Wait."

"I have waited three years," he said, "but at your bidding, I will wait once more—just one more."

Then he went away and became a soldier, and praise to his bravery filled the land; but the lady was piqued by the thought that he had been able to leave her for even a year, and when he returned she determined to punish him, though all the while she loved him well.

He knelt at her feet, and took her hands in his, and said: "Lady, I have come back to claim you for my wife."

"Wait longer; a patient waiter is not aloser."

"I will wait two years longer," he said calmly. "If I do not lose all is well."

Then he left her again. She had hoped that he would plead for her, and that she would be forced to change her mind; but now he was gone—gone for two long years. How she lived through them she could not tell; but they passed, and again her lover was before her.

"I have waited patiently," was all he said.

The lady yearned to cast herself into his arms, but pride was strong in her.

"Wait longer," she said.

"No," he answered. This is the last time. If I wait now I will wait forever."

At this she drew back haughtily. "Then wait forever," she said coldly. He left her without a word. And now her heart sank in her bosom. She wept bitter tears, and repented in dust and ashes. When a year had gone by, she could bear her woe no longer, and sent her little foot page to her old lover, bidding him bear this message, "Come back to me."

But the message the little foot-page brought was just this: "Wait." Again she was left to her sorrow, and two years glided away; then once more she bade her page ride over the mountains to her lover's castle.

"Tell him I am waiting," she said. The page rode away and rode back. He stood before his lady and doffed his cap and repeated the message that had been given him: "The patient waiter is not a loser."

"He is punishing me," thought the lady, and for two years longer she remained in her castle. Her heart was breaking—her health failed—she knew death was near.

Again she sent her cruel lover a message.

"Tell him," she said, "that I am near my end, and that if I wait longer before I see him I shall wait forever."

The page returned, and stood beside his lady's chair. His eyes were

full of tears; his head was bent upon his breast; he sighed and hid his face in his plumed cap.

The lady lifted her wan face. "Speak!" she said. "The message!"

"Alas!" sighed the page; "I would it were a more tender one."

"Whatever it may be speak!" gasped the lady.

"The only message that I have," replied the page, "Wait forever!"

"I am well paid back in my own coin," said the lady. "At last I have received all my answers back."

In a little while she died, and they buried her in the old churchyard, with a stone at head and a stone at her feet.

When spring came there was grass upon the grave, and there was also a new plant strange to those who looked upon it; a plant with dark glossy leaves that crept slowly but surely along, clutching fast to every rough surface it met.

There had never been a plant like that on earth before. Now we call it the ivy, but this is what those who saw it for the first time said of it: "It is the lady whom her lover bade wait forever. In this form she is creeping toward his castle slowly but surely. So she will creep on until she reaches the heart she threw away."

Generations have passed from earth. The castle is a ruin, covered with ivy, and the peasants will tell you that it has crept there from the lady's grave, point by point, over stone and rock, through the graveyard and over gates and fences. You can trace it if you choose, they say, but do not try.

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