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A WINTER NIGHT AT "HAYS."

A Tale of Love, Desertion, and Disobedience.

BY BRET HARTE.

CHAPTER I.

It was difficult to say if Hays' farmhouse, or "Hays," as it was familiarly called, looked any more bleak and cheerless that winter afternoon than it usually did in the strong summer sunshine. Painted cold, needle-s white, with scant protection for shadows, a roof of white pine shingles, bleached lighter through sun and wind, and covered with low, white-capped chimneys, it looked colder and chilly than the skies which had claimed its low roadside house, and yet seemed hopeless of raining or snowing on the glaucing walls, or slippery wind-swept roof. The storm, which had already heaped the hollows of the coast with snow, hurled its finely granulated flakes against the building, but they were whirled along gutters and ridges and disappeared in smoke-like puffs across the icy roof. The granite outcrop in the hilly field beyond had long ago whitened and vanished; the dwarf firs and larches, which had at first taken on mouth shapes in the drift, blended vaguely together, and then merged into an unbroken wave. But the gaunt angles and rigid outlines of the building remained sharp and unchanged. It would seem as if the rigors of winter had only accented their hardness, as the keenness of summer had previously made them intolerable.

It was believed that some of this unyielding austerity attached to Hays himself. Certain it is, that neither hardship nor prosperity had touched his character. Years ago his emigrant team had broken down in the wild but wooded dell or the Sierras, and he had been forced to a winter encampment with only a rude log cabin for shelter, on the very verge of the promised land. Unable to enter it his self, he was nevertheless able to assist the better equipped team that followed him with wood and water, and a coarse forage gathered from a sheltered slope of wild oats. This was the beginning of a rude supply camp, which afterward became so profitable that when spring came and Hays' team were sufficiently recruited to follow the flood of immigrating gold-seekers to the placers and valleys, there seemed no reason for it. His fortune had been already found in the belt of arable slope behind the wooded defile, and in the more closely wooded cañons of vantage on what was now the great highway of travel and the only oasis and first resort of the weary journey. The business of his own train at that spot had not only been the salvation of those who found at "Hays" the means of prosecuting the last part of their pilgrimage, but later provided the equipment of returning teams.

THE BAD LUCK INVITED BY WINTRY FRUIT.

The first two years of this experience had not been without hardship and danger. He had been raided by Indians, and besieged for three days in his stockaded cabin; he had been invested by wintry drifts of twenty feet of snow, cut off equally from incoming teams from the pass and the valley below. During the second year his wife had joined him with four children, but whether the enforced separation had dulled her conjugal affection, or whether she was tempted by a natural feminine longing for the land of promise beyond, she sought it one morning with a fascinating teamster, leaving her two sons and her two daughters behind her; two years later the elder of the daughters followed the mother's previous example, with such seemingly discretion, however, as to forbear compromising herself by any previous matrimonial formality whatever. From that day Hays had no further personal intercourse with the valley below. He put up a hotel a mile away from the farm-house that he might not have to dispense hospitality to his customers, nor accept their near companionship. Always a severe Presbyterian and an uncompromising deacon of a far-scattered and scanty community who occasionally held their service in one of his barns, he grew more rigid, sectarian and narrow day by day. He was feared, and, although neither respected nor loved, his domination and endurance were accepted. A grim landlord, hard creditor, close-fisted patron and a smileless neighbor, who neither gambled nor drank, "Old Hays," as he was called, while yet scarce fifty, had few acquaintances and fewer friends. There were those who believed that his domestic infelicities were the result of his unsympathetic nature; it never occurred to any one but himself, probably, that they might have been the cause. In these Sierran altitudes, as elsewhere, the belief in original sin—popularly known as "pure cussedness"—dominated and overbore any consideration of passive, impelling circumstances or temptation, unless they had been actively demonstrated with a revolver. The passive expression of harshness, suspicion, distrust, and moroseness was looked upon as inherent wickedness.

The storm raged violently as Hays emerged from the last of a long range of outbuildings and sheds, and crossed the open space between him and the farmhouse. Before he had reached the porch with its scant shelter, he had floundered through a snowdrift and faced the full fury of the storm. But the snow seemed to have glanced from his hard, angular figure as it had from his roof-ridge, for when he entered the narrow hallway his pilot jacket was unmarked, except where a narrow line of powdered flakes outlined the seams, as if worn. To the right was an apartment, half office, half sitting room, furnished with a dark and chilly iron safe, a sofa and chairs covered with black and coldly shining horsehair. Here Hays not only removed his upper coat but his under one also, and drawing a chair before the fire, sat down in his shirt sleeves. It was his usual rustic pioneer habit, and might have been some lingering reminiscence of certain not remote ancestors to whom clothes were an impediment. He was warming his hands and placidly ignoring his gaunt arms in coarse cheap clad "hickory" sleeves, when a young girl of eighteen sauntered, half perfunctorily, half inquisitively, into the room. It was his only remaining daughter. Already elected by circumstances to a dry household virginity, her somewhat large features, sallow complexion, and tasteless, unattractive dress did not obviously suggest a sacrifice. Since her sister's departure she had taken sole charge of her father's domestic affairs and the few rude servants he employed, with a certain inherited following of his own moods and methods. To the neighbors she was known as "Miss Hays"—a dubious respect that in a community of familiar "Sallies," "Mamies," "Pussies," was grimly prophetic. Yet she rejoiced in the Oriental appellation of "Zuleika." To this it is needless to add that it was impossible to convince anyone who looked more decidedly Western.

"Ye can put some things in my carpet bag agin the time the sled comes round," said her father, meditatively, without looking up.

"Then you're not coming back to-night?" asked the girl curiously. "What's going on at the Summit, father?"

"I am," he said grimly. "You don't reckon I kalkilate to stop that! I'm going on as far as Horseley's to close up that contract afore the weather changes."

"I kinder allowed it was funny you'd go to the hotel to-night. There's a dance there; those two Wetherbee girls and Mamie Harris passed up the road an hour ago on a wood sled, a-lash—wa to pieces, and sittin' up in the snow like skeert white rabbits."

Hays' brow darkened heavily.

"Let 'em go," he said, in a harsh voice that the fire had not yet softened. "Let 'em go for all the good their fool parents will ever get outer 'em, or the herd of wayside cattle they've let them loose among."

"I reckon they haven't much to do at home, or are hard put for company, to travel six miles in the snow to show off their prinkin' to a lot of like loutish sloughs with bear's grease and scented up with doctor's stuff," added the girl, a snuggling her shoulders with a touch of her father's mood and manner.

Perhaps it struck Hays at that moment that her attitude was somewhat monstrous and unnatural for one still young and presumably like other girls, for, after glancing at her under his heavy brows, he said, in a gentler tone:

"Never you mind, Zuly. When your brother Jack comes home, he'll know what's what, and have all the pleasures New York ways and style. It's nigh on three years now that he's had the best training Doctor Dawson's Academy could give, sayin' nothing of the powerful Christian example of one of the best preachers in the States. They mayn't have worldly, ungodly fandangoes where he is, and riotous living, and scarlet abominations, but I've been told that they've 'tea parties' and 'assemblies' an' 'harmony concerts' of young folks—and dancin'—yes, fine square dancin', under control. No, I ain't stinted him in anythin'. You can remember that, Zuleika, when you hear any more gossip and backbitin' about your father's meanness. I ain't spared no money for him."

"I reckon not," said the girl, a little sharply. "Why, there is that draft for two hundred and fifty dollars that went by last week from the Doctor's for extras."

"Yes," replied Hays, with a slight knitting of the brows, "the Doctor mout hev writ more particulars, but parsons ain't allus business men. I reckon those here extras were to push Jack along in the term, as the Doctor knew I wanted him back here in the spring, now that his brother has got to be the stiff-necked and self-opinionated to do his father's work." It seemed from this that there had been a quarrel between Hays and his eldest son, who conducted his branch of business at Sacramento, and who had in a passion threatened to set up a rival establishment to his father's. And it was also evident from the manner of the girl that she was by no means a strong partisan of her father in the quarrel.

"You'd better find out first how all the schoolin' and trainin' of Jack is goin' to jibe with the ranch, and if he ain't been eddicated out of all knowledge of station business or keer for it. New York ain't Hays' Ranch, and those yer 'Assemblies' and 'Harmony doin's' and their airs and graces may put him out of conceit with our plain ways. I reckon ye didn't take that to mind when you've been bustlin' round payin' two hundred and fifty dollar drafts for Jack and quo'llin' with Bijah! I am t'ayin' nothin', father, only hesbbe if Bijah had had drafts and extras flourished around him a little more, nesbbe he'd have been more polite and not so tough spoken. Mebbe," she continued with a little laugh, "even I'd be a little more in style to suit Master Jack when he comes of. I had three hundred dollars' worth of convent schoolin' like Mamie Harris."

"Yes. And you'd have only made yourself fair game for every schemer, lazy sport or counter-jumper along the road from this to Sacramento," responded Hays, savagely.

Zuleika laughed again constrainedly, but in a way that might have suggested that this dreadful contingency was still one that it was possible to contemplate without entire consternation. As she moved slowly toward the door she stopped with hand on the lock and said tentatively:

"I reckon you won't be wanting any supper before you go? You're almost sure to be offered somethin' up at Horseley's, while if I have to cook you up suthin' now and still have the men's regular supper to get at seven, it makes all the expense of an extra meal."

Hays hesitated. He would have preferred his supper now, and had his daughter pressed him would have accepted it. But economy, which was one of Zuleika's inherited faults, vaguely appealing to him to be as a virtue, interchangeable with charity and abstemiousness, was certainly to be encouraged in a young girl. It hardly seemed possible that with an eye single to the integrity of the larder she could ever look kindly on the blandishments of his sex, or, indeed, be exposed to them. He said simply: "Don't cook for me," and resumed his attitude before the fire as the girl left the room.

As he sat there grim and immovable as one of the battered fire-dogs before him, the wind in the chimney seemed to carry on a deep-throated, depicted, and confidential conversation with him, but to really have very little to reveal. There was no haunting reminiscence of his married life in this room, which he had always occupied in preference to the company or sitting-room beyond. There were no familiar shadows of the past lurking in its corners to pervade his reverie. When he did reflect, which was seldom, there was always a bitterness a vague idea of a central injustice to which he had been subjected, that was to be avoided by circuitous movement, to be hidden by work, but never to be surmounted. And to-night he was going out in the storm, which he could understand and fight, as he had often done before, and he was going to drive a bargain with a man like himself and get the better of him if he could as he had done before, and another day would be gone, and that central injustice which he could not understand would be circumvented, and he would still be holding his own in the world. And the God of Israel, whom he believed in, and who was a hard but conscientious Providence, something like himself, would assist him, perhaps, some day to the understanding of this same vague injustice which He was, for some strange reason, permitting. But never more unrelenting and unsparing of others than when under conviction of sin himself, and never more harsh and unforgiving than when fresh from the contemplation of the divine mercy, he still sat there grimly holding his hands to a warmth that never seemed to get nearer his heart than that, until his daughter reentered the room with his carpet bag.

To rise, put on his coat and overcoat, secure a fur cap on his head by a woolen comforter, covering his ears and twined round his throat, and to rigidly offer a square and weather-beaten cheek to his daughter's dusty kiss, did not, apparently, suggest any lingering or hesitation. The sled was at the door, which for a tumultuous moment, opened on the storm and the white vision of a horse knee-deep in a drift, and then closed behind him. Zuleika shot the bolt, brushed some flakes of the invading snow from the mat, and, after tragically raking down the fire on the hearth her father had just quitted, retired through the long passage to the kitchen and her domestic supervision.

It was a few hours later; supper had long passed; the "hands" had one by one returned to their quarters under the roof or in adjacent lofts, and Zuleika and the two maids had at last abandoned the kitchen for their bedrooms beyond. Zuleika herself, by the light of a solitary candle, had entered the office and had dropped meditatively into a chair, as she slowly raked the warm ashes over the still smoldering fire. The barking of dogs had momentarily attracted her attention, but it had suddenly ceased. It was followed, however, by a more startling incident—a slight movement outside, and an attempt to raise the window!

She was not frightened; perhaps, there was little for her to fear; it was known that Hays kept no money in the house, the safe was only used for securities and contracts, and there were half-a-dozen men within call. It was, therefore, only her usual active, burning curiosity for novel incident that made her run to the window and peer out; but it was with a spontaneous cry of astonishment that she turned and darted to the front door and opened it to the muffled figure of a young man.

"Jack! Saints alive! Why, of all things!" she gasped, incoherently.

He stopped her with an impatient gesture, and a hand that prevented her from closing the door again.

"Dad ain't here?" he asked, quickly.

"No."

"When'll he be back?"

"Not to-night."

"Good," he said, turning to the door again. She could see a motionless horse and sleigh in the road, with a woman holding the reins.

He beckoned to the woman, who drove to the door and jumped out. Tall, handsome, and audacious, she looked at

"GO IN THERE," SAID THE YOUNG MAN.

Zuleika with a quick laugh of confidence as over some recognized absurdity.

"Go in there," said the young man, opening the door to the office; "I'll come back in a minute."

As she entered, still smiling, as if taking part in some humorous but risky situation, he turned quickly to Zuleika and said, in a low voice: "Where can we talk?"

The girl held out her hand and glided hurriedly through the passage until she reached a door, which she opened. By the light of a dying fire he could see it was her bedroom. Lighting a candle on the mantel she looked eagerly in his face as he threw aside his muffler and opened his coat. It disclosed a spare, youthful figure, and a thin, weak face that a budding mustache only seemed to make still more immature. For an instant brother and sister gazed at each other. Astonishment on her part, nervous impatience on his, apparently repressed any demonstration of family affection. Yet when she was about to speak he stopped her roughly:

"There, now don't talk. I know what you're going to say—could a't I stay myself if I wanted to—and it's no use. Well, then, here I am. You can't say I didn't—you've been married three months. Yes, my wife; married three months ago. I'm here because I ran away from school—that is, I haven't been there for the last three months. I came out with her last steamer, we went up to the Summit Hotel last night—where they didn't know me—until we could see how the land lay, before popping down on dad. I happened to learn that he was out to-night, and I thought her down here to have a talk. We can go back again before he comes, you know, unless——"

"But," interrupted the girl with sudden practicality, "you say you've been at Doctor Dawson's for three months. Why, only last week he drew a draft for $250 for your extras!"

He glanced around him as if then arranged his necktie in the glass above the mantel with a nervous laugh.

"Oh, that! I fixed that up myself and got the money for it in New York to pay our passage with. It's all right, you know."

CHAPTER II.

The girl stood looking at the ingenuous forger with an odd, breathless smile. It was difficult to determine, however, if gratified curiosity were not its most dominant expression.

"And you've got a wife—and that's her?" she resumed.

"Yes."

"Where did you first meet her? Who is she?"

"She's an actress—mighty popular in Frisco—I mean New York. Lots of chaps tried to get her—I cut 'em out, I or all dad's trying to keep me at Dawson's—I ain't such a fool, eh?"

Nevertheless, as he stood there stroking his fair mustache, his assiduousness did not seem to impress his sister to enthusiastic assent. Yet she did not resume her breathless, inquisitive smile as she went on:

"And what are you going to do about dad?"

He turned upon her querulously.

"Well, that's what I want to talk about."

"You'll catch it," she said, impressively.

But here her brother's nervousness broke out in a weak, impotent fury. It was evident, too, that in spite of its apparent spontaneous irritation its intent was studied. "Catch it, would he? Oh, yes! Well, she'd see who'd catch it! Not him! No, he'd had enough of this meanness, and wanted it ended! He wasn't a woman, to be treated like his sister, like their mother, like their brother, if it came to that, for he knew how he was to be brought back to take Bijah's place in the spring; he'd heard the whole story. No, he was going to stand up for his rights—he was going to be treated like the son of a man who was worth half a million cash to be treated! He wasn't going to be skinned while his father was wallowing in money that he didn't know what to do with—money that by right ought to have been given to their mother and their sister. Why, even the law wouldn't permit such meanness—if he was dead. No, he'd come here with Lottie, his wife, to show his father that there was one of the family that couldn't be fooled and bullied, and wouldn't put up with it any longer. There would have to be a fair division of the property and his sister Annie's property, and hers—Zuleika's—too, if she'd have the pluck to speak up for herself. All this and much more he said. Yet even while he had small fury was genuine and characteristic, there was such an evident incongruity between himself and his speech that it seemed to fit him loosely, and in a measure flapped in his gestures like another's garment. Zuleika, who had exhibited neither disgust nor sympathy with his rebellion, but had rather appeared to enjoy it as a novel and special performance, the morality of which devolved solely upon the performer, retained her curious smile. And then a knock at the door startled them.

It was the stranger—slightly apologetic and still humorous, but firm and self-confident withal. She was sorry to interrupt their family council, but the fire was going out where she sat, and she would like a cup of tea or some refreshment. She did not look at Jack, but, completely ignoring him, addressed herself to Zuleika with what seemed to be a direct challenge; in that feminine eye-grapple there was a quick, instinctive, and final struggle between the two women. The stranger triumphed. Zuleika's vacant smile changed to one of submission, and then, equally ignoring her brother in this double defeat, she hastened to the kitchen to do the visitor's bidding. The woman closed the door behind her and took Zuleika's place before the fire.

"Well," she said, in a half-contemptuous toleration.

"Well?" said Jack, in an equally ill-disguised discontent, but an evident desire to placate the woman before him. "It's all right, you know. I've had my say. It'll come right, Lottie, you'll see."

The woman smiled again and glanced around the bare walls of the room.

"And I suppose," she said drily, "when it comes right, I'm to take the place of your sister in the charge of this workhouse and succeed to the keys of that safe in the other room?"

"It'll come all right, I tell you; you can fix things up here any way you'll like when we get the old man straight," said Jack with the iteration of tediousness. "And as to that safe, I've seen it chock full of securities."

TO BE CONTINUED.

"Ashamed o' the Weather."

The Highlanders are loyal to Scottish genius. Sir Walter Scott, while making a tour of the Western Highlands, wrote to the inkeeper of Arroquhar, Loch Long, to have rooms prepared for him.

On the appointed day it rained ceaselessly. As Scott drew near the inn, he was met on the hill near the house by the landlord, who, with bared head and backing every yard as Scott advanced, thus addressed him:

"Gude guid us, Sir Walter! This is just awfu'! Sic an a downpour! Was ever the like? I really beg your pardon! I'm sure it's no fault o' mine. I canna think how it should happen to rain this way just as you, o' a' men of the warrld, should come to see us. It looks amaist personal! I can only say, for my part, I'm just ashamed o' the weather!"

REMARKABLE CROWS.

One Gave a Fine Alarm—Two Feathered Thieves Who Decided to Be Honest.

"The reasoning faculty is present to a remarkable degree in the crow," says a naturalist in the New York Sun. "A members of mine in Pennsylvania had a tame crow that demonstrated it to the most conclusively. The neighbor had three children and one evening their mother went to a neighbor's house, locking the children and the crow in. That crow always stayed up until the children were put to bed, and this evening, while the children were romping with him, the kerosene lamp was knocked off the table. The spilled oil took fire, and soon the house was in a fine way to be burned down with all in it, and but for the crow it would have been. The crow, as soon as the flames peered out on the chimney, and, perching on the roof, set up such a yelling as only a crow can give when so disposed. The unusual noise was heard by the neighbors, and they went out to see what was the occasion of it. Flames were then bursting from the windows, but the crow kept his place on the roof, yelling for assistance. The children were rescued just in time, they having run into the kitchen, where they were found huddled together. But for the timely warning given by the crow, doubtless, they would have perished in the flames, as the fire was so far advanced that the house was soon consumed.

"I had two tame crows once, and while they were most amusing pets, they after a while became such incorrigible thieves that I had to get rid of them. They stole anything and everything they could get hold of, including money and jewelry. One day those two particular crows had visited the house of a young woman who was visiting at our house, and they hid away in newhere and hid it where it could not be found. It was that that that decided me to get rid of the crows, and one afternoon I took them off their roost, put them into a bag and drove with them nearly ten miles to a place of woods where I dumped them out of the bag and drove on, returning home by a circuitous route, for fear the crows might hear the sound of the wagon if I turned around at the place where I released them and start back the road I had come. I might have saved all the trouble, for the next day one of the crows came home, and I heard that the girl, perched upon the railing of the back porch, cried: 'I am ashamed and sorry for the trouble I have given you.' The girl was astonished at the speech, and ran to the door to see who was there, but the crow had flown. The other crow came home the next day, and was heard to say: 'I am ashamed of myself.' Both crows lived with us for years, and never did anything more to be ashamed of."

L'OLONNOIS, THE CRUEL.

He Was the Most Ferocious of All the Famous Buccaneers.

Frank R. Stockton is writing "The Buccaneers of Our Coast" in St. Nicholas. He says:

Among the buccaneer leaders who distinguished themselves as land pirates was Francois L'Olonnois, a Frenchman. In those days it was the custom to entrust capital upon people who are not able to take care of themselves, unfortunate debtors and paupers of all classes were sold to people who had need of their services. Boys and girls were sold for a term of years, somewhat as if they had been apprentices, and it so happened that the boy L'Olonnois was sold to a master who took him to the West Indies. There he led the life of a slave until he was of age, and then, being no longer subject to servitude, he was one of the fiercest and most independent persons who ever walked this earth. He began his career on the island of Hispaniola, where he took up the business of hunting and butchering cattle, but he soon became a pirate, and started as a common sailor on one of these ships. Here he gave signs of being so brave and unscrupulous that one of the leading pirates on the island of Tortuga gave him a ship and a crew, and set him up in business. The career of L'Olonnois was much like that of other buccaneers of the day except that he was abominably cruel to the Spanish prisoners.

All the surplus he attributed to the pirates' fund was spent in the career of this wretch, who does not appear to be so good an example of the true pirate as Roc, the Brazilian. He was not so brave, he was not so able, and it would be impossible for any one to look upon him as a hero. After having attained in a short time the reputation of being the wickedest pirate of his day, L'Olonnois was unfortunate enough to be wrecked upon the coast near Campeachy. He and his crew were safely ashore, but it was not long before their presence were discovered by the people of the town, and the Spanish soldiers attacked them. There was a fierce fight, but the Spaniards were stronger, and the buccaneers were attacked, defeated. Many were killed, wounded, or taken prisoners.

Among the wounded was L'Olonnois, and when the Spaniards walked over the battlefield, he was looked upon as killed. When the soldiers had retired, he stealthily arose and made his way into the woods, where he stayed until his wounds were well enough for him to walk about. He directed his cook of his great knife, his pistolshot, and the rest of his pirate costume, and a lady to his sunny raiment as cook and hat which he had stolen from a poor cottage, he boldly approached the town and entered it. He looked like a very ordinary person, and for before was been of much the authorities. Here he found shelter and something to eat, and soon began to make his way very much at home in the streets of Campeachy.

THE TROLLEY WAGON.

A New Thing Which Takes Fifteen Miles an Hour.

The very latest vehicle to transport people around is the trolley wagon. Fully three years ago it was seriously talked of, and it was between the trolley and the horseless vehicle. We have had horseless carriages, but the trolley wagon is novelty. It is a contraption all by itself, and its source of power is the one thing that makes the trolley car to call it a first cousin.

The motor of the wagon is mounted in the rear wheels by suitable gearing. It is quite ingenious. It is a complete unit, for it contains all the power and knowledge. The two [illegible] are supplied by the motor. The motor is [illegible] the wagon.

The wagon of two wheels is considerably and as the front wheels are not linked together they the rear wheels [illegible] guide it [illegible]. One of the [illegible] the trolley wagon is [illegible] and [illegible] the trolley car [illegible] the motor [illegible] the wagon [illegible] the motor [illegible] the wagon [illegible] the motor [illegible] the wagon