

The Dispatch

TELL BOTH SIDES, AND TAKE THE CONSEQUENCES.

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FUN.

Clipped from Exchanges.

"Pa, what does a wedding mean?" Pa (looking over his paper): It means, my son, that if the wedded parties were free they wouldn't get married again. That's all.

"Why do not women get bald?" asks an exchange. It seems to us that any one ought to be able to answer that. It's because they don't have wives.

It was the firm belief of the Tartars that whoever touched a beautiful woman with a kingfisher's feather would win her love. This was before the age of the golden dollar, however.

"My dear," said a husband to his wife as he paid the week's bills and had a little change left over. "dy'e (sic) know why on Saturday night I'm (sic) suthin' like an elephant?"

"Because your voice is apt to get tuskey, John," suggested his wife. "No, m' dear; because I'm (sic) able to make both ends meet."

Young Man (to business manager of daily newspaper)—"Are there any vacancies on the editorial staff, sir?" Business Manager (sourly)—"I should say so. There's the editor and his assistant; they are both on the staff yet."

Omaha Wife—What under the sun are you doing? Husband—Trying to tie this string around my finger.

"Why, I did not ask you to do any errand."

"No; this string is to remind me that I have nothing to remember to-day."

Violent rain storm—crowded street car—handsome lady and gentleman on platform. Gentleman (to those inside)—Can you squeeze a lady in there? Chorus of male voices—Yes, certainly. Lady goes in—gets squeezed.

Young Crimsonbeak—Goose again for dinner to-day?

Landlady—"Yes, sir."

Young Crimsonbeak—"Well, I declare I've boarded here for three years and I think you've had goose for dinner nearly every day."

Landlady—"I guess you're right, Mr. Crimsonbeak. You very seldom miss a meal."

Lincoln Boy: "My father's been laid up sick for a week."

"That's nawthin' my dad's been laid up two weeks."

"My father has a felon on his finger as big as a thumble."

[A pause.] "That's nawthin' my dad's got a carnhole on his neck bigger'n a goose egg."

[Another pause.] "The doctor says my father won't be able to work for a month."

[Triumphantly.] "And the doctor says my dad'll likely die."

A pupil in one of the public schools of Philadelphia complied recently in the following manner with a request to write a composition on the subject of a physiological lecture to which the school had just listened: "The human body is made up of the head, the thorax and the abdomen."

"The head contains the brains, when there is any."

The thorax contains the heart and the lungs.

"The abdomen contains the bowels of which there are five: A, E, I, O, and U, and sometimes W, and Y."

Mother—"Tommy, you have been so bad that I shall not give you any pie."

Tommy—"No, pie! Mamma, please give me a licking instead of cutting off my pie."

THE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

'Tis the week before Christmas, And all in the house Are plotting and planning As sly as a mouse.

Strange bundles are smuggled Inside, unaware, And hidden away with The greatest of care.

The children, with secrets They're burning to tell, And in an excitement That nothing can quell.

Are hourly asking How many more days Before it is Christmas, With cheeks all ablaze.

The old folks are eager, The fever have caught, And crowd in the places Where presents are bought.

To the Merry Christmas Is sweeter, we know, Than when their own stockings were filled long ago.

Way up from the kitchen Spiced odors arise Of genuine, home-made, Delicious mince-pies.

Just stuffed full of raisins As big as a round, As little Jack Horner So happily found.

The long winter nights All much longer appear, For who can sleep soundly With Christmas so near.

And now, for the stockings? No tot's tiny hoos Can't hold half the treasures Kriss Kringle bestows;

So mamma's big ones Are got with delight, All ready to hang up On Santa Claus' night.

Now, Christmas is near! and St. Nick in his sleigh, Behind his swift reindeers, Is flying this way.

He's now on the snow-clouds, He'll be at your gate; Prepare for his coming— There's no time to wait.

H. C. DODGE.

A BUNCH OF PANSIES

BY ANNIE ISABEL SHERRICK.

"Good-bye!" It was a madness of farewells. The two stood looking into one another's eyes with blanched faces. Would he ever come back? Her wide eyes grew desolate as she looked at him. Then the lashes dropped over them, and she lay motionless against his breast for a second, as though the spirit had died within her.

"Jeanette—is this the girl fitted to be a soldier's wife? Have you no regard for my honor?" His voice quivered, but his eyes looked down upon her proudly.

"Yes." She roused herself bravely. "Your duty is at the front. I would not hold you back."

She placed her hand on the bunch of pansies at her throat; royal beauties they were, with great velvety hearts of purple and gold.

"They are my colors," she whispered. "Wear them, my night, and be true to your lady always."

Her trembling finger pinned them inside his coat.

"God be with you." She kept the tears back, smiling into his face, though the drum-beat sounding in the street below seemed like a death-knell. It was the signal to start. The signal for the volunteers, the brave men who were off for the Indian war—this dreadful war that had come like a bright upon her beautiful Western home.

"Good-by and God bless you! The pansies will be my talisman."

A last look into the dreamy, lifted eyes, and he was away, riding down the street with a dash and a clatter into the midst of the excited men who were armed to the teeth, well mounted and equipped, ready to meet on his own battle ground the Indian chieftain and his warlike band.

The most intense excitement raged in the mining camp. Ever since the

news had come that the old chief was on the war path, and the call had been made for volunteers to defend the settlers on the frontier, the town had been alive with men anxious to obtain the scalp of the bloodthirsty redskin.

Two days before the militia had been ordered out, and just as the setting sun was illuminating the red buttes in the valley the brave boys had marched away, the strains of the martial music sounding sadly in the ears of those who had loved ones in the ranks. And now these plucky volunteers were to follow. A determined set they were; most of them hardy mountaineers, as well trained to the saddle as cowboys, and as reckless of life and limb.

Among them none were more fearless or more brave than Ned Asby. He was one of the young pioneers who had struck a bonanza in the mines. More than that (to use the phraseology of the mining camp), he had struck a state on the prettiest girl in town and patented it—a stroke of good luck that had made him more envied among the boys than even his mining shares in the "May Queen."

Jeanette, standing at the window, gazed with a dumb despair at the horsemen riding down the valley. Among them none looked so handsome or so dashing as her own lover, whose warm kisses still lingered on her lips.

The tears rose slowly in her eyes as she looked after him. The world was so beautiful, why should it be marred by such a thing as war? Her eyes wandered away from the horsemen now lost in a cloud of dust to the fair mountain that hemmed her in.

It was September in Colorado, and the beautiful queen, Summer, was looking backward over the mountain, leaving her smiles on the blossoms and the green slopes that had led to gold and crimson as she passed.

The next three days were days of suspense and almost agony to the patient ones left at home. What if the brave little band should be ambushed in some narrow canyon, and brutally butchered, as were Thornburgh's companies? The Meeker massacre was too fresh in the minds of all concerned for them not to think of the terrible fate that might befall these courageous men, and when news came of their safe arrival on the Indian battle ground, there was a rejoicing which was universal.

And with the good news came a letter for Jeanette from Ned—so full of tenderness for her, so full of courage and hope for himself. He expected to go on a scouting expedition the next day with Major R—, a dangerous affair, but his words were full of bravery and enthusiasm.

She trembled a little as she read, for she knew his fearless, self-willed nature, so ready to risk life and limb in the service of others.

Then passed many a weary day and nights in which no word came—nights which she spent in prayer in the pretty chamber overlooking the vine shadowed porch; nights when she looked out upon the silent moonlit world, its shadowy, upreaching mountains, almost merging the dim stars with a dark foreboding of evil in their light, trying in vain to still the tumult that fevered her brain. Oftentimes it seemed as if her every breath were a prayer.

Then came the news of a fierce battle between the Utes and the Major's men, in which many were wounded on either side. Her father came home at noon with an open telegram in his hand.

She took it from him silently, reading:

"Edward Asby was wounded in the battle of the —th inst."

She did not faint, though he had expected she would, but her face

blanched—blanched until it was like marble—and her eyes grew large and black, glowing like stars.

"I must go," she said, "and nurse him."

"Dear child!" he replied, his hand upon hers, "this is folly, the talk of insanity. You cannot go, Jeanette."

"But I will." The color leaped to her cheeks again and her eyes flashed. He could not say her nay then. He knew her nature too well. Turtled in this desire, she would die.

"I cannot go with you, Jeanette. Can you go alone?"

"Yes." She drew herself up grandly. It was the proud right of the Western American girl. She knew no fear.

At six the next morning her favorite horse, Plato, stood at the door. He was a noble fellow; her faithful companion in every mountain adventure. Mounted on this splendid creature, her slender figure had long been a familiar one to the mountaineers. Her fearlessness, her womanliness and her gracious acts of kindness and good will had endeared her to every inhabitant of the camp.

"My dear philosopher, he will carry me safely through," she said, patting his arched neck affectionately, and laying her small hand for a moment against his own.

The sun was just lighting the far peaks. He had not peeped over the high mountains yet into the little valley where the quiet town lay asleep. All was in shadow, all save the little golden aspens, whose quivering leaves gleamed fitfully in the growing light.

At nightfall she was at the Springs, fifty miles away. It was a popular summer resort, and many guests had been there, but at the first news of war most of them had fled to the Eastern towns.

At the hotel many people knew her, but they had only words of sympathy and encouragement for the brave girl. In that exciting time deeds of bravery like this, even from women, were not rare.

The General, who had headquarters at the Springs, and who had heard of her arrival and her purpose, sent for her in the evening.

She came to him with eager eyes, awaiting the news which he had just received by courier from the scene of battle. Beyond the Springs there were no telegraph wires, and the couriers rode day and night over the dangerous Indian trails to bring the tidings.

"Is there any news of him?" she faltered.

"Yes." The General's voice almost choked as he looked at her. How could he break the heart of this brave young creature whose great love made her so beautiful, its unselfish purpose shining from every feature? How could he tell her the cruel truth, with those love lit, starry eyes fixed so pathetically upon his?

"Child," he said, his hand upon hers, even as her father's had been, his eyes full of kindness, his stern voice suddenly tender, "your lover is dead. The courier just in states that he died yesterday afternoon."

Not one word came from her lips. The great eyes gave him one stricken look, and then she fell—fell just where she stood at his feet, like a helpless, broken reed.

He lifted her up gently and called for assistance. But in a little while she revived, rising to her feet with the old brave determination upon her pale face in those deep, mournful eyes.

"I must go to him," she said. "They will bury him there, and I shall never look upon his face again. I must go!"

The General did not attempt to dissuade her. He felt almost reverent in the presence of such devotion. The gruff old soldier was moved by

this girl's heart-break as no scene of battle had ever moved him.

"An escort of my best and bravest men shall accompany you," he said. "They will protect you and bring the body here."

"Thank you." It was all she could say, but tears of gratitude rose in her eyes as she bent low over his extended hand.

And then for the first time she learned the full particulars of her lover's exploit; how he had led the scouting party, rushing boldly into the very face of the foe and by this action saving the military from the ambush the savages had prepared for them. In a moment the battle had begun, but ere his comrades were hand to hand with the redskins, who seemed to lurk behind every bush and tree, this bold young soldier had met his fate falling with his face to the foe.

"At least he died like a hero," her heart whispered whenever the bitterness of her woe threatened to overwhelm her.

Two days later after a long and weary journey, her little party reached the soldiers' camp. The boys had intrenched themselves behind a small knoll overlooking the surrounding country, fortifying themselves with earthworks against any attack from the Indians. The flag of truce was up, however, and all things seemed for the present peaceful.

The soldiers looked with astonishment as the small cavalcade came upon them, that girlish figure in their midst, her fair face tinged by the sun and wind into a warmer beauty, her dark eyes resplendent with dauntless courage. For many, many miles back her straight form had drooped, not as though with physical weariness, but as though the spirit within her were slowly dying. Next to her heart she wore his letter—the last words his dear hand had penned. She did not need to read them, for every word was graven upon her memory, but the burden of their warm love, now dead to her for ever, was pressing more and more heavily upon her tender heart.

But now at sight of these soldiers, all her pride arose. She sat erect in the saddle, the color coming and going in her face, her eyes glowing. She raised her head nobly, as became the woman who had been beloved by a hero.

At sight of her the boys raised a cheer. Many of the militia knew her and they were proud of her. They knew her for what she was—a brave heroic girl, purely, sweetly, womanly, yet ready as any of her brothers to take the weapons from belt and defend her life or that of any she loved—a girl imbued with the glory and the strength of her native mountains.

She acknowledged their cheers with a sweet, grave dignity; then the leading officer in her escort whispered something to the Major ere he helped her to dismount.

She caught the reply. It made her tremble; but with the suspicion of a great joy, not of sorrow.

"Not dead!" were the words which came from her white lips with a gasp.

"No"—the Major came to her side quickly—"the courier made a mistake. It was Ned Sampson who died. Asby still lives, though he lies still almost at death's door."

All a mistake—all a horrible dream!—oh! such happiness was almost impossible to realize! Giving her hand to the Major, she almost leaped from the saddle. Her feet seemed, like the winged Mercury's, to sped to him.

The Major led the way into the tent where the wounded man lay, motioning the guard aside. Then he left her, followed by the young officer who had been in attendance.

Alone, the girl threw herself on her knees beside her lover. But

there was no recognition in that deep blue eyes—those proud, brave eyes that had never met her own save in love and tenderness. He was unconscious, with the delirium of the fever upon him. The words he murmured were of the battle field, not of the brave girl who had ridden so many, many weary miles just to look upon his dead face.

Taking up the hand that lay so helpless against the rough blankets, she pressed it to her lips; and then, for the first time, the tears fell from her eyes—fell in a hot, blinding mist. What pain and anguish had not done, joy that he still lived, and that she had reached him in time to give all her young life to his care and service.

His coat—the one he had worn when parting from her—lay on the bed. Her eyes darkened as she saw the stains of blood and the bullet hole. She took it in her hands, examining it keenly. There were the pansies, faded and worn, still pinned inside. The bullet had passed through just above them.

"Had the bullet struck him an inch lower," one of the men afterwards told her, "it would have proved fatal."

Perhaps the pansies, by some subtle influence, had saved him; perhaps her own spirit, in that moment of agony, had passed into them, making them indeed a real talisman to protect him. She loved to think this—that God had answered her earnest prayers by investing these her chosen flowers, with the power to save his life.

It was only a girlish fancy, but it made her happy. She took the dead, sweet blossoms and laid them tenderly away. Until they became as dust these faded flowers would be scarcely cherished.

The next few days brought with them endless care and anxiety. His life hung by a thread. A woman the men had rescued from an adjoining ranche came to assist Jeanette, and not one of the soldiers but would have risked his life to have done her a service. Her gentle manners won them all, and her patient love, so pure and brave in its devotion, made them feel as never before the high grace and worth of womanhood.

The officers were untiring in their attention to the wounded man, and gave the girl relief at every opportunity. Still it was a weary task, and when at last he was pronounced out of danger, she worn out with incessant watching fell into a stupor from which they could not arouse her for hours.

All this time the camp had not been without menace, but the redskins had been kept at bay until the arrival of fresh troops. Through all this danger, Jeanette had been unwavering. Not one expression of fear had passed her lips, though she like all the rest, drew a sigh of relief when the troops arrived.

Then followed a hot pursuit of the Indians; they were pushed back to the reservation.

Jeanette came to Ned's bedside one day with a look of joy upon her lovely face.

"Ned," she cried, with a return of her old life and spirits, "the war is over. Peace is declared, and we are going to take you home to-morrow."

For answer he silently pressed the small, warm hand that crept into his own. Whenever was there a sweet heart so tender and true, so beautiful and brave!

When they reached the Springs loud and wild were the cheers given for the brave boys returning from the war; and not only for the boys, but for the brave girl who had dared to go to the front for love's sake. Under the glorious sweep of the spangled flag she rode, her cheeks all alive like the crimson slopes, and her eyes splendid with the sunlight of love.—Frank Leslie's.