THE HEADLIGHT

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SPRING SONG.

So many ways to wander in,
So many lands to see!
The west wind blows through the orchard-close,
And the white clouds wander free;
The wild birds sing in the heart of spring,
And the green boughs beckon me.

And it's oh, for the wide world, far away,
'Tis there I fain would be,
For it calls me, claims me, the livelong day,
Sweet with the sounds and the scents of May,
And the wind in the linden-tree;
The wild birds sing in the heart of spring,
And the green boughs beckon me.

"Far and far, in the distance dim,
Thy fortune waiteth thee"—
I know not where, but the world is fair
With many a strange countrie,
The wild birds sing in the heart of spring,
And the green boughs beckon me.

So many ways I may never win,
Skies I may never see!
Oh, wood-ways sweet for the vagrant feet,
What may not come to be?
What do they sing in the heart of spring?
And where do they beckon me?

Farewell, farewell, to my father's house!
Farewell, true love, to thee!
Dear, and dear, are the kind hearts here,
And dear mine own roof-tree—
But the wild birds sing in the heart of spring,
And the green boughs beckon me.

—*Graham R. Tomson, in Scribner.*

The Long-Expected Letter.

BY HELEN FORREST GRAVES.

The yellow narcissus was all in blossom in the little yard that fronted the village postoffice; the maple trees had dropped their red stars long ago, and here and there one found pink clusters of honey-sweet trailing arbutus in the woods.

Isabel Islay had a bunch in the front of her jacket as she sauntered up to see if there were any letters; but they were no pinker than her cheeks.

A little group of men and women had assembled there for the same purpose. The women eyed Isabella, and wondered how it was that her dresses always "set so stylishly;" the men looked admiringly at her big blue eyes and rosy complexion.

Two or three other mill girls joined her; they laughed and talked gaily as the spectacled old postmaster sorted the mails.

At last the unpainted pine partition slid back, the spectacles appeared in the aperture and the postmaster cried, briskly:

"Naow, then! Who wants their mail?"

Isabella stepped briskly forward.

"Anything for me, Mr. Rider?" said she.

"Islay, Miss I. Isabel Islay. 'Miss Isabel Islay!'" read out the old man. "Three for you. Who next?"

"Isabel gets all the letters!" giggled the mill girls, as Isabella received her treasures. "She might divide with us! Hear comes Miss Seaman. Now for some fun!"

A pallid, pinched, old-young lady here advanced with a smirk on her countenance, and a faded shawl, whose folds scarcely covered the flat basket that she carried.

"Anything for me, Mr. Postmaster?" she demanded, with ill-simulated indifference.

"No, mum!" carelessly answered the official.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes'm!"

"Oh!" A blank expression crept across her face. "But it really don't signify. I just thought I'd inquire, as I chanced to be passing."

And she withdrew, amid the very audible titters of the mill girls.

"There ain't a mail comes in," said the postmaster, oracularly, "but Miss Genny Seaman's here a-watchin' for it. And she never gits a letter—not so much as a postal card. I should think she'd git tired o' runnin'."

"Miss Genevieve Seaman?" said the careworn woman of the house where the mill girls boarded. "Oh, that all happened years ago! She had a beau, or suthin', and he went away—nobody jest knew whar. Reckon she didn't know herself. And it sort of upsot her brain, and she hain't fairly been herself sence. She's a very good dressmaker, and she trims a bonnet quite scrumptiously, and so she earns a decent livin'. But she's been expectin' a letter this twenty-odd year, an' it's never come."

"Girls," said Isabel Islay, as they sat at the round table that evening, laughing and talking, "this is near the first of April! Let's write a letter to that poor old thing from her lover in the East."

"Was he her lover?" said Lucy Felton.

"Well, from the man she imagined to be her lover. Let's make it fervent as fire and sweet as sugar. Let's lay it on thick."

"In short, let's make an April Fool of Miss Genny Seaman," said Mary Crane, who was retrimming an old hat with lilac ribbons and a bunch of violets.

"Just that," said Isabel.

"But you don't even know the fellow's name."

"I can find that out. Mrs. Webb knows, and I can easily coax it out of her. It will be such fun!"

It was the morning of the first of April—a blue-skied, breezy day, with the air full of growing scents and bluebird whistles—and soon after the cumbrous old four-horse stage had crashed through the village, the usual crowd began to assemble in the little postoffice.

Isabel Islay was there, and Lucy Felton, and black-eyed Mary Crane; and presently Miss Genevieve Seaman came tripping in with the peculiar gait which the irreverent village children compared to a cat walking upon walnut shells.

"Two for Miss Islay," said the old man, scrutinizing each letter with provoking slowness. "One for Squire Zurubbable Jenkins; one for Widder Hopper, and one for—Miss—Genevieve—Seaman!"

Isabel flashed a merry glance at her companions as the poor little dress maker tiptoed up to the counter, her color changing from saffron to scarlet, her faded blue eyes full of intent rapture.

"Is it true?" said she. "A letter for—me? And I've waited for it all these years? all—these—years!"

She hid it under her shawl, cast a defiant look around at the neighbors' faces and hurried away, like a startled wild animal to its cover.

She could not open that letter with other eyes upon her. She felt that she must treasure it to herself, like one who has discovered a precious jewel.

Isabel Islay stopped at the little house where the tin sign, "Millinery and Dressmaking," swung creeking in the wind that evening, on her way home from the mill.

The window blinds were fastened back, the parlor was opened and dusted. Miss Genevieve was moving through and fro, in her best India silk gown, with a flower pinned fantastically in her lustreless hair.

A round, red spot glowed on each cheek; her bony fingers trembled with excitement as she laid down her spectacles.

"Can you press over my Leghorn flat, Miss Seaman?" asked the beauty.

"Oh, my dear, I'm afraid not!" said the little woman, with a hysterical laugh. "Haven't you heard? I—I'm to be married very soon! Captain Edward Gleason—you may perhaps have heard of him—he used to be a resident of Milltown—he has made his fortune, it seems, in New York, and he's coming back almost directly to—to claim an old promise I made him twenty years ago. My dear, he has loved me—twenty years!"

Her eyes shone, her voice faltered with the ecstasy of her soul.

"And to-morrow he is coming back to me. Oh, Miss Islay, it seems almost like a dream!"

She laughed again, but her eyes were full of tears.

Isabel moved uneasily; she was almost frightened at what she had done. The joke did not seem half so jocose as it had at first, since poor Miss Genevieve accepted it in such dead earnest.

She took advantage of the entrance of a customer to slip out of the little shop.

"Girls," said she to her co-conspirators, "we must tell her that—that it is only an April Fool!"

"Tell her!" echoed Lucy Felton. "What for? She'll find it out soon enough. She needn't have been such a silly, anyhow!"

"It will kill her!" pleaded Isabel.

"No, it won't. People don't die so easily," laughed Lucy.

"Heard the news about Miss Genny Seaman?" said Mrs. Webb, at the boarding-house breakfast table the next morning, as she poured the coffee and helped the eggs and bacon around.

Isabel looked guiltily up.

"No," said she. "What is it?"

"Found dead in her cheer," said Mrs. Webb. "A-smilin' as happy as a child. Some heart trouble, the doctor says."

Isabel drew a long breath. So she had died, and never known how cruelly she had been deceived.

She drew Mary Crane and Miss Felton aside.

"Girls," said she, "you must never breathe a syllable of this to anybody. Let the secret die with this poor little woman."

"But she died happy at last," said Mary, with the tears running down her cheeks. "Believing that her old sweetheart was coming back to her."

"Yes, but that don't justify our heartlessness," whispered Isabel.

And then and there the three girls entered into a compact secrecy.

Miss Genevieve was buried in a shady corner of the village cemetery, and on the very day of the funeral Isabel Islay met a tall, bearded stranger walking along the street, scanning the houses with keen, troubled eyes.

"Can you tell me," said he, "where Miss Seaman lives—Miss Genevieve Seaman?"

Isabel started.

"Miss Seaman was buried this morning," said she. "Oh, I am so sorry! Was she a friend of yours?"

They had stopped opposite the little gate where the wheel-tracks of the hearse were yet visible. The sign "Milliner and Dressmaker" yet creaked in the wind, the red sun was sinking behind the low eaves, and Miss Genny's cat rubbed itself against the doorsill as if begging to be let in.

"A friend!" repeated the stranger, as he drew an old-fashioned miniature from his pocket. "See, here is her picture! I've waited all these years to make a home for, and now—she is dead!"

Isabel looked at the picture.

Good heavens! had Genevieve Seaman ever looked as fair and dimpled and smiling as that?

And the thought flashed across her mind that it was well that this Captain Gleason had not been undeceived.

"Yes," she repeated, softly, "she is dead."

"And you were her friend?"

"Yes, I was her friend—at least as much any one here," falteringly owned Isabel, feeling like an impostor.

"Then perhaps you can tell me something of her. I waited to surprise her—and now—"

His voice was choked; he turned his face away.

Isabella told him, in a low, soft voice, all that she could—all that was good and cheering and hopeful—and Captain Gleason went back to the village hotel, walking slowly, with his hands behind his back, and his head drooping on his breast.

For the time he truly mourned the sweetheart of his youth, but no one can grieve forever.

Moss grows over the fallen tree; violets bloom above the new-made grave. Poor Miss Genevieve was dead and buried, and when the next April blossomed over the land, Captain Gleason was married to Isabel Islay.

"If death was really so near her, I'm glad I wrote the letter that made her happy," thought Isabel. "And Edward will always think of her as young and beautiful! But I never, never will play another practical joke!"—*Saturday Night.*

Real Dimensions of Whales.

Most of the stories we hear about whales of 200, 300 and 400 feet in length are the imaginary musings of persons who have more respect for the sake of a story than for the truth it may contain. Mr. Scoresby, a very high authority on this subject, declares that the common whale seldom exceeds seventy feet in length, and is much more frequently under sixty. Out of 362 whales which he personally assisted in capturing not one exceeded fifty-eight feet in length, and the largest he ever heard of being captured and measured by persons who could be relied upon only measured seventy-seven feet. Of the razor backed whale he has seen specimens that measured 105 feet. One of these was found dead in Davis Straits, which measured 101 feet, and a skeleton of one found in in Columbia River was 112 feet. Other specimens have measured all the way from eighty to 100 feet. One cast on shore at North Berwick, Scotland, and preserved by Dr. Knox, was eighty-three feet in length. These instances seem to establish the average length of these huge animals. In his earlier accounts Cuvier, the eminent naturalist, with considerable credulity, says. "There is no doubt that whales have been seen in certain epochs and in certain seas that were upward of 300 feet, or 100 yards long."—*St. Louis Republic.*

Parisian ladies are wearing dress skirts that fit the figure as closely as a coat-sleeve fits the arm.

LADIES' COLUMN.

THE FAD OF WEARING BLACK.

The fashionable fad of wearing black has been given the word "go." It is only about a year ago that women were considered always stylishly dressed in black. It was rich, delicate, durable, unfading, all that women desire. But the shopkeepers and storekeepers, who found that it was just the color for their female employes, knocked the fashionable stamp off it. As a fact, black fabrics are about as cheap as anything poor people can buy, because they are generally durable. The woman who is dressed in black, with white linen collar and cuffs, looks the perfection of neatness, and from the purely æsthetic standpoint employers of female help did a good thing when they began to inaugurate black as an article of attire among them. But fashion is so fastidious that the women of Murray Hill will don nothing that is the custom of their humbler sisters behind the counters or in the offices to wear, and black has been almost tabooed, except by reasonable and sensible ladies, who retain it in spite of fashion.—*St. Louis Republic.*

DRESS OF 16TH CENTURY ENGLISHWOMEN.

This description of the dress of Englishwomen in 1515 is taken by the San Francisco *Examiner* from a letter written by an attache of the Venetian Legation to a friend at home:

"Their usual vesture is a cloth petticoat over the shift, lined with gray squirrel or some other fur; over the petticoat they wear a long gown lined with some choice fur. The gentlewomen carry the train of their gowns under the arm; the commonalty pin it behind or before, or at one side. The sleeves of the gowns sit as close as possible, are long and unslashed throughout, the cuffs being lined with some choice fur. Their headgear is of various sorts of velvet, cap fashion, with lappets down behind over their shoulders like two hoods, and in front they have two others, lined with some other silk. Their hair is not seen, so it is not possible to see whether it be light or dark. Others wear on their heads muslins, which are distended and hang on their backs, but not far down. Some draw their hair from under a kerchief and wear over their hair a cap, for the most part white, round and seemly. Others, again, wear a kerchief in folds on their head; but, be the fashion as it may, the hair is never seen. The stockings are black, and their shoes doubly soled, of various colors. When they meet friends in the street they shake hands and kiss on the mouth and go to some tavern to regale, their relatives not taking this amiss, as such is the custom. The women are very beautiful and good tempered."

NEED EXPLICIT DIRECTIONS.

Did you ever know a genuine Chinese woman of culture? There are a very few such women who are married to Anglo-Saxon husbands and have adopted Anglo-Saxon habits of thought, retaining enough of a spice of the "flowery kingdom" to be specially interesting. Such women seem to be possessed, however, in their work with the same mechanical kind of mind which is the characteristic of the male Chinese. They follow a rule given them with a fidelity and exactness that never fails to produce a uniform result. An amusing instance of this perfect fidelity to detail is thus related: A Chinese lady who had become thoroughly anglicized was given a recipe for a new cake which she had asked for. She gazed at it critically. "It's an odd way of making cake," she murmured. "You don't give any directions for buttering the pan." "Of course, that is understood," was the amused answer. Unhappily, it is the Anglo-Saxon woman's habit to consider things understood in cooking and to give directions in an indefinite manner, leaving half the rule to be presumed; and this makes most cook books a failure. "My husband invited a friend to tea," said a young married lady recently, "and I wished to show what a good housekeeper I was; so I made some cake. I did not say anything to the cook, as she was not too amiable over my intrusion; but I made the cake by myself, exactly according to the recipe, feeling certain that it would be better than Bridget's. The rule gave no directions for flour, so I did not put any in. The cake was a surprise to all of us." This story, which is literally true, goes to show how exceedingly ignorant a young housekeeper may be, and how necessary exact directions are.—*New York Tribune.*

FASHION NOTES.

Jeweled nets will be much worn in the way of draperies this season.

Decorative hairpins appear to be necessities of the modern style of dressing the hair.

Tight lacing was never carried to such agonizing and ridiculous extremes as now.

Stationery used by women of taste and good breeding is marked by its simplicity.

A lady's purse of English manufacture is adorned in a corner with a lucky sixpence.

The large gold and silver hooks and eyes which are used to trim the waists of dresses are a Parisian idea, where fashions now are nothing if not eccentric.

Recently the Princess of Wales appeared in a long white lace boa, embroidered with real pearls, the cost of which London society papers give as "over $2500."

The sleeves are close below the elbow, and buttoned on the inner side with six small buttons. The upper part of the sleeve is set very high on the waist, with but little fullness.

The portable writing table is a most comfortable affair, either for traveling or a sick room. It consists of a small tray on legs, which can either be set down on the floor or used as a bed table. A writing board, fitted with ink, blotter and paper, fits into it securely.

The Guttenberg Bible.

Fourteen thousand eight hundred dollars seems a stupendous price to pay for one book, but J. W. Ellsworth, of Chicago, who paid that sum for the Gutenberg Bible, at the recent sales of the Brayton Ives collection, in New York, probably does not repent his bargain. He has secured not only the first book printed with type, but also, as many believe, the first production of the printers' art since the invention of printing. The Gutenberg Bible was printed about 1450-55. There are several copies of the Bible in existence, but Mr. Ives claimed for the copy a pre-eminence on the ground that it was the first edition, and that it is in a state of marvelous preservation, being in the original binding of thick oak boards, covered with stamped calf, and ornamented with brass corners and center pieces. Many of the leaves are uncut. The volume measures eleven and a half by fifteen and seven-eighths inches on the leaf. The first volume, ending with the Psalms, has three hundred and twenty-four leaves, and the second contains three hundred and seventeen leaves. The Lenox Library has a copy of the Gutenberg Bible, and it belongs to a later edition. Another copy, smaller than the one in the Ives collection, and in modern binding, sold in London, seven years ago, for nearly $19,500, so that the figure paid by Mr. Ellsworth is not exorbitant. — *National Publisher and Printer.*

Lancewood and Logwood.

Jamaica is exporting a great deal of lancewood (used for buggy shafts) and logwood. They have exhausted the more easily attainable supply of logwood and are now digging up the roots of the old trees. It won't take long to use up the supply of roots, but in the meantime the young trees are springing up. The railroad, which is to make the circuit of the island, is now seventy miles long and that will open up new forests.— *Washington Star*