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ORIGINAL TALES.

For The Star
Buried Alive,

BY ECALLAW.

In January, 1856, a young Southerner arrived at Smithville, and entered the house of Raymond & Carey in the humble capacity of dry goods clerk. A quiet, pleasant, genteel looking young man was Alfred Raymond; obliging to all, intimate with none, he seemed to care for nothing, but the fortune he had left home to make. But, unlike most fortune-seekers, he sought to make it honestly, and with the good will of all.

But a change came over the spirit of his dreams. The first time he saw Kittie Norwood, he fell a victim to tormenting Cupid's arts. Not that he loved her as yet. No. He did not own this even to himself. Besides Alf. Raymond was no fool; and he well knew that John Norwood would never give his beautiful and accomplished daughter to a wandering youth without a home he could call his own; even if he could win her affections, which he considered very doubtful. But still she lingered in his memory, and each subsequent interview deepened the impression made upon his heart until at last he became miserable, and heartily wished he had never seen the lovely town of Smithville.

But strange to relate, (but which will be readily understood by persons in his situation,) he lingered near her, and was never happier than when by her side.

As for Kittie, she thought him a good looking, yes, really a handsome young man, intelligent, genteel. O! he was altogether a nice young man. But she had never once thought of loving him. Poor Alf. It was well he could not read her secret thoughts, for when she smiled at meeting him, his heart fluttered at the thought that perhaps she loved him.—Thus weeks rolled by.

It was a dark, stormy night in March following. The wind howled fiercely through the leafless branches of the giant oaks which adorned the town, and roared amid the surrounding hills. Raymond had just finished the business of the evening, and was sitting before the crackling fire in his little sleeping room, smoking a cigar, listening to the rustling winds without, and dreaming of the future. Suddenly he heard the distant shout—Fire! He listened; louder arose the startling cry. Snatching up his hat he hurried out into the street to ascertain the worst. 'Twas the residence of Mr. Norwood, situated on the eastern side of the town, full half a mile off.

For a moment Raymond stood gazing blankly at the rolling flames, mantling higher and yet higher toward the skies. Then joining the excited crowd he hurried to the spot. 'Twas a sublime spectacle—those billows of fire, wrapping in flames that noble mansion and lighting up the surrounding darkness for a long distance around. That large and excited crowd, which had gathered from every quarter of the town, standing around powerless before the devouring element.

As Raymond neared the spot he looked around—there was Mr. and Mrs. Norwood—safe. But where was she, whom he loved better than life—without whom

existence itself was not desirable. She alone was left in the doomed house; and the floors and stairways were wrapped in flames.

Norwood appealed frantically to the multitude to save his only child, and offered immense rewards for her rescue. But the danger was too appalling; none volunteered to undertake the hazardous enterprise.

Raymond snatched up a thick woollen blanket, and hastily wrapped himself in it, and with a hurried prayer for success, rushed into the building amid the murmured applause of the assembled multitude who could appreciate, though they could not perform so noble an action.

Scorched by the flames, almost suffocated by the clouds of smoke which filled the interior of the building he made his way up the first stairway and paused—no sound, save the roar of the flames, fanned into fiercer fury by the sweeping wind. He called, but received no answer—shouted, but in vain. He hurried to a window and endeavored to peer through the rolling clouds of smoke which shut him off from the world. If he could only feel that he was still in the busy world, and not cut off from human aid—lured on to destruction by an invisible demon which he could not resist. He pressed his hands to his face to shut out the terrible fancies which were thronging through his brain, a foretaste of the dreadful fate awaiting him.

A low groan reached his ears—he rushed in the direction of the sound. A door, fastened, locked, stopped him; he tried in vain to open it, he sprang against it with all his strength. It tottered, opened, and Kittie Norwood rushed to meet him.

"Oh, Mr. Raymond, may heaven bless you for this. I could not find the key to unlock my door and I had given up to perish."

Without uttering a word he snatched her in his arms and hurried out. Everything depended on his haste, his life, her life was hanging on a point—if the way of escape was blocked up by flames they were lost. Suddenly he paused, the last ray of hope was extinguished, escape was impossible; they were lost, lost inevitably.

Driven backward by the fierce torrent of fire that came rushing up before them, he recoiled back into the room in which he had found her; and closing the door he seated her upon a soft cushioned sofa and kneeling beside her, he buried his face in his hands.

For a moment he sat motionless, her face was white as death, and her eyes shone with a strange light, but her compressed lips showed the unflinching fortitude with which she met her fate. At last she whispered,

"Is there no hope?"

Raymond raised his head and gazed silently at her.

"Must we die?" she asked.

He arose and stood before her; his voice was calm, cold, distinct,

"You will not perish, you will be saved, I know not what my fate will be but it will be something terrible. If I perish will you not remember me, and shed a tear over the memory of one who loved you better than life and who died to save you. You cannot realize the depth

of my affection for you," he continued more passionately, "but—"

The floor tottered beneath them, and the flames burst into the room. Grasping her tightly to his breast he sprung to a window; through the parting clouds of smoke he could see the multitude below looking eagerly for his return. A moments hesitation, a swift whistling through the air and he knew no more.

* * * * * "The lady is not seriously injured," said Dr. Marlow, the surgeon of Smithville.

"And the gentleman?"

"The gentleman is dead; his head struck a stone and fractured his skull," and the surgeon turned away to give his attention to the lady, leaving the unfortunate young man to his fate. And what was he to the citizens of Smithville, more than any other stranger. Friendless, poor, who was there in that multitude to weep over his fate, or feel more than a passing sadness as they looked at that cold white face. There was one,—one who mourned sincerely—the fair young girl for whose life he had given his own. And there were others who wept for her sake.

Morning came, bright and beautiful. The storm had spent its fury and the wind his strength; and the sun arose and poured forth his cheering rays upon the earth as if to make amends for the preceding night's disaster. Business resumed its onward march in Smithville. Business! That power which neither death, nor fire, nor aught else can stop. True there was a new grave being made beneath the old oak in the Smithville burying-ground; and a heap of smouldering ashes, where once stood the beautiful mansion of Mr. Norwood; but the people of Smithville believed in taking care of themselves and their own, and leaving others to do the same,

The day wore away and evening had arrived when Raymond was carried to his narrow bed beneath the elods of the valley. A few sympathizing friends stood around his open grave to hear the solemn burial service read over him. A few tears were shed over the noble and unfortunate young stranger; and all turned away to pursue their daily avocations, and to forget him; or only to remember him as the young man who was killed when Mr. Norwood's house was burned; little dreaming that the throbbing of that still, silent heart had been only temporarily suspended, and that soon the life current would begin to flow, and no one near to rescue him;

The sun had long set, and the stars alone kept watch over the darkened earth when Alf. Raymond awoke. Slowly the life current began its ebb and flow, and still more slowly did consciousness and reason resume their sway.

Reader, did you ever imagine yourself buried alive? Did you ever fold your hands across your bosom, in utter darkness and imagine yourself fettered in a coffin with the earth piled above you, shutting out all expectation or hope of life, with no companions, save the mouldering bodies of those gone before you, lying by your side? Do you remember the thrill of horror which crept over you, to thrust out your arms to drive away the feeling? If so you have some idea of the horror with which Raymond became acquainted with his

dreadful situation.

Slowly the remembrance of the incidents, of the past twenty-four hours rose up before him, growing more extinct with every effort to recall them. He remembers hearing the surgeon pronounce him dead; bitter thoughts would rise up against him, for he might have examined him more carefully before he sentenced him to this dreadful death. He remembered the murmurs of sorrow and sympathy which burst from the group standing around his coffin, before it was finally closed. And then he forgot his rage against the surgeon when he remembered the lingering kiss of her he had sacrificed himself to save from death. All rose up in his mind like a strange fantastic dream, and for awhile he dwelt over it, almost forgetting his horrible situation.

Then as he felt the hard unyielding sides of his coffin the reality rushed upon him. In vain he struggled to raise himself, to extend his arms, to enlarge his narrow prison but an inch; a wall of adamant was not more firm. In vain he shouted for aid, but his voice was lost in the solid earth around him; and had aid been near, his fate would still have been unknown. In vain he prayed to meet death with composure; the heavens above seemed cut off from his reach and his terror remained.

Human agony can only exist to a certain extent, when we pass this boundary, the feelings become blunted and the mind insensible to pain.

It was thus with Raymond; a stupor crept over him, driving away all feeling save a dim, shadowy consciousness of his situation. Hours, days, weeks crept slowly by, for in the grave there is no computation of time, a day is as a year and a year as a day.

Again he was aroused, this time by slow dripping of the water into his coffin; and he remembered with a new thrill of horror, that the graves in this burying-ground were in this season of the year, soon filled with water. Sudden death was inevitable; the little space around his coffin outside was filled, and through the cracks, beneath the coffin lid, the water was oozing slowly, yet surely. One might think this a merciful providence, but to the unfortunate victim it was not; for life is sweet, and to the perfectly sane, death can never appear in any other than a hideous form. Perhaps it is for the reason that our kind Creator has ordained that we should leave our earthly home, while our faculties are suspended, or acting unnaturally for were our love of life, friends, or any earthly things in full action, we could never leave this state but with regret.

Slowly the water rose—his body was half covered and his head was only kept above it by the pillow, which had been placed by some kind hand to give an air of quiet slumber to his long rest.

The water reached his head, it crept slowly along the side of his face. He pressed his face against the coffin lid—a few moments more and the subtle fluid would cover his lips and cut off his existence, strange images were floating before his eyes, unearthly sounds rumbled in his ears, the coffin walls trembled around him, an invisible hand reached down and clutched him by the hair, and was dragging him from his hiding place

THE STAR.

Be Sure You Are Right And Then Go Ahead.—Davy Crocket.

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to cast him into outer darkness. * * *
* * * * * He opened his eyes. Kittie Norwood was bending over him. For awhile they looked into each others eyes in silence. Those eyes, neither had expected to see again.

"Where am I?" he asked at last.
"Wait, perhaps you had better not talk about it yet. Dr. Marlow will come in a few minutes."

Presently Dr. Marlow bustled into the room,

"Had a serious time, young man. You must forgive me for thinking you dead.— Fact is, I was never more astonished than when I discovered life in you. A dispute arose between myself and Dr. Beaumont concerning you, and we repaired last night to the church-yard to examine into the cause of your death more minutely. You had a narrow escape from being drowned. The water had reached your lips."

Thus the worthy doctor rattled on, and Raymond slowly gathered the facts. The surgeons had dug him up to settle a dispute, concerning the injury of the brain, necessary to produce death, by sawing asunder his skull. They had found life not extinct and had removed him to a house close by. He was delirious for several hours; but after a quiet slumber he awoke out of danger.

On a calm, sweet evening in May following, when the sun shone with the brightness, but without the heat of summer, and the earth was decked out in her fairest robes; there was a wedding in Smithville. Raymond had won his treasure and Kittie Norwood became Mrs. Raymond.

Ten years afterwards I chanced to pass through Smithville again; there was a new mansion on the site of Mr. Norwood's old one which had been destroyed. I asked a fat old gentleman who owned that beautiful residence.

"Alf. Raymond. The young merchant who married the daughter of the late John Norwood. S'pose you've heard of his saving her life and getting buried alive?"

"Oh, yes! such things never remain a secret."

"Well, sir, that was a big price to give for a girl, but she's worth it. She's a rare lady, sir; got four or five children, pretty as dolls. to boot, sir; O! Raymond is a rare, happy man, sir."

But he came very near losing when he played that dreadful game, the conditions of which were "life and happiness," or "a dreadful death."

Massachusetts has one convict to every hundred citizens; Alabama has one convict to every five thousand three hundred and ninety citizens,

The United States has a greater length of railways than all other countries together.

Almost every decade in our country's history, ending with the figure seven has marked the beginning of a financial crash or severe depression.

A merchant in New York who failed twice in fifteen years and was forced to sell his wife's wardrobe to procure the necessaries of life has just retired with a fortune of \$500,000.]