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Miss Tompkins' Mystery.

By Eugenia D. Bigham.

FIVE hilarious horsemen came charging through the darkness until within a few feet of an on-going buggy. Then the foremost shouted:

"Halt, or we shoot!"

The buggy halted with a jerk, and its two occupants nerved themselves for what they knew was coming. Almost instantly lanterns were flashing in their faces, other faces peering at them. The road was such that the horsemen could not surround the buggy, and several, half drunk, and holding pistols, had dismounted to make inspection of the buggy's occupants.

"What name?" asked the leader, his tone itself showing surprised disappointment.

"Horace Tilly and mother," the man answered. "What's the trouble?"

"Trouble be hanged! We are after Ed Tompkins, the murderer, blast him!" swore the fellow, satisfied that neither of the parties before him could be that much hunted person. With less of whisky in him he might have been harder to satisfy. Lowering his lantern, he started to the rear of the vehicle, calling out, "No go, boys! Let's pass 'em!"

Yelling and cursing the men managed to remount their horses, and the small man in the buggy trembled more violently than his mother did when shouts, of, "Pass 'em! Jump the buggy!" split the air.

The two parties were on a most dangerous piece of road, one side skirting an abrupt hill, the other side but a foot or two from a poorly guarded cliff edge, rocks and river far below.

"They are just drunk enough to try to jump us," quavered the small man, peering back of the buggy.

His companion quietly took the reins in her large hands, and turning the horse as close to the hill as possible, held him there. With yells that seemed to come from demons rather than men, the horsemen made a mad rush on the backward track to gain space, the leader whirling about first, and making a rush directly at the buggy. In a moment there was a fine fanning of air about that vehicle, and then a noble horse scrambled wildly, close to the right forewheel of the buggy, balanced himself, and dashed on. Another splendid animal immediately followed suit, and a third, their riders cursing and cheering by turns, the lady in the buggy holding her astonished steed as best she could, her son fairly covering from fright.

The two remaining horsemen declined to make the leap.

"Drive on there, you road blockers, and be quick about it!" they shouted.

And the road blockers drove on, their horse not refusing to be quick, the lines managed by the woman, while her son, no doubt, thanked God for the shielding darkness.

Some two hours later Mr. Horace Tilly purchased a railroad ticket for his mother at a country station, saw her comfortably seated in a coach, kissed her with a really manly effort to conceal his tears, and again sought his buggy. The same terrible piece of road was to be re-traveled, this time alone, and a fear almost beyond control set his body to trembling. But the entire drive was accomplished in safety, and at about three o'clock in the morning the horse was laboriously unharnessed and put in a stall. Then, mud spattered, tear spattered, and utterly weary, the alleged Horace Tilly climbed none other than the back steps of Mr. Ed Tompkins' home, let himself in with a latch key, and in five minutes became Miss Tompkins, maiden lady, and now the only occupant of the house.

Where her brother had hidden the three days and nights since the murder, not even Miss Tompkins knew. He had stealthily let himself in the very night that the officers grew careless in watching his house, and had made good his escape as described. Had the buggy and horse belonged to him he would doubtless have been captured. They belonged, however, to an old farmer who had for years been allowed to put them in the Tompkins' barn when he stayed overnight in town.

That Miss Tompkins would or could sustain her part of the escape would

have been almost impossible of belief to the townspeople, to all of whom she was well known. She was a teacher and had taught the alphabet to the parents of many of her present pupils. Possibly there was not a man, woman or child in the place who did not sincerely admire the timid, exceedingly dressy, faithful little woman who at fifty was as patient as she had been at twenty. Some people said that her heart had been broken and thrown away in her youth. If so, she had recovered the largest fragment and it had never failed her. It came nearest to doing so when she sat in the quiet house and realized that her brother had taken with him every cent of the money which she had laid away year after year. The old age which she knew was upon her made her very shy of the lonely future—no brother, no money. So she began to borrow a daily paper from a neighbor, and watch the want column, thinking to see something by which she could add to her earnings. One day she gazed in great excitement at the following advertisement:

"Any person wishing to sell the use of his brains at the rate of seven thousand dollars per annum, will please apply at Perriwink Home Place, near Fettersburg, Pa., on Thursday morning, ninth instant, between the hours ten and twelve."

Miss Tompkins kept her own counsel, but a substitute was in her place at the school the following Thursday morning.

About eleven of the clock on that day, there were hitched in front of Perriwink's fine house a buggy, a close carriage, and a saddle horse. A young lawyer had ridden the horse, a preacher and a commercial traveler had come in the buggy, and Miss Tompkins had stepped from the carriage. The four were ushered into a handsome room, where they sat in stony silence, taking stolen glances at each other, calculating, no doubt, as to the excellence of the several lots of brains represented. The lips of the commercial traveler several times showed symptoms of a smile, and he dared look nowhere but at the centre table.

They were not kept waiting long. A most gracious, fine looking old gentleman entered, bowed and seated himself so as to command the faces of the four. Few words were wasted, and it was soon clearly understood what was wanted: a person of education and high morality, who would at once take up residence at the farm, and assume entire charge of a half witted son and his property.

"In short," said the gentleman, "I want to provide ease and satisfaction for myself the few more years I may live, and brains for my son against the time when I shall not be here to guard him, helpless."

The preacher could not accept because of his calling; the lawyer because of family ties; the traveler because of disinclination; and Miss Tompkins because she had enough brains to see that a man was required to fill the position. At least that is what she said. But there was a queer flutter in the fragment she used as a heart, her face being so much colored thereby that she looked more like her girlhood self than she had in many a day before. The old gentleman gave her more than the fourth of his attention, and when the conference was ended escorted her to her carriage. When he should have bid her good-bye he hesitated, stammered, colored, and then managed to ask:

"Did I understand you to say you are Miss Linda Tompkins?"

A really natural, merry ripple of laughter sounded in the carriage, and Miss Tompkins said:

"No, you did not so understand, for I did not say it. But that's who I am nevertheless. How'd'y do, Philip?" With that she put her hand in his as if just meeting him. "I knew you the moment you entered the room," she added, laughing again.

The Mr. Philip Passmore upon whom Miss Tompkins had so unwittingly called was the heart-breaker, according to the public, of Miss Tompkins' youth, and after many years' resi-

dence elsewhere, he had returned "to die," he said, near his boyhood home. But after this meeting with his old friend, and after meetings with various other old friends at Fettersburg, he decided that he would live some years yet. His advertisement did not reappear, and in a short while the Fettersburg people had a sweet morsel to roll under their tongues: Miss Tompkins had an almost constant visitor, and seemed ridiculously happy, despite the shadow resting on the family name. That her visitor had addressed her in her teens, and was now a wealthy widower, glorified both of them in the eyes of onlooking young people.

Miss Tompkins ceased to borrow the daily. Then it was rumored that she was buying her wedding outfit. And she was.

But all in an evening the engagement was broken. That no one knew why but added to the interest, and Mr. Passmore affirmed that the cause of Miss Tompkins' unusual behavior was no better known to him than to the public. He looked very dejected, and once more began to think of the time when his son would be without a protector. People gave him all their sympathy, and called Miss Tompkins heartless.

But by-and-by that lady lost the cheerful demeanor she had kept up immediately after the storm broke, and she seemed humble, even meek, joining in conversation as if it were an honor to be allowed to do so. She again began to watch the want column, and to ask for little jobs of sewing. Then sympathy began to veer in her direction. People said there was "something rotten in Denmark," and to nose it out would have been their dearest delight. Soon they were petting Miss Tompkins as in the days before Mr. Passmore re-appeared in her life, and were really grieved that she did not brighten. The change in the public extended even to Mr. Passmore, and he again called on Miss Tompkins, the act creating quite a ripple. No other love affair had ever caused such interest in Fettersburg. Even the school children talked about it. And they talked long, for weeks went by, and months, the two parties concerned changing not on any respect.

When winter was well advanced, it was whispered about that the old Tompkins place was haunted. Some told of unaccountable noises in the basement when Miss Tompkins was known to be at school; and others of hearing a sepulchral cough in the back of the house, a cough that sounded exactly like that of old Mrs. Tompkins. Perhaps these reports made Miss Tompkins more nervous than she had been. She tried to laugh at them, even going to far as to tell her neighbors that if they should see a thin coil of smoke from her chimney during her absence, they might know the ghost was warming himself at her banked fire. The thin coil of smoke had already been noticed, making cold chills creep up the spine of the superstitious, who looked upon Miss Tompkins as the bravest woman in the town.

But by-and-by when several more winters had passed and the coil of smoke continued to be seen, it ceased to be talked of except among a few. Mr. Passmore continued his visits at intervals, and people were forced to be reconciled to the course of events.

Then came a winter so cold that the oldest inhabitants said they had never seen its like. And the cold was responsible for the renewal of the talk concerning a ghost at the Tompkins house. A light began to be burned all night in a back room which some said was Miss Tompkins' bedroom. It was known that she had become almost stingy of late years, and nothing but fear of the ghost could make her burn a light all night and every night. Moreover, the lady was growing bent, and paler and thinner and very sad.

Next door to Miss Tompkins lived a preacher, and away in one night when things were in stiff freeze, the preacher's door bell jangled most urgently and repeatedly.

"What's wanted?" he called from the rear of the hall, as he stood shivering in his night dress.

"It is I, Miss Tompkins," came from outside. "Please Mr. Myers, go for Doctor Parker as fast as you can, and bring him to me."

"That I will. I'll send my wife to wait on you till he gets there," was the hearty answer.

But Miss Tompkins was half way across the yard before he finished speaking, and evidently it was not she who required the doctor's aid. Somewhat later four people stood by a bed

in a back room of the Tompkins house. On the bed was an emaciated, suffering, most wretched looking consumptive—Ed Tompkins. His sister was too excited to know or to care that her face was wet where unheeded tears had dripped.

"I'll help you, old fellow," said the doctor, bending over the thin body, examining it critically with eyes and hands, only to gain time to recover himself, somewhat. "How long has he been here?" he asked, straightening himself, and looking at Miss Tompkins. "Five years," she answered tremulously.

The preacher and his wife started perceptibly, and stared in silence at the little lady, while the doctor cleared his throat and looked away. All three began to understand many things. The doctor busied himself with his patient, though he knew there was no shadow of use in his ministrations.

As for Ed Tompkins, he had known that death was at his side when his sister left him to call aid, and now he seemed to be conscious of her presence alone; this kind sister, who all his life had given him blessing for blight, blessing for blight. He did not even glance at the unaccustomed faces looking so pityingly at him. Seeing how he watched her, Miss Tompkins asked:

"What is it, Ed?"

"Just thinking," he answered. "Thank you for all—all."

She bent close to his head and whispered to him, weeping.

At dawn a corpse was in the parlor, and by breakfast time the whole Fettersburg was agog with comment. Of course Miss Tompkins had shielded a murderer in her house for five years. But then he was her brother, and had been sick all that time. Women said they were proud of Miss Tompkins; men said she was grand, and young people gazed at her house in speechless awe. And Mr. Passmore declared that a more perfect character than Miss Tompkins' had never graced the town. He couldn't have looked happier if all Fettersburg had been admiring him instead of Miss Tompkins.

About six months later, the much lauded lady went once more to Perriwink Home Place, this time not to answer an advertisement. She went in her own carriage and was greeted as Mrs. Passmore.—Waverley Magazine.

"Bugeye" Bay Craft.

A Crisfield, Md., correspondent writes to the Baltimore Sun: Stephen G. McCready, of Crisfield, gives the following history of the boat known as the bugeye. He has acquaintance with all kinds of Chesapeake Bay craft for the past fifty years, and says: "Captain Clement R. Sterling built the first bugeye that sailed on the Chesapeake Bay. Captain Sterling was building a canoe from three logs, and as he had plenty of time, it occurred to him to use two more logs and put on a deck. On his first trip to Baltimore with this peculiar craft he was hailed many times by passing vessels, whose captains invariably asked what was the name of the queer vessel. To each inquiry Captain Sterling replied: 'It's a bug's eye.' If Captain Sterling were living at the present time it is doubtful if he could give an explanation of his answer, beyond saying that it was pleasantry. The name stuck to the craft, and it has been known ever since as the bugeye. The first vessel of this class was called a punt, and was made from one log hollowed out; then came the canoe, and, finally, the most complete vessel of all—the bugeye.

"The bugeye is now the most popular vessel among oystermen in Somerset County, and at least 100 new vessels of this type are built every year. Some of them are of at least ten feet beam, and cost \$1200. They are very strong, being built of the best logs."

Docking the Tails of Horses.

It is a pity that docking horses is a practice which needs legislative interference. Its cruelty and absurdity ought to be patent enough to ordinary humanity and common sense to bring about its abolition. Why the unnecessary suffering entailed by this practice should be inflicted on so useful and willing a servant of man as the horse is a mystery no one has yet succeeded in elucidating. The mere plea of fashion is pitifully insufficient, as even fashion should hesitate to put a horse docked for the hunting field in England in the shafts of a carriage in America.—Baltimore American.

THE END OF THE WAR.

(As it looks sometimes.)

Ten sturdy burghers standing in a line; French's column captured one; then there were nine.
Nine sturdy burghers, reckless of their fate,
Organized a little raid; then there were eight.
Eight sturdy burghers—no hope under heaven—
Tried to storm a blockhouse; then there were seven.
Seven sturdy burghers played some little tricks
On a British armored train; then there were six.
Six sturdy burghers now remained alive; brilliant strategy soon made them five.
Five sturdy burghers—not a burgher more—
Tried to capture Kitchener; then there were four.
Four sturdy burghers, chipper as could be, Wouldn't hear of terms of peace; soon there were three.
Three sturdy burghers—a cordon to cut through—
Sure enough they did it, but then there were two.
Two sturdy burghers had a little fun With a troop of yeomanry; then there was one.
Then the British Army bagged the Only One—
And he was planning raids and traps until they got his gun!
—William E. McKenna, in Puck.



One touch of humor makes the whole world chin.—Schoolmaster.

Ethel—"Were you very much surprised to meet her?" Blanche—"Surprised? Why, I didn't notice what she had on!"—Judge.

"Did you see those two women exchange looks?" "Y-yes; but, somehow, that dark one in red is still the better looking."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

Tess—"She's very mannish, isn't she?" Jess—"Awfully so. She can't force her way through a crowd of women at all."—Philadelphia Press.

Celebrities are lots of fun; At least, I've heard it said. The trouble is you're never one Till after you are dead! —Philadelphia Record.

Miss Singleton—"Society is all well enough for those who are single and want to marry." Mrs. Wedderly—"Yes, and for those who are married and want to forget it."—Chicago News.

He forced her pa to toe the mark; 'Twas quite a hit. Alas! her pa did toe the mark, But he was it. —Philadelphia Press.

Her Father—"No, sir; you can't have her. I won't have a son-in-law who has no more brains than to want to marry a girl with no more sense than my daughter has shown in allowing you to think you could have her."—Chicago News.

Claribel—"I wonder what that creature meant!" Lizzie—"What creature?" Claribel—"Why, Tentworth, of course. When I told him everybody said I was improving in my singing, he said he was delighted to hear it. The idea!"—Boston Transcript.

"First of all," said the merchant to the youthful applicant, "we'll have to test your ability as a whistler. Suppose you try." "I am sorry, sir, but I can't whistle at all." "Hang up your hat!" cried the merchant, promptly. "You're the boy we're looking for."—Boston Globe.

"Laura, these biscuits of yours are unusually fine this morning. I think I never tasted better." "George Ferguson!"—here she looked at him suspiciously—"what are you up to now? Are you going to tell me you can't spare the money for those rugs I wanted to buy to-day?"—Chicago Tribune.

"They say," remarked the sweet young thing, "that you were never really frightened." "Nonsense!" returned the man who was honest, as well as more than ordinarily brave. "They forget that I was once one of the principals in a—" "Duel?" "No—in a swell church wedding."—Chicago Post.

Forest Riches of the Philippines.

In many places the great forests of the Philippines, which are estimated to cover at least 20,000,000 and perhaps 40,000,000 acres, are at present inaccessible through lack of roads. In these forests more than 900 species of trees have already been enumerated. Some of the trees attain a height of 150 feet. They produce gum, rubber, gutta-percha, dyes, oils, tan-bark, textile substances, medicines and timber.