

"Then fill up a bumper!—what can I do less Than drink to the health of my bonny Black Bess?"—this is the point at which she has arrived when she suddenly becomes silent, and for a second her face is suffused with a conscious color. It is our young doctor who has appeared on the gravel-path. She does not rise from her stooping position; but she hurries with her work.

"You are going to decorate the dinner table, I suppose?" he says, somewhat timidly.

"Yes," she answers, without raising her head. The fingers work nimbly enough: why so much hurry?

"You will take some down to the yacht, too?" he says. "Everything is quite ready now for the start to-morrow."

"Oh yes," she says. "And I think I have enough now for the table. I must go in."

"Miss Avon," he says; and she stops, with her eyes downcast. "I wanted to say a word to you. You have once or twice spoken about going away. I wanted to ask you—you won't think it is any rudeness. But if the reason was—if it was the presence of any one that was distasteful to you—"

"Oh, I hope no one will think that!" she answers, quickly; and for one second the soft, black, pathetic eyes meet his. "I am very happy to be amongst such good friends—too happy, I think. I—I must think of other things—"

And here she seems to force this embarrassment away from her; and she says to him, with quite a pleasant air:

"I am so glad to hear that the *White Dove* will sail so much better now. It must be so much more pleasant for you, when you understand all about it."

And then she goes into the house to put the flowers on the table. He, left alone, goes over to the iron seat beneath the ash-tree, and takes up the book she has been reading, and bends his eyes on the page. It is not the book he is thinking about.

#### MR. WITHERTON'S ROMANCE.

**W**HAT a pretty, very pretty girl she seemed, as I looked at her, seated in front of me, over on the right side of the car, with her face turned at an angle which gave me the contour of her delicate oval chin and regular brow! How clear and pure her temples were, and how very neatly the hair grew back from them!

A long time did I watch her, that very cold day near Christmas, when we travelled the whole way on the same road, and I found so much to attract in the changes of her face that I noticed nothing else without or within. She was alone, and appeared to be keeping a sharp look-out upon all her fellow-travellers, more from timidity, I think, than from any curiosity as regarded them. Every man who rose to go to the end of the car to get a drink of water, or to leave it for the pleasure of "a little smoke," or to lounge up to the stove from pure restlessness, immediately influenced her expression of countenance. At the first movement he would make she would start, look apprehensive as he rose, alarmed as he advanced toward her seat, terrified as he came close, and relieved in proportion as he lengthened the distance between them. I noticed, as time passed on, with increasing interest, every new alarm, and the expression each elicited depicted upon her speaking countenance, and was almost lost in conjecture as to where could be her destination, what her position in life, and antecedents, when I was suddenly startled by my wife's voice at my side, saying,

"Theodore, what in the world do you see in that girl's face, that you have been watching her so intently for the last hour?"

"My dear," I answered, "she is very pretty. She reminds me most forcibly of you when I first met you at—a—a—Newport."

"I never went to Newport until I had been almost ten years married," said Mrs. Witherton. (My name is Theodore Witherton.)

"Well," I said, "I mean at that time."

"Then why did you not say 'ten years after our marriage?' I don't think that people can be too particular in their statements," said Mrs. W. "If every one observed this rule, fewer quarrels would occur in families, and society also, and less mischief be made."

"Yes, my dear; I was only thinking at the moment of the likeness."

"Likeness?" she said, sharply. "What likeness could any one possibly see between a dark girl with brown hair and eyes, and the long thin face that she has, and a round fair one, with blue eyes and light hair, like mine—at least," in answer to my glance, "like what mine *was*. However, if you are amused or interested in what you have been gazing at, I am quite satisfied."

She was so well satisfied that she turned squarely round, with her face to the window, and four blocks of black and red plaid shawl alone given me for prospect; for my wife was of comfortable dimensions, and quite filled up three-quarters of the seat we mutually occupied, and the whole of the window besides.

Mrs. Witherton had married me many years ago, through the suggestions of mutual friends, and to the great gratification of my parents. There had been so much difficulty in finding anything in the way of business that I could manage, that the effort at last had to be abandoned. I think that, as is often the case in large families, my capacity has been underrated. Until I married Mrs. Witherton I had been under my mother's care, and then my wife had assumed the charge of me, and we have been as happy, I think, as people generally are. Mrs. Witherton was not handsome, but my mother said that beauty was a great snare; and she was, perhaps, not very clever, but I preferred her not being so for many reasons that I would rather not tell. She had a nice little fortune she had inherited, and when my mother told me in our days of courtship to express certain correct views to her touching marriage settlements, she had interrupted me quickly with a beautiful sentiment: "Do you think, Theodore, that I should be afraid to trust my money to a man to whom I am not afraid to trust myself?" Mother told me not to say anything more on the subject, and we found after the marriage that everything had been tied up as tightly as law could tie it. I am compelled to tell you all this, to make you understand my story. Mrs. Witherton, though, always paid my bills, when she thought them reasonable, and also allowed me some pocket-money; and it was natural that I should be deferential to her, for she was a great deal older than I was.

Now I had often heard the men around me talk of romances and adventures, and all that sort of thing, and though I envied them, still I knew that I was married, and therefore never could have any such experience; but those recitals were of intense interest to me, and as long as they would recount them, I would listen, until there happened to me the adventure that I am going to tell you. Since that day I have thought that I have more in me than people imagine. But to go on with my story.

We were due at New York at eight o'clock that night, and the short winter day closed in earlier than usual as we sped on, breasting the most terrible snow-storm ever encountered. I was afraid to look again at that solitary girl; but when, picking up my wife's muff, I took advantage of my position to steal a glance at her, I saw that her face was pressed closely against the window-pane, and that she had timidly stopped the conductor and asked some question, which, on being answered, seemed to alarm her still further, for she cowered down deeper in her seat. I wanted to follow him out to question him, but I dared not leave Mrs. W. on the plea of a small smoke, for she never allowed smoking when travelling—indeed, very seldom at any other time; but after some cogitation I muttered something concerning her trunk strap having been loosened by the porters. Mrs. W. is very strong-minded on most points, but she never could attain any influence over baggage-men, and was therefore peculiarly alive to their delinquencies.

"Go, Theodore," she instantly said, "and see about my trunk. My opinion is that those porters throw the trunks deliberately about, in the hope that some of them will break, and so give them a chance of pillage."

I rose quickly, and sought neither baggage-master nor trunk, but the conductor, and had a short conversation with him.

"That young lady who is travelling alone seems very nervous and timid," I remarked, as politely as I could, for conductors are sometimes of a contrary temperament. "I feel quite anxious about her."

"Oh, those kind get on very well," he answered, carelessly. "They have a way of looking that will soon induce any soft disengaged chap to take care of them, and no harm done, either."

"But is she entirely alone?"

"Yes, I believe so. Lots of them run all around the country at this season on their own hook. Tell you, sir, the American female is some."

I crushed my disgust at the fellow's vulgar slang.

"Do you know to where she is bound? Is her ticket farther than New York?"

He eyed me very unpleasantly.

"You just let that girl alone," he said. "What have you to do with her? You look as if you could hardly take care of yourself."

"My wife is with me," I said, with dignity; "and I thought that if the young lady was alone, and in need of protection, we could offer it to her when we arrived at New York."

"All right, sir," he said, more civilly. "I guess she will need some one to see after her, for she is bound for Baldon, in Maine, and we shall miss the connection to-night. There's an awful storm blowing."

I went back to my wife, with many useless plans chasing each other in my brain for the accomplishment of my purpose. I was compelled, in returning, to pass the place where the poor girl was seated. She looked up, and the terrified expression that had settled upon her face changed to an appealing glance, so appealing that I hesitated; but just then my wife turned toward me with a question.

"Did you see that the strap was properly fastened?" she asked; "and what was the reason that you did not attend to its being correctly done before we started?"

"It is all right," I said. "My dear, the conductor tells me that we shall be very late in arriving. How terrible for those ladies who are alone to get to the city in this storm and darkness!—so long, too, after the train has been due."

She turned a suspicious—a very suspicious—eye upon me.

"I am so very glad," I hastened to say, "that I did not allow you to leave me, and travel alone to New York. I am always more comfortable in my mind when I am near to protect you in time of need." And I really felt so.

"Mr. Witherton," she said, concisely, "I dislike platitudes."

We sped on in silence, the snow was so deep; and at each station that we stopped at we dropped a passenger or two, till but few were left, for we were an accommodation train. At last we passed through Newark; and then the poor girl, who had hesitatingly risen once or twice, and then sat down again, as if afraid of carrying out her intentions, at last sprang up desperately, and made her way to us. She looked once in Mrs. W.'s face, and then turned to me.

"When I left Washington this morning," she said, almost inaudibly, "I expected to go right through New York to my home, but the conductor tells me we shall not make the connection with the Eastern train. I am all alone, sir, and

much alarmed, for I never have been before in New York, except once, when I passed through without stopping. Will you tell me where I can remain for the night?"

I had known that there existed some strange sympathy between that girl and myself when our eyes had met in passing, and now as she looked me in the face and appealed to me, I felt that I could do and dare a great deal for her sake; but Mrs. Witherton's opinions have always strongly influenced me, and I knew that she was not putting the most favorable construction upon what was passing at that moment. Still, there have been epochs in my life when I have remembered that I am a man and a gentleman, and also an independent one in my views, however my actions may have been curbed by circumstances. And this was one of those moments.

"This lady and myself," said I, motioning toward my wife, "are going to the New York Hotel to-night, and if you so desire, will take charge of you, and will also see that you are comfortably housed, and to-morrow morning will attend to your safely getting to the Eastern train."

"Perhaps you may manage to make it convenient to take her to her home yourself," icily suggested Mrs. Witherton.

"Oh no," cried the girl, innocently; "but if you please, sir, could I see you a moment alone?"

She saw assent in my eyes, and led the way to the rear of the car, and turning away desperately from Mrs. Witherton's looks, I followed her.

"When we get to the city, can you take me to the hotel in the cars?" she asked, with great trepidation.

"Certainly I can, in either car or stage. But do you prefer them to a carriage?" I asked.

"Oh, so much!" she said, thankfully; and after a moment's hesitation she added, "I have so little money with me that I fear to incur much expense;" and then she turned away and quietly resumed her old seat.

I returned to my wife's side.

"Was her communication a state secret?" said she.

"Certainly not. She seems afraid of hacks, or drivers, or something, I really do not know what; only she begged me to take her to the hotel in a street car." I felt an invincible repugnance to letting

my wife know the true reason of the request.

We reached the city by ten o'clock, and telling my *protégée* to keep close to us, I gave my arm to Mrs. Witherton, and looked around for a car as soon as we got out of the *dépôt* to carry us up to our destination. I had just signaled one, and turned to my party to get them in, when I caught sight of my wife stepping into a comfortable carriage.

"Why, my dear," I exclaimed, "I thought you were going with *us*." The driver was waiting, so that I was naturally heedless of my phraseology. "Was it not decided that we should take a car?"

"I really am not quite certain of whom you are speaking, Mr. Witherton, when you say 'we,'" she answered; "but I, for one, do not care to tramp to that vulgar conveyance over my kid boots in snow and slush. You may do as you please."

I "might," certainly, any one "might" who did not care to count the cost; but sage experience had taught me a great deal. However, I could not, and I would not even if I could, have left that lovely young creature alone at night in a strange city; so I turned away and stopped another car, and handed her in.

Seen now in the full light of the brilliant gas jets, as we passed along, she certainly was lovely, with a clearness and freshness of coloring and a brightness in her full hazel eyes and white even teeth. It is true that there was a lack of expression, and an absence of all that would be suggestive of intelligence or quick comprehensiveness; but I confess I only thought of this years afterward. I give an opinion, as I have always considered myself a judge of feminine beauty, although circumstances may not have permitted me to prove my taste.

We reached our destination at my old head-quarters, the New York Hotel, almost as soon as my wife did, whose skirts I saw turning the corner of the second-story staircase as we entered (this was before elevators became a necessity), and then I turned to my companion to learn her wishes.

She was gazing wonderingly and apprehensively around her, evidently thinking of many things I could not fathom, but she gave me no clew just then to her anxieties.

"You need not feel any uneasiness," I said. "This place is almost like a home

to me, and I can make any arrangements for you that you desire. Are you afraid of being alone to-night, for if you are I will ask my wife—" But here my courage failed.

"Not at all frightened," she said, "but I should like an inexpensive room somewhere. I would not mind where they put me."

"I will attend to that. And now will you have some supper? Perhaps after your cold journey—"

"No, no, I thank you," she answered, hastily. "I would like to go at once to bed."

I secured her a room, and gallantly went up five pair of stairs to show her the way. At the threshold she stopped.

"I am very much obliged to you," she said. "You have been very kind. Can I depend upon you to arrange that I shall be called at seven to-morrow morning, as I am told the train leaves at eight; and will you settle my bill and repay yourself what I owe you?" Her beautiful dark hair had fallen down and hung around her, and she looked so gentle and lovely that I determined to do my duty by her in spite of—anybody!

"There will be time enough for that," I said, putting her thin little purse back into her hand. "I will come up and call you myself early to-morrow morning, and arrange everything for you. I will also take you to the station, and see you started safely on your journey." She gave me a little bow and a sweet smile. "Indeed, I shall be most happy to do so," I added, with spirit, and then the door closed.

And then I also remembered that I did not even know where Mrs. Witherton had domiciled herself, and so prowled around on the different floors, interviewing the stray chamber-maids I met (with very unsatisfactory results) as to what room had been assigned to a tall, stout lady in an iron-gray Ulster, and at last I descended to the office and found her number.

I tapped at her door, waited a moment to whisper close to the key-hole, "It is only me, my dear," and then walked in. Mrs. Witherton was seated before a comfortable fire, still in her Ulster (for I had forgotten that the keys of her trunk were in my pocket, so she had been unable to get at her dressing wrapper). Her feet were thrust into a pair of knitted Polish boots, generally used for snow-boots (for her

slippers also were in my overcoat at that moment). Her front curls were "put up" for the night (for bangs were at that time *out*, and corkscrews *in*); and though she had a fragrant supper of broiled oysters on toast and a glass of ale on a waiter before her, she did not appear happy.

Now of all Mrs. W.'s moods the satirical was the one I most abhorred. My skin is naturally soft, but it would curl up into goose-flesh under such infliction, and one glance sufficed to show me the nature of her humor at that moment.

"Why," she cried, "where is she—the lovely waif and stray? How did you manage to tear yourself away? I was quite sure that you would so settle matters that she should have a share of our room, and I have been looking around to gauge its capabilities. That was quite a clever arrangement about the street car, and I only wonder that, after she got rid of me, she did not suggest a carriage."

"My dear Maria, the poor child has perhaps never left home before. Consider how you would have felt if at her age—"

"How *I* would have felt? Do you wish to insult me, Mr. Witherton? I suppose you are aware by this time that you married a lady who would hardly be found, at *any* age, roaming around the country on snowy nights, appealing to the protection of any chance man—"

"Oh, my love, how could she tell that there was a snow-storm coming on? And, besides, thousands of women in this country—indeed, everywhere—are compelled to travel alone. She did not appeal to me. I offered you protection—"

"Then I most positively decline," solemnly said Mrs. W.; and there was no use contesting the point, as, according to the manner things had arranged themselves, her complicity was not needed.

I did not dare to ring and request openly that the porter should be notified to rouse me at seven o'clock; so, fearful that I might oversleep myself, I lay awake the whole night, and counted the hours as they struck. Not even a fire broke out to vary the monotony of my vigil, and once, having given incautiously a loud sigh, my wife turned, and sleepily asked what was the matter.

"I have not closed my eyes," I said.

"Conscience," she muttered, and was again asleep before the words had left her lips.

However, at six I slipped out of bed into the dressing-room, luckily without observation, and when accoutred, toiled up the five pair of stairs to my destination, "one of the five hundred," and knocking at the door, was answered by a pleasant voice, which said, "Thank you; yes—all ready." In a few moments her door opened, and she appeared, bonneted and shawled, bag and purse in hand.

"Will you be so kind as to pay my bill, if you please?" she asked, very nervously, "and to take out also what I owe you for car fare?"

"I will bring you up your account, and you can then see if it is all right before you pay," I said. "I suppose you will take some breakfast?"

"Yes, I think so"—hesitatingly.

Down the five pair of stairs I walked again to the office, and there had a brief confidential talk with the sympathetic clerk, giving him a slight sketch of my position at the time.

"You know," I said, "that she could not help herself, for the connection failed; so I persuaded her to come to this hotel with—with my wife and myself, although she seemed rather afraid of incurring too great expense. Now do, that's a good fellow, make her bill as small as you can. You know I shall remain at this house for some time, and you can always make it up—fix it, you know. Anything that Mrs. Witherton won't object to—on our bill. You understand."

"I see, I see," he said. "All right. Let me see: a night's lodging and breakfast—and a hack?"

"Oh no," I cried, hastily. "I will take her in the street cars. They will soon be running, I suppose?"

"Oh yes. Well, then, a night's lodging and a breakfast. Do you think" (he spoke judicially) "that a dollar and a half is too much?"

"Not at all," I answered. "Give me the bill, and I will take it to her."

He handed it over, and again I made the five-story ascent, and found her seated at her door waiting for me.

"Here it is," handing it over. "Look over it, and if you are not satisfied, I can have it altered. They are very obliging in this house."

She looked long and uneasily.

"Say whatever you think," I urged.

"I think it is very, very high," she answered, simply.

"Then give it to me;" and again I made the descent to the office, tiptoeing carefully past my wife's door, although I knew the utter impossibility of her hearing, or, if she heard, detecting, my footstep among the many that passed.

There, just where I left him, stood the patient, sleepy clerk.

"She thinks it is too much," I whispered.

"Too much?" with raised eyebrows.

"Yes! Take off that dollar" (still in a whisper), "and make it fifty cents. All right, you see. Fix it afterward." I tapped my hand on my rather empty pocket, and winked.

"Oh! Ah! Well!" he said. "That will be all right. Have it just as you please." He gave a broad dash through the one dollar, leaving the fifty cents charged; and again I toiled up with my diminished bill, and once more put it in her hand.

She simply and in good faith handed me a silver half dollar, and then we went in a car to the dépôt. I looked in her relieved, satisfied, and pretty face, and really did not regret my sleepless night and early ride. As for the inexorable future to be met upon my return, I simply ignored it. I put her in the train, and charged the conductor to see to her, and then came the last page of my only romance, ready to be closed. She looked in my face with her open, candid eyes.

"You have been more than kind," she said, "and I hardly know what to say, I am so grateful. I was very much alarmed on the cars, for mother, who lives in Baldon, in Maine, you know, did not consider that there might be detention on the road, and only sent me money enough to buy my ticket and leave me two dollars for travelling expenses. I paid fifty cents to get to the dépôt in Washington, and you were kind enough to have my bill made out as cheaply as possible at the hotel. This, too, was the reason that I asked you to take me there in the cars; I was afraid that my money would not last if I had to pay hack hire. I have just a dollar left," she continued, while the clear, lovely color mounted to the roots of her hair, "and I shall not want anything more till I reach home. It is only a very small trifle; but please, sir, won't you accept it for your trouble?"

Thunder-struck, speechless, with the bill lying on my extended hand which I

had offered to say good-by, and where she had placed it, I stood for a second, hardly understanding what she meant, when, with, "All hands aboard—you'll be carried off, my good sir," the conductor good-naturedly took me by the shoulders, and I found myself at once standing on the platform—the cars half a mile distant already.

It was some time before I recovered my full senses, and then I turned homeward. Half a dozen times before I reached there I took that dollar bill out of my pocket and incredulously inspected it. Circumstances certainly forbade my attaching any very romantic associations to it, but it yet had a kind of mysterious fascination for me. What was her name? I just remembered that I never had asked it, but had told the clerk at the hotel to leave a blank, and that I would inquire, and then I had forgotten to do so. Who was she? What a strange idea for her to have chosen a dollar bill as a remembrance between us! and what could be the value of our currency in Baldon, that her mother should calculate that a couple of dollars above and beyond the cost of her ticket could defray her casual expenses from Washington to Maine? My mind was not equal to finding out the meaning of it all.

I kept my secret for a week, and then I weakly told it. (I hope you do not think that I am trying to make a pun.) My wife had been a good wife to me, although she may not have been very attractive, so in a moment of confidence I revealed it all. Need I say that my openness was not respected, and that in after-years the very slightest attention that I might have felt that I was compelled to pay to any young or attractive girl would bring that dollar bill down on my devoted head, in many ingenious ways on my wife's part, though resulting in exasperating annoyances to me?

How I came to confess the whole story may require a few explanations—to unmarried people particularly. That hotel clerk was a bachelor, and owing to this, and also to an absurd and almost exploded idea he seemed to entertain that he was bound to attend to the interests of his employer, and not let him be defrauded of his just dues (oblivious of how many unjust ones he may have extorted which would have more than restored the balance), had interpreted the hint I had given him, the morning I had arranged the

girl's bill, into a permission to him to charge the deficit to me. Now I dare say this was all fair, and I had no objection to the obligation, for, as you know, I had the equivalent in my pocket; or even without it I would have been willing to bear the loss, for I had my month's allowance in my purse at the time; so if our weekly bill had borne any itemized charge such as "washing," or "baths," or "district messages," or even "oysters on the half shell," it would, perhaps, have passed unnoticed, or at least without comment; but the thoughtless fellow had fixed up the deficit in this way with one fell swoop of his pen:

18 Dec. Drinks..... \$1 50.

Now Mrs. Witherton always slept on the outside of her couch on Sunday night, so that she could secure the weekly bill early Monday morning, although generally timid about robbers; and as her father, her grandfathers on both sides, her only brother, as well as all her immediate kindred, had been leaders in every temperance movement ever instituted, and had always been teetotally teetotal men, she naturally received a severe shock.

"Mr. Witherton," she cried, suddenly awakening me, "what has been your object in treating bar-room loafers for drinks? Do you intend to run for the office of alderman of this city?"

I was so startled at first that I could not collect my senses, but I was perfectly certain that I could positively deny with entire truth this charge. (I had not yet noticed the bill in her hand.) "My dear," I solemnly said, "I have never offered a man a drink, or paid for one for him, in the whole course of my life."

She turned slowly toward me, and situated as I was with a plastered wall on the one side, and no escape except over my wife on the other, I felt the might and majesty of woman. "Mr. Witherton," she again said—and she was wearing at the time her triple-frilled night-cap, and her black-rimmed spectacles to assist her eyes in deciphering the document she held in her hand—"am I to understand that *you*, and *you* alone, imbibed one dollar and fifty cents' worth of drinks on the 18th December? Then, if so, I thank Heaven that there are such places as inebriate asylums."

I too then rose up from my pillow, as the nature of the charge began to dawn

upon me. I took the bill from her hand and pretended to inspect it, although I knew but too well all about its nature; and then what could I do but make a clean breast of it, and confess *all*? and I really felt happier when that was done. My story was rather hard to tell. You would understand how difficult if you knew Mrs. Witherton personally; but still my Maria listened composedly, only breaking the silence once, and that was when I came to the part where I had insinuated to the hotel clerk that I was willing to make up any deficiency in his charge on the girl's bill with *my* money. Then she said something unpleasant, condensed into two words. It is true that I have forgiven them, and never even alluded to them since; but I suppose that to complete my story they ought to be recorded. I can not give her emphasis, though, which, after all, was the most objectionable part of their nature. "Your money?" she cried, with a wonderful prolongation of sound, and all the force was strongly laid on the possessive pronoun.

But I too have at last a story to tell, and though the fellows all laugh at it, I do not mind them, for she was just as pretty and nice as any girl they ever saw. They can not doubt the truth of what I say, because I have the dollar bill to show.

I have tried in vain since we parted to learn something of my travelling companion; but not knowing her name, or aught save that she lived in Baldon, and the subject, also, being unpleasant to my wife, I have labored under difficulties impossible to surmount; but one of my reasons for writing this narrative is the hope of its meeting her eye, and, as Jones says, "weaving one more link in the frail chain that binds us." I suppose he means the dollar bill.

#### A FAREWELL.

Thou goest, and I abide. Like some gray tower  
Crumbling to ruin on desolate mountain height,  
Death-silent, save for screaming eagle's flight,  
My patient day waits Time's corroding power.

While thou, with wings of flame, through Love's  
vast space,

Like some great planet, traversest all spheres,  
I, all in vain, at lonely fount of tears,  
Must strive to quench my soul's thirst for thy face.  
But, 'mid thy varied splendors sometimes pause,

And stay sometimes thy sweep of radiant wing,  
And bid thy voice old songs to memory sing,  
For dirges on my broken life's lost cause,

Which thou hast sung, while I stood by thy side,  
In those long-buried hours before Love died.