

# The Erie County Zephyr

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**The Conduct of Life.**

Be it good that we do, let us do it,  
Giving soul and our strength to the deed;  
Let us pierce the hard rock and pass through it,  
And compass the thing that we need.

Does fate, as a dark cloud, hang over,  
And cover our heads from the light?  
Does fate mock the heart of the lover?  
Must wrong be the victor of right?

Yat in fate there is freedom for each one  
To make or to mar, as he will;  
And the bolts of ill fortune that reach one  
May maim, but they never shall kill.

Ever onward and upward pursuing  
The aim that is thine for the day,  
Adding strength to thy strength by thy doing,  
Thou shalt gain it, no matter by what way.

And though thou art buried with small things  
Though menial thy labor may be,  
Do thy utmost in that and in all things,  
Thou shalt shalt be noble and free.

Does thou love? Let it be with full measure;  
Nor mingle with coldness or hate  
Of others the joy of thy pleasure,  
The passion that crowns thy estate.

Be true every man just; and to women  
Be gentle, and tender and true;  
For thy own do thy best; but for no man  
Do less than a brother should do.

Living thy days full to number,  
In peace thou shalt pass to the grave;  
Thou shalt lie down and rest thee, and slumber,  
Beloved by the good and the brave.

—*Tinsley's Magazine.*

## A Romance of Avenue A.

The scene of my story is laid in the American metropolis, and most of the action takes place in a tenement house situated on that great street of tenement houses, Avenue A. All the characters and the historical lived together; occupying between them one flat of a tenement house nine stories high. Our flat was the seventh from the ground, and being the only lodgers on that floor we speedily became well acquainted. Being a bachelor I occupied the front room, which was a large one, with a kitchen, dining room and sleeping apartment. My next door neighbors were an elderly Irish woman with her two sons, Patsy and Teddy Horley. They occupied three rooms. There were two rooms had as an occupant one of the loveliest little maidens it was ever my good fortune to meet. I think she came originally from Massachusetts. She worked as a shirt maker in a large Canal street establishment, and her name was written on the pavilion as Alice Layne. The Horleys and Miss Layne had been neighbors some time when I became an inmate of the house, and were already quite intimate.

Patsy Horley was the oldest of the brothers, large-formed, red-headed and with irregular homely features. He was heavily freckled, and I never saw him during a six months' acquaintance time that he didn't have a three day's growth of red stubble on his face. He had large, gray eyes, and these were the most striking of his facial organs. They had but one expression—unswerving honesty in their every flash. Patsy was a manly, well-proportioned, and his hands were frequently came home much the worse for liquor, which grieved his old mother sorely.

She was a blunt, plain-spoken woman, sixty odd years old, fat and much given to a "weakness," and her face, which body, which prevented the possibility of labor. So she was content to sit by the window all day long knitting at a never finished blue woolen stocking. Her "eyes" were very good to her. Teddy gave her all his earnings. Patsy, most all. Teddy was the reverse of his brother. He was six feet in his socks, finely proportioned, handsome. His eyes were black, his hair and mustache dark brown, and his face was a combination of a dandy and "dressed up" every night after work. There was a deep affection existing between these brothers. They loved each other, and this devotion was apparent in every act of their lives.

Miss Alice Layne was, as I have before stated, a lovely little maiden, pretty, and with a tender heart, susceptible to the slightest variation of her compass. Less than a week after taking up my quarters in the front room I made a discovery. Alice Layne was in love with Patsy Horley and Teddy Horley was in love with Alice Layne. It was an interesting study to watch the various phases of this cross passion, and I never tired of it. It was very evident to me that Patsy Horley admired the little shirtmaker, but he kept the secret safely locked in his great heart, and only took it out at odd moments when he came and looked at the treasure to go over it and worship it as his mother did the figure of the Virgin at the head of her bed. I don't suppose the honest fellow ever dreamed that his love was returned. How could he when he saw the bright, shipped the superior physical gifts of his younger brother. For Patsy was very proud of handsome Teddy, and never tired of praising him. Alice, with a woman's intuition, saw the noble in Patsy's character, and although Teddy's good looks and fine dress and "flowers" made an impression upon her it was only a transitory one, which vanished as soon as she caught sight of Patsy's big, homely face and honest gray eyes, like all good-looking men, Teddy Horley was just the least bit conceited, and he imagined that it was only necessary to declare his passion to find himself in undisturbed possession of Alice's heart.

One warm afternoon I was lying on a lounge in my room, endeavoring to interest myself in "The Light of Asia." Mrs. Horley was downstairs visiting a neighbor, and I was nodding over the poem, when Alice Layne tripped up the stairs and entered her apartments. I heard her singing softly to herself as she made preparations for supper, and, mistaking that I am, envied her that bird-like lightness of heart which tried through every measure of the song. She was brooding over the melancholy past, when a heavy footstep sounded on the stairs and Patsy Horley, in his rough working clothes, and a little under the influence of liquor, opened the door of the room adjoining mine and threw himself heavily on the bed. He got up directly, opened a little window over the door which separated the two rooms, took a drink of water and lay down again. It may be well

to mention that this chamber was a dark room, and was occupied by the brothers as a sleeping apartment. A few minutes after this Teddy Horley bounded up the steps and entered the room, which was between the dark chamber and his mother's bedroom. Finding his mother absent, he crossed the hall and knocked at Miss Layne's door. The little maiden looked up and opened it.

"Oh, Teddy, it's you, is it?" she said.

"Sure it is, sweetness. Who else could it be?"

"I thought it was Patsy," she said, tantalizingly.

Then there was a struggle, a stifled scream, and a smack, smack of lips. The noise disturbed Patsy, and he rose from his bed and opened the door entering into the hallway. The scuffle outside continued and there was more smacking. Presently Alice cried:

"Oh, Teddy Horley, you're perfectly horrid, and I don't like you one bit, there, now, you have the truth."

"Now, darlint," began Teddy.

"Don't darlint me, I don't like you. You are better looking and finer dressed than Patsy, but he is a thousand times better than you."

"Perhaps he is in earnest," said Teddy, a little passionately. "There's many a true word spoken in jest."

"Well, I am in earnest. I do like Patsy, and if he'd ask me to marry him this day, I'd jump at the chance. So there, now, you have the truth."

Then the door was slammed, and I heard Teddy walking slowly back into his mother's room. Presently there came a knock at my door, and when I opened it I saw Patsy's freckled face peering in through the doorway. He spoke kindly and invited him to have a chair. He sat down, and I saw that what he had heard had sobered him. After a moment's silence he cleared his throat and began:

"Did you hear what she said?"

"Yes, Patsy," I replied.

"An' do ye believe she means it?" he continued, eagerly.

"I have no doubt of it."

"I don't know what she says! I'm not the man for her, an' I never to be sure cared for me. If I could only bring me some to believe it's thrus, I'd be a different man."

He sat in silence for some time and then, when he reached the door he turned and said:

"I was a bit drunk when I come home to-night. It's hard work beyond there in the tunnel, an' I swear to ye that I'm not the man for her, an' I never to be sure cared for me. If I could only bring me some to believe it's thrus, I'd be a different man."

I bade him good-night and God speed in this new-forgotten resolution, and he shook my hand warmly. Mrs. Horley came home and she and Patsy had supper together. Teddy was out. I took a short walk in the evening, and coming home passed Patsy and Alice on one of the cross-streets walking together, arm in arm. I did not hear what they were saying, but felt convinced Patsy had declared his love and been made happy with Alice's acknowledgment that this passion was reciprocated.

The next morning Patsy came to my room before he went to his work. He seized my hand, and a look of supreme happiness shone in his eyes. He said:

"She sez she'll have me, sez," he said, "an' we'll be married ez soon ez I get through work on the tunnel. I'm a happy man, but for what thing—Patsy's poor boy, he takes it to heart, an' it's not his fault at all. God knows I'm his brother, an' would rather lose me right hand than bring harm to him."

"Oh, that will be all right. He'll get over his disappointment in a few days," I said, trying to cheer him.

"I wish I could think so," he said, moving toward the door, and these were the last words I ever heard of the poor fellow utter.

Every one has heard of the terrible tunnel disaster, the details of which electrified the whole country. Teddy and Patsy Horley were employed in the tunnel as laborers, and worked side by side in the same relief. The morning of a certain day, when they were at work, went to their work as usual, and for the first time in their lives spoke never a word of kindly cheer or brotherly balance as they walked swiftly through the streets. The better to make plain what follows, it will be necessary to say that the entrance to the tunnel proper, on the New York side, is through a circular, perpendicular shaft, thirty feet in diameter, and about sixty feet deep. This is a working shaft, the bottom of which is used for the reception of waste matter, as it is excavated, and before it is taken away. Thirty feet below the surface of the ground is an "air lock," which is the sole means of communication between the tunnel and the outer air. It is necessary to keep the air inside the tunnel sufficiently compressed to maintain a pressure of seventy pounds to the square inch, and the "air lock" serves a similar purpose to the lock of a canal, which is used for the purpose of passing the water from one level to another. As a matter of course, there are two doors, one at each end of the lock, only one of which can be opened at a time, while the other is fifteen feet long by six feet and six inches wide, allowing for the passage, in case of necessity, of thirty men at once.

As they were preparing to go down the shaft that morning Patsy turned to his brother and whispered:

"It's a queer feelin' I have in me this mornin', Teddy. May the blessed Virgin protect us from harm."

Teddy laughed. "It's the whiskey," he said, and turned away, not so quick that his eye didn't meet the reproachful flash that fell from his brother's great gray orbs. Afterward that look haunted him, and made the misery of life all the harder to bear.

Twenty-eight men composed a relief, and the work of excavation moved along smoothly until noon. Then the squad was divided. Fourteen men went to lunch; the remainder worked on. In half an hour the first squad was heard advancing, and the others threw down their tools and prepared to leave the tunnel. Patsy was in the first squad, and in the second. The men returning had passed inside through the air-lock and the others had quit their posts preparatory to leaving. It is probable that if they had delayed this for even a minute the accident would not have happened, for the leak, which was discovered just too late, might easily have been stopped if discovered in time. As the two squads met just at the moment of shifting, a peculiar rattle sound was heard, with which all were familiar. It meant a leak, and a leak meant death!

"Back and stop the leak!" shouted the superintendent, and the order was obeyed almost before it was given.

As many as could get there jumped for the piece, where all knew the danger was greatest. The brothers worked side by side.

"It's the manning of the quare feelin'," Patsy cried Patsy, as they both piled pick and shovel. "May the Virgin save us!"

The joining of the temporary roof of the tunnel with the wall of the shaft was necessarily imperfect. It was intended to make all secure with a three-foot wall of brick and cement, but it was impossible to set the foundation of the brickwork until after the circle of the tunnel should be completed, so that this imperfect jointure was continually watched. With reasonable diligence it was easily to keep it closed, and the material to close was plenty and at hand. The chinks were stopped with the silt, or what the river bottom is largely composed of—a clayey mud, and the consistency of putty—and a man should have been at this part watching the chink.

No one can describe the terrible struggle which followed. It lasted scarcely two minutes. The men were nerved by a full knowledge of the great danger of their position. Not a man but knew that he carried his life in his hands wherever he went to work, and not a man failed to know that the supreme moment had come. All worked well. The brothers did the work of ten men.

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