

HIS HAPPIEST DAY.

[By Grace Paul.]
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The Lonely Man had decided to take a day's holiday in the country. He had gone so far northward that he had reached the city limits; then he had taken a ferry boat across the river and come to a suburban street car. He got in, and presently, for the first time in many years, he saw country—real country, with trees and flowers and singing birds.

There remained only one other passenger when the car passed Greenfield. She was a girl of about seven and twenty. Her hair was brown, her eyes gray, her figure slight. Her dress was neat, but worn, and the purse from which she extracted the coin had seen better days. The Lonely Man watched her when he thought she was not observing him.

The Lonely Man was between thirty-five and forty. Once, years before, he would have thrilled with the sense of adventure. For the girl, like himself, was obviously holiday-making.

"All out!" announced the conductor impersonally.
The car stopped at the end of a country road, and the conductor began to reverse the seats. There was not a house in sight, but trees everywhere, and birds, and tall flowers that nodded by the wayside.

The man and the girl stood side by side in the roadway, and the car ran back until it disappeared in the distance.

"I beg your pardon," said the girl, "but how far is it to Northwood?"
The man raised his hat. "I don't know," he answered. "I have never been here before."

"Neither have I," answered the girl, laughing. And it was impossible not



They lingered in the Sunny Lane.

to laugh when spring had come and Nature riotously proclaimed her mirth in every breeze and every breath of the flowers.

"I think it must lie in this direction," said the man, pointing along the road.

The girl turned and began to walk in the direction that the man indicated. At first he tried to lag behind her, but presently, realizing the absurdity of their position, he took courage to address her.

"Suppose we go together," he said diffidently.

The girl looked at him with swift scrutiny. In spite of her apparent indecision the longing for companionship leaped out of her eyes unmistakably. The man took courage. They walked on side by side, crossed a path through a field, and emerged upon a little lane. Their conversation, at first restrained, grew animated.

She was a stenographer, and she had been in the city for five years. She worked in a building one block distant from that in which he spent his days as secretary for Haas, president of the Cement company; and they must have passed each other a score of times and never known it.

All at once they came upon a little, old-fashioned inn. A table with a couple of chairs stood on the porch. The landlord stood in the doorway, flourishing a napkin. The invitation was so obvious that they looked at each other and laughed, and then sat down.

They exchanged confidences. Her name was Doris, and she had no relatives in the world. She had come to the city five years before with no training except a knowledge of stenography, and she had nothing to look forward to.

And somehow the man found himself telling her of his own hopes; the boyhood dreams, the man's disillusionment, the realization that youth had slipped away and left him, approaching middle age, with nothing accomplished.

Their eyes told more than their tongues. Their hands met across the table. It was an instinctive greeting of fellowship. Each knew that the loneliness in his own heart was shared by the other.

If the landlord saw that greeting, he turned discreetly away, for he had been young once, and he knew that in spring one does many foolish things.

They lingered in the sunny lane, sauntering under the budding trees. The sun dipped down. At last they awakened to the realization that their day was slipping away, as life was slipping away. And, silent now, they walked back through the field, side by side, toward the car line.

The man turned to her. "I want to ask you something," he said. "How is it that you have never married?"
The crimson dyed her cheeks.

"It was impertinent of me—" he began repentantly.

"No," she answered hurriedly. "I'll tell you. I suppose love seems a trivial thing to many people. It was never so to me. I was in love when I was a girl—before I came to the city. I thought he loved me. I was going to wait for him. He married another. That is all."

"And then?" he asked gently.
She shrugged her shoulders. "Then?" she answered. "Why is not that enough? I had my disillusionment. But how about yourself?" she cried suddenly. "How about you?"

"Why—I guess it is about the same story with me," he replied, in embarrassment.

And the car came up inexorably. They entered.

It rushed through the pleasant countryside, now touched with the shadows of evening, bearing them back to town. The city appeared upon the horizon. Then a wilderness of drab, unlovely houses began to spread about them. And they knew that their day was ended.

"I shall see you again?" he asked, as the car traversed the sordid streets.

"I don't know—why?" said the girl hurriedly.

"Because," he said slowly, "I think I have made a good deal of a fool of myself. You see, when I lost her, I came to about the same conclusion that you did. I never had the nature to lay hold of life. I think one must seize what it offers, and not spend it in vain regrets. Don't you?"

"Perhaps," she answered, digging the point of her parasol into the floor of the car.

"I had been coming slowly to that belief. But it needed two things to assure me that it was true."

"What were they?" asked the girl. But she did not look up.

"Oh, the spring, I think," he answered, laughing for the first time on the return journey. "I am sure it was the spring. It reminded me of other springs."

"Yes, but—the other?" asked the girl.

"Why—you," he answered. "This has been the happiest day of my life." He took her hands in his.

"I don't want to make the same blunder always," he said. "I want a chance to seize happiness when it offers. I want to—see you in the city. May I?"

The red was in her cheeks again, but she looked him in the eyes for the first time.

"Yes," she answered softly.

Gold in the Soot.

Four pounds of gold were not so long ago collected from the soot of the chimney of the royal mint in Berlin. So the things accounted vulgar are full of the dust of gold, if we only knew it. We need a quick eye, a ready mind, to let no chance pass us. To be taught by everything, improved by everything. Neglect in this matter brings into our life heaviness, dullness, weariness, vacancy.

Let us be alive to every way-side flower in the home, to every flower that springs amid the rough stones of business life, to every sweet thing that blooms in the very dust of the street, to the teachings, the mercies, the comforts, the strengthenings, of common days, places, things and people; so shall we be charmed along life's pilgrimage until we arrive at home.

Mule Drinks at Bar.

A mule standing up at the bar with its two front feet resting on the top rail was the sight presented to patrons of a saloon in the business district.

The animal, which had been secured by Municipal Court Bailiff Blythe on a writ of replevin, was being taken to a stable. Blythe had stepped into the saloon to get a glass of beer. He left the animal in charge of a man outside.

Hardly had the beer been drawn when Blythe heard a commotion at the side door and in came the mule. All efforts to get it to leave proved futile until it had been given four glasses of beer.—Cincinnati (Ohio) Dispatch to New York Sun.

Watching the Crowd.

Did you ever watch a crowd? Of course you did. Everybody does. Nothing is more interesting than a crowd.

But did you ever think how a crowd appears to different eyes? A pick-pocket will watch it to look for loot. A newspaper reporter will watch it for news. A physician will notice the sick, but not the well. A clergyman will observe the suffering.

Demagogues are always watching the crowd and devising the easiest scheme to fool the people. They have succeeded wonderfully in doing so in the past, but all the people cannot be fooled all the time.—Jagger in Leslie's Weekly.

Not So Far Gone as That.

In one of the industrial towns in South Wales a workman met with a serious accident. The doctor was sent for, and came and examined him, had him bandaged and carried home on a stretcher, seemingly unconscious.

After he was put to bed the doctor told his wife to give him sixpenny-worth of brandy when he came to himself. After the doctor had left the wife told the daughter to run and fetch threepennyworth of brandy for her father.

The old chap opened his eyes and said, in a loud voice, "Sixpenny'orth, the doctor said."—Tit-Bits.

REPAIRING THE FENCE

By JOHN DARLING.

"Say!" shouted a tramp over the gate of the Mortimer place.

Miss Nellie Mortimer sat on the veranda reading a book.

"Say! I say!"
The girl shook her head to signify that there was nothing doing in his line.

"Oh, I'm not after a hand-out."
"Then go on!"

"And I don't want to do that until I have told you that there is a hog in the side garden out there, and that he is rooting up things for fair!"

"The hog again!" exclaimed Miss Nellie as she started up.

"Yes'm—same hog!" grinned the tramp.

"But he must be driven out at once. If you will drive him out, I'll—"

"Oh, no, Missy," interrupted the tramp as he began moving away, "you can't play that on me."

Mr. Mortimer had an interest in a business in the city and spent most of his time there. On this morning no one was at home except herself and the cook, and as for the latter she was fat and lame. That hog must go out, however.

Miss Nellie drove him down the road and found the place he had broken in, and then it was hammer and nails and a couple of boards. She had got all the materials on the spot when a young man came along on foot. She recalled that she had seen him pass in an auto an hour before, and was wondering if he had met with an accident, when he halted and raised his cap.

"Had a break-down and am walking back."

She wanted to ask him why he didn't walk on then, but she spotted that hog coming back and uttered a muttered threat instead. This caused him to notice the materials and the hole in the fence, and he continued:

"Ah, I see! The beast has been in the garden, and you are going to secure the fence against him. I have read that few women could drive a nail."

"I have read that same thing of the men!"

"Here is the chance to test the matter."

He reached for a board and knelt down and held it against the fence for her and smiled in a superior way and in anticipation. That smile settled the matter. Miss Nellie picked up hammer and nails and began driving.

There was a smash and a yell! The hammer had missed the nail and hit the thumb!

"You—you—"

"I didn't do it!" he protested.

"But if you hadn't been here and looking on it wouldn't have happened!"

"Nonsense! Didn't I say that a woman couldn't drive a nail without mashing her thumb?"

"And didn't I say that a man couldn't? You pick up that hammer and try it!"

The board was held in place while the nail was neatly driven, and the young man turned to Miss Nellie with that superior smile.

"Go ahead!" she ordered. "There's three more nails to be driven yet."

He started on the second. There was a smash and a howl. It was more than a howl. It was language—lots of language. For a moment the victim thought himself far from the haunts of men (and women), but then he calmed down and said:

"I sincerely beg your pardon."

"It was unfair of you, when you knew I couldn't do the same thing. How bad is it?"

He held out his hand for inspection. The blood had already begun to settle under the nail.

"And yours?" he asked.

It was as bad, and the girl's face had become very pale with the pain of it. At that moment the cook came limping out to see what had happened, and they held out their bruised thumbs to her.

"Great cats and dogs!" she exclaimed. "Why both of you will surely lose your thumbnails, anyhow, and it will be a miracle if you are not disfigured for life!"

The "mashed" took seats on the veranda and held on to their thumbs, while the cook brought out bandages and ointments by the handful.

"Why did you go and do it?" asked the woman as the last thumb was cared for.

"If this gentleman hadn't come along and butted in—" began Miss Nellie, when she was interrupted:

"Whose name is Earl Bell. Excuse me that I haven't given it before. I believe this is Miss Mortimer?"

"And I believe that pesky hog has got back into the garden again! Perhaps you have also read that no woman can drive a hog?"

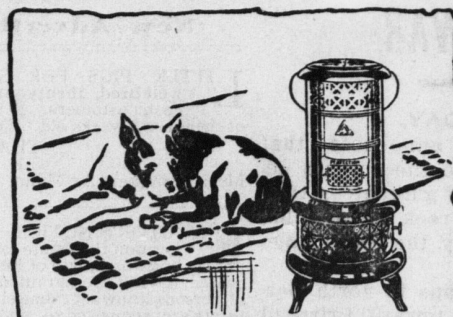
"If I ever find one I'll—I'll admire her!"

"Well, I want you to show me that a man can. I'll stay here and watch."

When that hog found that he had a man to deal with he quit his job and made for the fence, and then the young man left. Did he ever return? Read what the cook said the other day:

"Oh, yes, he returned and returned and returned, and he's returning yet, and if that hog don't bring about a marriage and a wedding trip, then I'll never go by signs again!"

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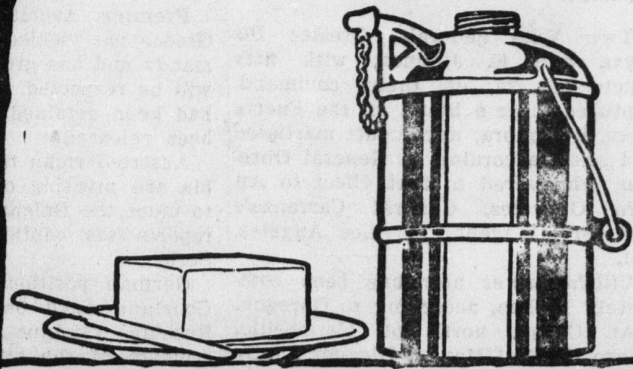


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