

THE CURFEW HEROINE.

The story that is the basis of the well-known poem, "Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night," told in prose is as follows: It lacked quite half an hour of curfew toll. The old bell-ringer came from under the wattle roof of his cottage stoop and stood with uncovered head in the clear sweet-scented air. He had grown blind and deaf in the service, but his arm was as muscular as ever, and he who listened this day marked no faltering in the heavy metallic throbs of the cathedral bell. Old Jasper had lived through many changes. He had tolled out the notes of mourning for good Queen Bess, and with tears scarcely dry he had rung the glad tidings of the coronation of James. Charles I. had been crowned, reigned, and expiated his weakness before all England in Jasper's time, and now he who under army held all the common wealth in the hollow of his hand, ruled as more than monarch, and still the old man with the habit of a long life upon him rang his matin and sorrow.

Jasper stood alone now, lifting his dimmed eyes up to the softly dappled sky.

The wall of his memory seem so written over—so crossed and recrossed by the annals of the years that had gone before, that there seem little room for anything in the present. Little recked he that Cromwell's spearsmen were camped on the moor beyond the village—that Cromwell himself rode with his guardsmen a league away; he only knew that the bell had been rung in the tower when William the conqueror made curfew a law, had been spared by Paritan and Roundhead, and that his arm for sixty years had never failed him at even-tide.

He was moved with a slow step toward the gate, when a woman came hurriedly in from the street and stood beside him; a lovely woman, but with a face so blanched that it seemed carved in the whitest of marble, with all its roundness and dimples. Her great solemn eyes were raised to the aged face in pitiful appeal, and the lips were foaming words that he could not understand.

"Speak up, lass, I am deaf and can not hear your chatter."

"For heaven sake, Jasper, do not ring the curfew bells to-night."

"What! no ring curfew? you must be daft, lassie."

"Jasper, for sweet heaven's sake—for my sake—for one night in all your long life forget to ring the bell! Fall this once and my lover shall live, whom Cromwell says shall die at curfew toll. Do you hear? my lover, Richard Temple. See, Jasper, here is my money to make your old age happy. I sold my jewelry that the Lady Maud gave me, and the gold shall be yours for one curfew."

"Would you bribe me Lily De Vere? You're a changeling. You're na the blood of the Plantagenets in ye're veins as ye're mother had. What, corrupt the bell-ringer under her majesty, good Queen Bess? not for all the gold that Lady Maud could bring me! Babes have born and strong men have died before now at the ringing of my bell. Awa! Awa!"

And out on the village green with the solemn shadows of the lichen lengthening over it, a strong man awaited the curfew toll for his death. He stood handsome, and brave, and tall—taller by an inch than the tallest pikeman who guarded him.

What had he done that he should die? Little it mattered in those days, when the sword that the great Cromwell wielded was so prone to fall, what he or others had done. He had been scribe to the late lord up at the castle, and Lady Maud, forgetting that man must woo and woman must wait, had given her to him without the asking, while the gentle Lily De Vere, distant kinswoman and poor companion of her, had without seeking, found the treasure of his true love and held them fast. Then he had joined the army and made one of the pious soldiers whose evil passions were never stirred but by sign or symbol of poetry. But a scorned woman's hatred had reached him even there. Enemies and deep plots had compassed him about and conquered him. To night he was to die.

The beautiful world lay as a vivid picture before him. The dark green wood above the rocky hill where Robin Hood and his merry men had dwelt; the frowning castle with its drawbridge and square towers, the long stretch of moor with the purple shadows upon it, the green, straight walks of the village, the birds overhead, even the daisies at his feet he saw. But ah! more vividly than all, he saw the great red sun with its hazy veil lingering above the trees as though it pitied him with more than human pity.

He was a God fearing and a God serving man. He had long made his peace with heaven. Nothing stood between him and death—nothing rose pleadingly between him and those who were to destroy him but the sweet face of Lily De

Vere, whom he loved. She had knelt at Cromwell's feet and pleaded for his life. She weariest heaven with her prayers, but all without avail.

Slowly now the great sun went down. Slowly the last rim was hid beneath the greenwood. Thirty seconds, more and his soul would be with God. The color did not forsake his cheeks. The dark rings of hair lay upon a warm brow. It was his purpose to die as martyrs and brave men die. What was life that he should cling to it? He almost felt the air pulsate with the first heavy roll of the death knell. But no sound came. Still facing the soldiers with his clear gray eyes upon them he waited.

The crimson banners in the west were paling to pink. The king had ceased their lowering, and had been gathered in to the rick yards.

All nature had sounded her curfew, but old Jasper was silent!

The bell-ringer, with his gray head yet bared, had traversed half the distance between his cottage and the ivy-covered tower when a form vent flitting past him, with pale, shadowy robes floating around it, and hair that the low western lights touched and tinted as with a halo.

"Ab, Huldah!" the old man muttered; "how swift she flies? I will come soon dear. My work is almost done."

Huldah was the good wife who had gone from him in her early womanhood and for whom he had mourned all his long life. But the fleeting form was not Huldah's. It was Lily De Vere, hurried by a sudden and desperate purpose toward the cathedral.

"So help me God, curfew shall not ring to-night? Cromwell and his dragons come this way. Once more I will kneel at his feet and plead."

She entered the ruined arch. She wrenched from its fastening the carved and wormeaten door that barred the way to the tower. She ascended with flying and frenzied feet the steps; her heart lifted up to God Richard's deliverance form peril. The bats flew out and shook the dust of centuries from the black carving. As she went up she caught glimpses of the interior of the great building, with its groined roof, its chevrons and clustered columns; its pictured saint and carved image of the virgin, which the pilages of ages had been spared to be dealt with by time, the most relentless vandal of all.

Up—still—up—beyond the rainbow tints thrown by the stained glass across her death-white brow; up—still—up—past open arch, with griffin and gargoyle staring at her from under bracket and cornice. Her breath was coming short and gasping. She saw through an open space old Jasper cross the road at the foot of the tower. Oh, how far! The seconds were treasures which Cromwell, with all his blood-bought commonwealth, could not purchase from her.

Up—ah—there, just above her with its great brazen mouth and wicked tongue, the bell hung. A worm eaten block for a step, and one small white hand had clasped itself above the clapper—the other prepared, at the tremble, to rise and clasp its mate, and the feet to swim off and thus she waited. Jasper was old and slow, but he was sure and it came at last. A faint quiver, and the young feet swung from their rest, and the tender hands clasped for more than their precious life the writhing thing. There was groaning and creaking of the rule pulleys above, and then the strokes came heavy and strong. Jasper's arm had not forgot its cunning, nor his hand its strength. The tender soft form was swung and dashed to and fro. But she clung to and crossed the cold, cruel thing. Let one stroke come and a thousand might follow—for its fatal work would be done. She wrenched her white arms about it, so that with every pull of the great rope it crushed into the flesh. It tore her, and wounded and bruised; but there in the solemn twilight the brave woman swung and fought with the curfew, and God gave her victory.

The old bell ringer said to himself; "Aye, Huldah, my work is done. The pulleys are getting too heavy for my old arms; my ears, too have failed me. I dinna hear one stroke of the curfew. Dear old bell! it is my ears that have gone false and not thou. Farewell old friend."

And just beyond the worn pavement a shadowy form again went flitting past him. There were drops of blood upon the white garments, and the face was like the face of one who walked in her sleep, and her hands hung wounded and powerless at her side. Cromwell paused with his horsemen under the dismantled May-pole before the village green.

He saw the man who was to die at sun, set standing up in the dusky air, tall as a king and beautiful as Absalom. He gazed with knitted brow and angry eye, but his lips did not give utterance to the quick command that trembled on them for a girl came flying toward him. Pikeman and archer stepped aside to let her pass. She threw herself upon the turf at his horse's feet; she lifted her bleeding and tortured hands to his gaze, and once more poured out her prayer for the life of her lover; with trembling

lips she told him why Richard still lived—why the curfew had not sounded.

Lady Maud looked out of her latticed window at the castle protector dismount, lift the fainting form in his arms and bear her to her lover. She saw the guards release the prisoner, and she heard the shouts of joy at his deliverance; then she welcomed the night that shut the scene out from her envious eye and sculptured her in its gloom.

At the next matin bell old Jasper died, and at curfew toll he was laid beside the wife who had died in his youth, but the memory of whom had been with him all ways.

A Spencerian Ass.

After I had accumulated a handsome competence as city editor of the old morning *Sentinel* at Laramie City, and had married and gone to housekeeping with a gas stove and other luxuries, my place on the *Sentinel* was taken by a newspaper man named Hopkins who had just graduated from a business college and who brought a nice glazed grip sack and a diploma with him that had never been used.

Hopkins wrote a fine Spencerian hand and wore a black and tan dog wherever he went. The boys were willing to overlook the copper-plate but they drew the line at the dog. He not only wrote in beautiful style but he copied his manuscript, so that when it went into the printer it was as pretty as a wedding invitation.

Hopkins ran the city page nine days and then he came into the city hall where I was trying a simple drunk and bade me adieu.

I just say this to show how difficult it is for a fine penman to get ahead as a journalist. Of course good reliable writers like Knox and John Hancock may become great, but they have to be men of sterling ability to start with.

I have some of the most blood curdling horrors preserved for the purpose of showing Hopkins' wonderful and vivid style. I will throw them in.

"A little son of our esteemed fellow-townsmen, J. H. Kayford, suffered greatly last evening with virulent colic, but this a. m., as we go to press, is sleeping easily."

Think of shaking the social foundations of a mountain mining and stock town with such grim, nervous prostrators as that! The next day he startled Southern Wyoming and Northern Colorado and Utah, with the maddening statement that "our genial friend Leopold Gutsenhoven's fine yellow dog, Florence Nightengale, had been seriously threatened with insomnia."

That was the style of mental callisthenics he gave us in a town where death by opium and ropium was liable to occur, and where five men with their Mexican spurs on climbed one telegraph pole in one night and sauntered into the remote indefinitely. Hopkins told me that he had tried to do what was right, but that he had not succeeded very well. He wrung my hand and said:

"I have tried hard to make the *Sentinel* fill a long want felt, but I have not been fortunate. The foreman over there is a harsh man. He used to come in and intimidate in a frowning and erect tone of voice that if I did not produce that copy p. d. q., or some other abbreviation, that he would burst my crust, or words of like import."

"Now that's no way to talk to a man of a nervous temperament who is engaged in copying a list of hotel arrivals, and shading the capitals as I was. In the business college it was not that way. Everything was quiet, and there was nothing to jar a man like that."

"Of course I would like to stay on the *Sentinel* and draw the princely salary, but there are two hundred reasons why I cannot do it. So far as the physical effort is concerned, I could draw the salary with one hand tied behind me, but there is too much turmoil and mad haste in daily journalism to suit me, and another thing the proprietor of the *Sentinel*, this morning stole up behind me, and struck me over the head with a wrought iron side stick weighing ten pounds. If I had not concealed a coil spring in my plug hat, the blow would have been deliterous to me."

"Then he threw me out of the door against a total stranger, and flung pieces of coal at me and called me a copper-plate ass, and said that if I ever came into the office again he would assassinate me."

"This is the principal reason why I have severed my connection with the *Sentinel*."

As he said this Mr. Hopkins took out a polka dot handkerchief, wiped away a pearly tear the size of a walnut, wrung my hand, also the polka dot wipe, and stole out into the great horridness.—*Bill Nye.*

Chickens And Diamonds.

(From the Virginia Enterprise.)
A few days ago Mrs. Nora McShane, who resides on the Divide, near Hickory street, received a letter and a news-

per from her husband who is in the diamond fields of South Africa. When nearing home Mrs. McShane—who is not able to read writing—concluded to go on to the residence of a friend who generally reads for her the letters that come from her husband. While standing and debating in her mind the question of going on at once to have her friend read the letter, Mrs. McShane almost mechanically opened the newspaper to have a glance at it, she being able to spell out print. As she opened the paper she thought she observed, as she says, "some bits o' d' thirtor gravels" fall out of it, though she paid but little attention, thinking at the time it was some "schuff" that had worked into the paper on the road." When her friend read the letter it was found that her husband—"trusting to luck," as he said—had sent in the newspaper as specimens no less than fifteen diamonds in the rough, ranging in value from \$20 to \$120 each.

Here was a go, as not a stone remained in the paper. However, she remembered that when she opened the paper she was in a walk—where the snow was off the ground—just opposite the residence of a neighbor, and accompanied by her friend she returned to the place. Not a diamond was to be found, but Mrs. McShane's friend had observed a lot of chickens about the spot, and was confident they had found and swallowed the glittering little stones. In a short time quite a crowd of men and women had collected about the spot—having been told about the loss—and, as the place was a regular cruising ground for the chickens in search of gravel while the ground was covered with snow in most places, it was the general opinion that the fowls had swallowed the gems.

The chickens belonged to the neighbor in front of whose place the newspaper was opened, and this neighbor could not be expected to sacrifice his whole flock—numbering 30 fowls—for nothing. As no one could tell which particular chicken might have a diamond in its crop, and which not, it would be necessary to sacrifice the whole lot. The owner disliked to lose his chickens, but finally said he would let them go, under the circumstances, at 75 cents each, cash down. Mrs. McShane had no money, and knew not what to do. However, there was no time to lose, and miner of a "sporting" turn, who happened to be present, agreed to pay for all the chickens provided Mrs. McShane would give him any stone he might pick out from among those recovered. Mrs. McShane accepted the offer, with the proviso that she was to have all the chickens that were killed.

The fowls were enticed into their house and the heads cut off the whole lot. The contents of their crop being carefully washed and examined, 12 of the gems were found. Generally they were worth from \$30 to \$50, but there were 3 worth \$100. One of these, a stone worth \$120, fell to the share of the speculative miner. Mrs. McShane was helped out on her side by dressing and selling the chickens at from 75 cents to \$1 each.

A curious part of the story remains to be told, however. Besides the uncut diamonds found in the crops of the fowls, there was taken from one a handsome emerald that was perfectly cut. Mrs. McShane, of course, thought this stone had also been sent by her husband, though it was not mentioned in his letter. While this matter was being discussed, a lady living in the vicinity came up and at once claimed the emerald. She said she lost it out of her ring, the day before. No one knew what to say to this, as those present did not wish to dispute the point. Seeing how matters stood, the lady ran off home, and presently she returned with her ring, into the setting of which the emerald fitted perfectly. On seeing this all agreed that the stone was the property of the lady.

A Cunning Advocate.

At the assize town in the West of England, some time since, an action was brought by two graziers against the landlady of an inn, to recover the sum of £200 under the following circumstances: The two plaintiffs and another grazer called on the defendant, and deposited with her the sum of £100 each, upon conditions that she was not to deliver it to either of them unless all three were together. It so happened that, shortly after one of them repaired to the defendant in great haste, and requested her to let him have the money, as it was wanted immediately to pay for cattle. The landlady, knowing him to be one of the party, and not suspecting that fraud was intended, handed over the money. Having gained possession of the £200 pounds he started for America, and the plaintiffs brought their action. The jury seemed inclined towards the plaintiffs; but the defendant's counsel started up, and addressed the court in these words: "My Lord and gentlemen of the Jury—My client (the defendant) acknowledges having received the money; and the fact, as stated by the plaintiffs' counsel, is correct—that my client was not to deliver it up unless all three were together. Now, my Lord and gentlemen of the Jury, here is the money; and when the plaintiffs, unable to produce their companion, were obliged to submit to a nonsuit, to the great joy of the poor landlady, the satisfaction of the audience, and the credit of the crafty counsel."

CALL

—AT THE—

CENTRE DEMOCRAT

Job Office

And Have Your Job Work

DONE

CHEAPLY, NEATLY AND WITH DISPATCH.

Now is the Time to Subscribe

FOR THE

"CENTRE DEMOCRAT,"

The LARGEST and CHEAPEST Paper in Bellefonte.

ONLY \$1.50 PER YEAR, IN ADVANCE.

OFFICE:

COR. ALLEGHANY & BISHOP STS. BELLEFONTE, PA.