

June's Strange Story.

BY RYE BONNELL.

It all began at the skating rink. Now I know that is a dangerous statement, and may be some of you won't read my story; but the loss will be yours, as I have a very strange one to tell. I repeat my statement boldly, it all began at the roller skating rink.

It was a clear, cold, sparkling Saturday night, and with many others, June and I were gliding around the long room; she had been in the gayest spirits all the evening, and we were busily talking up to the moment that I first noticed something odd about her. Her face grew white, and the light left her eyes, which stared straight before her, yet seeming to see nothing.

Her hands grew cold as ice and seemed rigid as they were clasped in mine. I spoke to her, but she did not answer, and I plainly saw, did not hear. Her motions were mechanical, and the thought came to me that if I were to stop, she would fall. The band was playing gayly, and we glided along in perfect time.

I was fully occupied in watching and carefully guiding her; fully five minutes or more, it lasted, then she seemed to awake with a start and shiver, and stared confusedly around. Then she began trembling violently, and I guided her to a chair, taking one beside her. She leaned carelessly back, with her hands idly clasped in her lap, and a far-away look in her sweet eyes.

I watched her awhile in silence, then fearing someone would notice her strange mood, I touched her lightly and called her by name. She started violently, and there was a dazed look in her eyes as she turned them upon me.

"Is it you, Joe?" she said. "Won't you take me home?"

"No indeed, June, unless you are ill. The fun has hardly begun yet."

"Let me take your note book and pencil then."

I gave it to her, curious to see what she wanted it for. She selected a blank page, and worked busily with the pencil, then handed it to me, asking if I had ever seen anyone that looked like that. It was the sketch of a man's head, a very fine looking man too.

"No," I answered, "I never did. What about him?"

"Take my word for it, Joe, the man who owns that face will make or mar my life." There was a strange look on her face as she looked at the sketch a moment, then tore it into bits and dropped them out the window by which we were sitting.

"Now, Joe, let's skate," she said, and for the rest of the evening was her old bright self.

When I parted from her at her father's door that night, she asked me to come over the next evening, as she had something to show me, and a strange story to tell. I promised, and went home to spend hours in useless thought, over her strange appearance that night at the rink. Now, I must tell you, June and I are second cousins, and for years I have been her closest friend; once I had sought a nearer relation, but had been gently but firmly given to understand that she had a very great affection for Cousin Joe, but nothing more.

For a long time I was very unhappy, but it grieved her so that I had put it all out of sight now, and if I suffered she did not know it.

I was her companion in all her sports and escort to balls and parties; and now that the new skating craze had come, took great delight in teaching her the art. Not much teaching did she require; she soon excelled her teacher.

Well, next evening I went over (her father and mine own farms adjoining in the edge of the village). I found her father and mother just starting to attend the lecture, and Aunt Mary told me to be sure and stay with June until their return. June greeted me gayly, called me to a cosy seat by the fire, shook down the curtains over the windows, stirred the fire, until it crackled and snapped in rage; then drawing a low rocker to my side, sat down. There was a dull ache at my heart as I watched her. Why could she not care for me?

"I coaxed father and mother to go to the lecture," she began, "so we

could be undisturbed, for I have just the queerest story to tell you, Joe, that you ever heard."

"First I want you to look at these pictures," and she handed me a sketch. I knew she drew remarkably well, but never saw any of her work that equaled that. It was a wild, snowy scene; a country road, running between a high wooded bank and a steep descent; an overturned sleigh and two struggling horses near the edge of the steep; and in the road, partly under the sleigh, the body of a man, his face the one she had sketched at the rink. When I looked up she silently handed me another.

A train of cars, standing still, and a few rods in front a broken bridge; upon one platform a man with that face. A third sketch she gave me.

I smiled when I first glanced at it for it was the interior of a skating rink; a crowd of people were there, and I saw nothing special until I discovered that face. Another skater was in the act of plunging a knife in his back. I handed them to her and waited for the story.

"I can't explain it, Joe, and am not going to try, but shall tell you all about it, knowing you will never betray me. I can't tell anyone else, not even mother, for she wouldn't understand and I could not bear to hear it talked about."

"It began last March at the time of the snow blockade. I had been to M———, and coming back the train was delayed twenty-four hours in a deep cut just beyond R———. There were not many passengers, I being the only lady. It was awful cold, but there was plenty of coal, and they kept the stoves filled, so we were pretty comfortable. Among the gentlemen was one who was very kind to me. He was quite old, and lame, using a crutch when he walked. It was four o'clock when we were stopped, and when no supper appeared, and the morning no breakfast, I got very hungry. As the morning wore away and there were no signs of starting we got to feel rather forlorn."

Then the old gentleman came to the fore, with an offer of ten dollars to anyone who would bring us something to eat from a farm house, whose roof we could see over the huge drifts. He increased his offer to twenty dollars, but not one of the men would go; the snow was waist deep and I did not blame them much; it being a good three miles there and back.

"You see, miss, you will have to starve; I can't go," and he pointed to his crutch.

I assured him that I was far from starving yet, and set about picking up some things he had knocked from the seat in his fidgeting.

There were several photographs among them and two or three of one person. He saw me glance at them and I laid them back, and said smilingly, "That's my son, Alf Trevor." I nodded, and sat down in the next seat, and we had a long talk. I was glad of anything to pass away the time. He had talked of his son a good deal, and ended by giving me one of the photos. Here it is."

I looked at it long and earnestly, a man of perhaps six and twenty, and a noble, handsome face, deep, dark eyes, a good mouth, half hidden by a dark mustache, and a firm resolute looking chin. Truly a man to be trusted and loved, I added to myself after a glance at June's sweet face, as I saw the dainty flush upon her cheeks and the light in her eyes.

"About ten," she resumed, "a brakeman brought some provisions and by three we were once more under way. The old gentleman shook hands warmly with me at parting, and hoped to meet me again soon."

"Now comes the strange part of my story, about the picture," and she held up the snow scene.

"I had looked at Alf Trevor's picture many times, and some way a feeling of friendship had grown up in my heart for him, when one day as I held it in my hand, I said to myself, I wish I could go in the spirit and find him, to see what he is like and what he is doing. Mother was pottering about the house and I sat just here alone."

"There was a good fire, and every thing was right and comfortable. All at once as I sat looking at the picture, I became possessed by the idea that some peril menaced him, and an intense longing to warn or save him, and then I saw as I see you, this scene; the snowy hill, and half broken

road, the overturned sleigh and struggling horses, and the body of the man in the snow. As I gazed another horse and sleigh dashed up and a man sprang out, just as the runaway horses went over the bank, carrying the sleigh with them."

"The new-comer picked up the senseless man and placed him in his sleigh, then drove rapidly away. I seemed to follow, but did not see where they went, but only heard a voice saying: 'He is all right; was only stunned.' Mother was skaking me by the arm, and scolding me for letting the fire go out,—sure enough, it was out, and I was shaking all over."

"For a long time I thought of nothing else, but gradually the impression wore off, and I almost forgot it. You see I keep the picture in an easel frame on that table, well one day in July I was sweeping and dusting the parlor. I had finished my work and was shaking out the curtain at the window by the table, when I happened to glance at the picture. Instantly the old feeling came over me, and I seemed to stand in a wild, desolate place on the railroad bridge over a deep ravine; but the bridge was badly broken, and glancing down I saw a hand-car and the bodies of several men lying in at the bottom. In another moment I was flying down the track, and almost immediately stood inside a car, with my hand upon a gentleman's shoulder."

"Then I seemed to realize my helplessness. I pulled at his shoulder; I tried to shake him; I screamed and raved; he was reading a paper, and I soon saw how useless such actions were. Calming myself, I laid both hands upon his shoulders, and exerting all the will power I possessed, said 'Danger, danger.' In a moment he looked up from his paper. 'Danger, danger.' He turned and glanced all around the car, looking disturbed. 'Danger, danger.' It was only a moment or so, but to me it was hours, till all at once sprang up and gave the bell rope a violent pull."

"The train slackened and stopped, and the conductor rushed in to know what was the matter."

"Send men ahead to look at the track," said Trevor. That was done, and not ten rods away was found the broken bridge."

"I was ill for several days after that, but ever since have always known where Alf Trevor is. He is a traveling salesman, and I have been in every city in the State, when he was there. I have warned him of dangers; I have saved him from sin; I have helped make him what man made in God's own image should be, an honest, honorable, upright man. Last night at the rink I saw this picture, and I know that he lies wounded at No. 147 B—street, Chicago."

"Where you have the whole story, Joe. What do you think?"

"How could I answer? Looking into her pure, loveliest eyes, I plainly saw she believed every word she had told me."

"O, Joe, it's been such a trouble to me it's spoiled my life since it began," she was sobbing softly. "Can't you do something to clear it up or drive it away?"

I formed a sudden resolution, and soon as I returned home, proceeded to put it in execution. The 12:30 train for Chicago had me for a passenger."

Arrived in due time in that city, I did not rest until I found No. 147 B—street. I had no faith in the matter, and when it stared me in the face I own to a severe shock. Entering (it being a large boarding house), I asked to see some rooms; the landlady was a good, kindly soul, and a great talker; before I had selected a room she had given me the names and history of every boarder in the house. Imagine my horror at hearing Alf Trevor's name, and the whole circumstances of his wound, and upon passing a certain door to be told that was his room."

I engaged a room for a week, and by the judicious use of money got introduced to the sick man; every one in the house seemed too busy to look in, so I, being an idler, was very welcome. Trevor was not badly wounded. I found, but had lost a good deal of blood. There was no mistake, it was the face of June's story."

"Hang the fellow! How I tried to hate him, but ended in loving him

like a brother. I found him every-thing June had described, and did not leave him until he was able to go home. As we shook hands at parting I gave him a hearty invitation to spend Christmas with me, which he has heartily accepted."

I was rather blue on my way home, trying to study out how matters were to end. I had been gone three weeks and had only written to my mother, so thought June would not know where I had been, and was not prepared for her first question:

"Well, Joe, do you believe me now?"

I stood amazed, and she laughingly shook her head. The first time we were alone she entreated me to tell her all about it, and I, to tease her, asked what the use would be, as she knew already. But she said she only knew I had been to Chicago, and that Trevor was well enough to go home."

So I told her the whole story, and she only asked one question, and that was: "Did I think he had any knowledge of her?"

"No," was my answer, "but he is conscious of some influence which has ruled his life for a long time. He told me many stories about it, among them that of the broken bridge. I am compelled, dear June, much against my will, to believe every word of your story."

Two weeks later, on the eve of Christmas, I met Alf Trevor at the depot, and brought him home. Fully recovered, he was handsomer than ever. My heart ached as I looked upon his perfect face, for I well knew how it would end."

The night was a gala night at the skating rink, and June was to go with my brother, I following later with my guest. An introduction was to be brought about as if by chance, during the evening."

As we planned, so we executed; after skating alone awhile, Trevor expressed a wish to skate with a partner, and I led him to June. I would not look at her, as I spoke the words that I knew put an end to the last lingering hope I had been foolishly harboring."

The result was just what I knew it would be. He scarcely left her side a moment that evening, and I heard him say to her once that he must have known her in some other life; she surely was no stranger."

And June, you should have seen her glorious beauty that night. Never in her life had I seen her so glorified. Well, there's little more to tell. When he went away they were engaged, and he returns for her in the spring."

As for me, I shall not be here; I am not strong enough to stand by and see her give herself to another. I shall go to California in a few weeks, and stay until I am cured if this is possible."

I have truthfully told you the story. I do not try to explain it. Each of you try—was it clairvoyance?"

HOUSEHOLD HINTS.

In paring fruit for canning, use a silver knife, so that the fruit may not turn dark colored.

Buy bar soap by the quantity. Keep it where it will dry, and it will go much further in using.

Finger marks may be removed from varnished furniture by the use of a little sweet oil upon a soft rag. Patient rubbing with chloroform will remove paint from black silk or any other material.

In cleaning paint spots which will not yield to rubbing or soap, even the spots which look like small gashes cut through the paint, may be removed by rubbing lightly with a damp cloth dipped in soda.

Rusty black lace can be freshened and otherwise improved by rinsing in water to which has been added borax and alcohol in the proportion to one tablespoonful each of borax and alcohol, to one cupful of water. After the lace is partly dry dip it in water in which an old kid glove has been boiled, squeeze gently, pull out the edges, and spread on cloth or blotting paper and dry under a heavy weight.

A decaying shoot is a steady strain upon the roots, for, although growth has ceased, evaporation takes place as long as the limb remains, attached to the tree.

NATURAL GAS.

People fool with natural gas and wastes it here in a manner quite picturesque, but indicating at the same time that they either don't know just what to do with it or have got a great deal more than they can make useful. If you take the 9:15 a. m. train from New York for Pittsburg on any day you will find the darkness after sundown relieved by frequent plunges alongside of long rows of flaming things like boiler furnaces, with holes in the top in place of chimneys, so that you see the white hot fire where the doors ought to be, and great leaping red and white flames where the smokestack belongs. These are coke ovens, or furnaces in which bituminous coal is reduced to coke, and very beautiful and surprising things they are when seen by the hundred in long lines and Indian file, on a pitch black night and in a region where, in some cases, no villages or houses or buildings of any sort appear.

In the heart of this coke oven country you suddenly shoot past a great cloud of flame in the sky—a flame as big as a house, and shaped now like a ham, and next like a huge conical seashell. For half a mile around it the country is brilliantly lighted, and men and fences and sheds and flying birds cast jet black shadows on the grass. At a second glance the vast cloud of flame is seen to be poised on a slender black pole twenty feet high. It takes a moment's study to bring a realization that the pole is an ordinary house-service gas pipe, and that the swaying, rolling cloud of fire is a flame of natural gas. If the cars would stop just there for a moment you would hear that burning gas roar and rumble and hiss with almost exactly the noise of a good sized cataract.

A great, yellowish white speck, low down in the distant horizon ahead, is the first sign one sees of Pittsburg. That speck is a flame forty or fifty feet long and half as wide. It is the advertisement of a gentleman's furnishing goods store on Smithfield street—the Broadway of Pittsburg. The enterprising brothers who keep the store had a figure of "Liberty, Enlightening the World" in the corner of their great new building, and when a natural gas invaded the city they took the cumbersome Bartholomew imitation of a firebrand out of her hand, substituted twenty feet of gas pipe for it, tapped the main in the middle of the street, and now they send a man up a ladder every night, and he lights a bang! a section of the city is lighted as no electric light ever began to light any part of outdoors. And there over the city this great balloon-shaped blaze aways and pulsates in the wind all night, roaring like a giant's furnace.

Just so the river side is illuminated by two great flames that jet from ordinary little tubes sticking out of the side of Du Quesnes Heights. It is wonderful to see the wind catch one of these masses of flame and wrestle with it and bear it down and roll it over and bite great yellow and white pieces from it and fling them away, patches of fire that look as if they were going to float along and keep their shape awhile, as whiffs of steam do, but instantly they are gone.

This natural gas carries no odor with it. You cannot detect its presence even when the air is laden with it. It leaks from the mains in the Pittsburg streets, and, finding a vein of sand, penetrates to the cellars of near houses. Several times it has happened that a resident has gone down in the cellar of his house to look for something, has lighted a match there, and has seemed to become the centre of a convulsion of nature that has wrecked all the windows, cracked all the walls and blown the doors off their hinges. In some of the mills and in the lot where the new jail is going up the gas jets burn forever. There is at least one town or city in this region wherein the street lights are never put out, because it would be a waste of money to hire a lamplighter after the original lighting.

This new fuel is valued by manufacturers because of the intensity and evenness of its heating properties. One manufacturer said that in his opinion it will presently double the wealth-producing power of the industries in and near Pittsburg by improving the quality of every product in the development of which heat plays a part. For the use in dwellings and

offices it seems equally desirable. I only saw it in use in one house. There I saw it in an ordinary cylindrical stove. A pipe emptied the gas in at the bottom of the stove, where it used to be customary to keep the ash pan.

At first, when the owner turned on his new fuel and dropped a match in at the stove door the top lid was shot into the ceiling, the door flew across the room, and the dampers blew out. He is an ingenious person. He got a lot of bricks, broke each one in two, put the half bricks into the stove so that they looked like big coals, turned on the gas, and chuckled to see how, as he expressed it, he had "fooled the stove into thinking he had returned the old-fashioned way of getting heat." It fooled me also for when the gas had been lighted in the stove for a few minutes the bricks became red hot and looked precisely like coals.—Pittsburg Correspondence.

A SUSPENDED SENTENCE.

A Dakota justice of the peace was trying a man for obtaining money under false pretenses by making untruthful statements concerning a horse he had sold. A rather severe sentence was passed and the prisoner said:

"Judge, that sentence is unjust."

"That sentence won't be changed not to any very great extent not if the court knows herself," thundered the justice.

"But there was alleviating and extenuating circumstances in connection."

"Why didn't you state 'em before?"

"The court didn't give me no chance."

"It is the opinion of the court that the court had something to do with this trial—please ante up yer fine here fore I sock \$5 enter you for contempt o' court."

"But just let me explain; you know I told the man that the boss was only six years old and wouldn't talk; well, you see it was the sorl boss you traded me and I took your word for all this."

"Hey! Was it the one I shoved oater you last week?"

"That's what it was, judge."

"And you didn't say nothing was than that he'd pull and was a colt?"

"That's all, yer honor."

"Well, this makes the case entirely different—circumstances alter cases—I don't see as you said any more than was necessary to unload the boss—I'll remit the fine and discharge you on yer own recognizance. Ef you and the jury'll come out you may ir'igate at the expense uv the court."—*Estlin (Dak.) Bell.*

FIGHTEN IKE'S BATTLE.

"Had to do it, you know," he explained as he came around the post-office corner with a bloody nose and two deep scratches on his chin.

"You have been fighting," said the policeman.

"Yes, but I was drive' to it. Big Jim was goin' to lick Little Ike."

"What was that to you?"

"Lots. Ike's brother died 'tother day, and Ike is in mourning. How's a boy goin' to fight when he's thinkin' of his dead brother and graves and bein' buried? He can't do it. Pluck's all gone, you see. Can't get his mad up to save his neck."

"And what did you do?"

"Took Ike's place, you know. Big Jim said it didn't make no difference to him, considerin' the circumstances, who he licked, and so I went in. Ike offered me two cents and a banana, but I didn't take 'em."

"And how did the fight come out?"

"I got away with Jim. He licked me ten times. But this time I got to thinkin' of Ike's poor brother an' I sctched Jim a winder on the ear. Then I thought of Ike's havin' to sleep alone, and I knocked Jim's nose sideways. He rushed in on me, but I thought of Ike's mother feelin' so bad, and I gave Jim a ki-ki which doubled him up and made him holter 'nuff."

"Where's Ike now?"

"There he is across the street. Hi there, Ikey! Come over! It's all right! Big Jim was knocked out in three rounds, and you and I'll go up and see the grave the first thing in the morning."—*Detroit Free Press.*

"It takes 250 bushels of potatoes to make a ton of starch." Only starch with potatoes at 90 cents per bushel.