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ROMANCE IN A RAILWAY.

BY JUSTIN M'CARTHY.

TWO YOUNG BARRISTERS travelling from London to Live pool, took their seats one evening in a first-class carriage of the five o'clock express at the Euston Square station—a station known, I venture to think, to every American who has ever invaded the old country. There were only two other seats occupied in the compartment entered by the two young men. Two ladies—at least a lady and her maid—were the other occupants. The lady was young and pale and pretty; the maid was a fresh blooming, round-eyed north country girl—the moment she spoke a word her accent made it plain to one of the two advocates, himself from the lakeland of Northern England, that the girl came from dear old Cumberland. Two gentlemen, one apparently the young lady's father, attended her to the carriage door, and waited at the door until the train actually moved off. They both, especially the one who seemed to exercise parental authority over the young lady, kept incessantly casting expectant, eager, suspicious eyes about the platform, as if they looked for or dreaded the arrival of somebody. These little facts the two barristers, accustomed to note small things and construct them into evidence, observed almost unconsciously, and by the sheer force of habit.

The older man whom both the youths learned in law assumed to be the father of the departing young lady, at last nodded significantly to the other, and said, in a low tone, "It is all right Cunningham. He is not here. Thank Heaven!"

"He can't come now," said the other.

"It would not have much mattered even if he did," the elder observed. "He should not have exchanged a word with her—not one word! But I'm glad to escape scenes and tears and confusion for all that."

The lady in the carriage had heard nothing of this. She sat at the farther side of her compartment. Doubtless what was said would never have been spoken were she near enough to hear it. One of our lawyer friends, however did hear it—in fact, he could not help himself; he had no chance but to hear.

The elder of the two speakers had taken a farewell of the girl when he put her into the carriage—that is, he kissed her very coldly, and said good-bye, and added a few whispered words which seemed to be something in the nature of a caution or a menace. Now, as the train moved off, he only nodded a farewell. He had a formally handsome face, regular, cold, and harsh, with thin lips and very white teeth.

The train then went on, and soon whirled through the pleasant suburbs of that side of London, and away into the open country.

The young lady seemed very melancholy and absorbed. She replied gracefully to a few civilities and attentions offered by the two barristers, but was evidently not much inclined to any manner of conversation. She exchanged a few words every now and then with her maid, but for the most part remained silent.

It was growing to be late in autumn, and dusk soon began to come on. The evening was soft and beautiful: the face of the country looked tender and poetic, with all its autumnal charm and melancholy grace around it.

Our two friends talked together on many subjects, at first in a low tone, then as the young lady appeared to be asleep, or wholly absorbed in her own thoughts they began to speak a little more freely and loudly. Something or other, perhaps the gray poetic sadness of the evening, set them talking of the old world ghosts—the dear delightful, torturing, hair-lifting, blood-chilling spectres who used to haunt our childhood. They actually began telling each other ghost stories, and did not observe the shuddering terror of the Cumberland lass, who could hardly sit still in her seat, so great was her interest, excitement, and superstitious dread.

"I don't know," said one of the two young men, Lewis Rossmore by name, "why railways should be supposed to have necessarily banished ghosts. I can quite imagine a ghost making his appearance in this very train, for instance."

"Can you?" replied Fred Sargent, "I confess I can't; but I think you Northmen near the Scottish border, have more imagination than we prosaic cockneys."

At the same time he happened to glance at the young lady in the corner, and her pale sad face seemed ghostlike enough in the gray evening light. Sargent thought for a moment of the legend of the company who sat one evening telling ghost stories until at last the turn came to a pale young lady who had been silent all the time, and who now when invited to contribute her share to the entertainment, said, in a low, toneless voice, "I have no ghost story to tell, but I am a ghost myself!" and so vanished.

"Yes," pursued Lewis Rossmore; "I can easily imagine it; and I think it could be done with rather fine effect. Look here, Sargent, take a note of this idea, and make something of it for one of the magazines. Two people, are traveling alone in a railway—the express—and have just passed one of the only stopping-places. Behold as the train is rushing at full speed across the open country, fifty miles an hour, and the evening is growing dark, like this, they suddenly perceive that one of the seats has an occupant, whose presence was not observed before—"

"God's sake! don't ye go on in that way," broke in the Cumberland girl, unable to contain herself any longer. "Don't ye go on so, gentlemen; it's enough to raise a ghost right i' the midst of us all!"

The young men laughed at first but the superstitious fear of the poor girl was so obviously genuine and profound that Rossmore discontinued his goblin invention, and they reassured her and talked for a few moments of something else. Then the train stopped for five minutes at the one only station where it was to make any halt during the long journey. No one got out of the compartment in which our friends were, and no one got into it; and when the train had fairly moved off, and our two friends felt secure against further disturbance, they settled themselves for sleep. The young lady appeared to be already asleep.

Both young men slept. Suddenly a loud shriek caused both to start up and rub their eyes.

It was the Cumberland girl who had given the alarm.

"It's a ghost! it's a ghost!" she cried. "That's what comes of your devilry and your talk—you've brought a ghost among us!"

The evening had sunk into almost complete darkness; the one lamp, the highest luxury in the way of illumination, to which even first-class passengers in an English express are treated, was burning very dimly; but it needed little light to see that there was a filth figure in the carriage—the figure of a man. There he was assuredly; a tall slender man, stooping because of the lowness of the roof, and apparently about to take the seat, which was vacant, opposite to that on which the young lady was seated. She had started up with a half scream on hearing her servant's alarm; but the back of the mysterious intruder was turned to her and she perhaps, saw nothing surprising in his presence.

Both the young lawyers however, saw something very surprising in it. An English railway train cannot possibly be entered by any one after it has moved from the station Nor has it any outer platform or other means of communication, by which passengers can go from one carriage into another. The carriages open at the sides and each first-class coach is a room closed up and complete in itself. Nobody had entered this compartment when it stopped at the station; nobody could have entered it since then; yet here was a fifth occupant where only four were present before.

"Hallo! who are you?" exclaimed Sargent.

How did you get in—where the devil did you come from?" fiercely demanded Rossmore.

"It's a ghost!" sobbed the Cumberland girl, faithful to her original hypothesis.

"Don't be alarmed, gentlemen" the intruder very calmly observed. "You have not a ghost among you; although if I had remained under cover a little longer, it is quite possible you might have had a ghost in the carriage before the end of the journey."

But the sound of his voice created a new agitation. The young lady sprang from her seat and cried out, "Oh, Harold! my dear Harold!" and threw herself upon his neck, and sobbed and laughed and sobbed again, and committed other such extravagances, to which the intruder lent himself with great apparent cordiality, giving back embrace for embrace, and with compound interest.

The Cumberland girl said, "God be guide to us—it's Master Harold himself!"

The two barristers resumed their seats and looked on much amazed, but with that outward calmness which distinguishes your true Briton under almost all conceivable circumstances. The intruder, whoever he might be, was clearly neither ghost nor robber.

"Oh, Harold!" exclaimed the young lady; "how did you come here? Where did you get in; and what have you come for?"

"Come for? Why, to see you love, of course. They thought they were quite safe, I believe, when they were a little mistaken. We'll surprise them a little more yet, Alice."

"But how did you come here, Harold!"

"Do satisfy our curiosity, sir," Sargent interposed. "It is really quite legitimate on our part, seeing that your sudden appearance looks very much like a fraud upon the railway company, of which for aught you know, my friend and I may be leading directors—and then you are positively accused of being a ghost."

The young man laughed. "Gentleman," he said, "You shall have a full explanation. I have been for years engaged to this young lady. Lately her mother who was a widow, thought fit to marry again, and her new husband, this young lady's step-father—you saw him at the station to day—detests me, has poisoned his wife's mind against me, and has persuaded her to refuse her consent to our marriage, of which she quite approved two years ago—perhaps because we were then too young to marry. I am going to the West Indies, and may be absent Heaven knows how long—and they had set their hearts upon preventing me from seeing Alice before I go.—Now I had, very naturally, set my heart on seeing her; and yet I didn't care to ask her to do any thing directly in opposition to her mother's commands."

"Quite right, sir," said Rossmore, with a look of infinite solemnity.

"Very commendable indeed," added Sargent, paternally.

"So," Harold continued, "I found that she was being sent back to the country today, in order to get her quickly out of my way—and my course was clear."

"Don't see it yet," murmured Sargent.

"Don't you see it? I came to Euston Station, took a ticket to Liverpool—so you perceive there is no question of fraud on the company— used audacious efforts in the way of bribery, and thus induced the guard, first to allow me to hide under the seat, and next to manage so that the young lady, whose photograph I showed him, should be conducted into this particular carriage. Gentlemen, this was done, and, in short, here I am."

"Lucky that you were not smothered," said Sargent.

"Or shot as a robber, on emerging from your hiding-place," said Rossmore.

"Dear Harold, how you must have suffered," Alice whispered. He pressed her hand tenderly.

"Why did you not come out before?" she asked.

Harold smiled. "Blame these gentlemen for that," he said. "They will not be offended if I say that I thought them just a little *de trop;* and I fancied, from something they said, they were about to get out at the station we have just passed, and so I waited. But when I found they were coming the whole way, I saw it was useless waiting any longer, and I came out, and nearly frightened poor Polly there" (the servant) "out of her senses."

"Very sorry we should have been in your way sir," said Sargent. "But it may interest you to know that I am the very profoundest sleeper who ever traveled in a train, and that I feel terribly sleepy already."

"And I said Rossmore can hardly keep my eyes open."

So the discreet barristers at once turned round in their seats, coiled themselves up, and closed their eyes, and were apparently buried in slumber deep enough for the Emperor Barbarossa or the Sleeping Beauty in her immortal wood.

Then Harold sat beside Alice, and took her hand in his; and the servant, Polly, seemed to follow the example of her legal travelling companions, and sink into sleep. So Alice and Harold talked and talked, and were happy. About to part, apparently for years, yet they were happy in the present. Surely that is one of the most excellent and exquisite properties of love—exquisite in its delight and in its pain—that it never looks beyond the present hour, but finds happiness now in a momentary meeting, though the agony of a long parting threatens near at hand—agony now in a momentary parting, although the hope of a speedy re-union may smile and offer consolation.

These two then were happy for the hour. But after all, the whole journey from London to Liverpool by express is only some five hours affair; and two hours had been wasted before our adventurous lover emerged from his concealment. So the prospect of Liverpool and separation began to look very threatening and imminent; and Harold, dreading and detesting the thought of such a parting, began to urge a wild proposal. Why should they not escape at Liverpool take the first train in the morning—only a very few hours to wait—and go on to Scotland and be married there? Then let the family do its worst; and Harold would not go to the West Indies, but would push a career at home. Or, even if they had to go, he would at least leave behind him a wedded wife, whom no ill-conditioned step-father could take from him. "Be my wife—come and be my wife—that first; that of all hazards!" So rang the refrain of the passionate outpouring which for nearly an hour Harold kept whispering into Alice's ear.

The girl had spirit enough, and was not unwilling to yield. Indeed, there were few risks life could offer which she was not ready to encounter rather than to go back to the dreary and odious home life, with Harold far away. Now she was being sent, as she perfectly well knew, to the custody of an uncle and aunt in Liverpool, in order that she might be kept out of the way until Harold should have left London and gone out to the West Indies, where he hoped to make a fortune.

"But, Harold, dear," the girl whispered, "the thing is impossible. My uncle will be at the station waiting for me with the carriage. Do you think he would be likely to fall into our plans?"

"No, Alice; I have thought of that. If you have courage—and I know you have—and are very quick, we can escape and defy him. Now listen, and don't be afraid.—Just before we get to Liverpool the train enters a tunnel, and inside the mouth of the tunnel we stop for a minute—a bare moment—to make sure that all is clear. I will have the door open, and I will take you in my arms and get out; it will be perfectly easy and safe; and Polly shall follow without one instant of delay. Then we hold our breaths, and stand in the darkness close up to the tunnel wall for only a moment, until the train rushes by; and then we get quietly out, take to the road, get a carriage at the nearest inn, and drive to any station on the line where we can wait for the Scottish mail.

Your uncle will only suppose that you have put off coming for a day; he will grumble and wait for you to-morrow without doing or even suspecting any thing, and then it will be too late."

"If we are killed—"

"Dearest, do you think I would expose you to any danger?"

"No, Harold, it was not that. I was only going to say that if we are killed—I mean if we are killed—we shall be killed together!"

Harold embraced his intrepid and desperate *fiancee*, and the plan was resolved on. A few whispered words conveyed the whole to stout-hearted Polly, who had a romantic heart, and would have gone with these lovers any where—leaped with them out of an express train flying at full speed rather than desert them. The moments went by; the tunnel was near; the two young barristers had long since been fast asleep in good reality; Harold softly opened the door, and stood close to it with Alice in his arms; the faithful Polly loaded herself with such of her mistress's cloaks and shawls and things as she could attempt to carry; the train began already to slacken its speed; they were at the mouth of the tunnel; Harold said, in a whisper, "*Now*, love!" And Alice shut her eyes, and pressed her face against his shoulder.

The train rattled and crushed through the echoing tunnel. The hollow, hideous reverberations aroused our sleeping barristers. Sargent started up, and rubbed his eyes.

"Hallo, Rossmore, this is the Edgehill Tunnell! We shall be in Liverpool in a moment. Shake yourself up, old boy!"

"All right," replied Rossmore, yawning. "Glad we're in. But I say, Sargent look here—why—did we stop anywhere?"

"Of course not. Why do you ask?"

"Then where are our fellow-travellers?"

"Good Heavens! To be sure, where are they? I forgot all about them. But they were here—that's certain; and we stopped at no station, and now they are gone!"

"Confound it, I never knew anything like that! That man, Harold, whoever he was, came in mysteriously, and now he has gone out even more mysteriously, and spirited away the two women along with him!"

"I say, Rossmore, how if your suggestion of this evening should have turned out a prediction? Have we had ghosts in our railway train?"

Both laughed—both were incredulous; and the train rushed into the crowded, bustling, blazing station at Liverpool. Our friends spoke to the guard of the train, who was much amazed at first to hear of the disappearance of the three passengers; but he seemed to think that, in the case of so audacious a lover as Harold Rivers, anything was possible—and then, there *was* a momentary stoppage in the tunnel.

So the barristers made no further inquiries, but took it for granted that all was right somehow, and went to their hotel.

They heard the end of the story, however, even before they returned to London, for they met Harold Rivers and his young wife in Liverpool ten days after. The pair had just returned from Scotland, where they were married. They had, of course, written off at once to Alice's mother, announcing their marriage, and they were in good hope that she would soon accept the situation. They could afford to wait a little, for they were married and happy, and Harold had made up his mind that he would not go to the West Indies.