# Clif Blunumirili Eintrs: 

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Harvey Middleton's Proposal.
Love in a Stage Coach

 nutum manm were meroly a crust covering the porous
mass below. It was nine o'clock in the morning when the stage-coach which con-
nects the little vilage of B - on the Kenvebec River, with the railroad terminus
some twenty-five miles below, drew up besome twenty-ive miles pelow, drew up be-
fore the door of the public-house, where Harvey Middloton stood waiting. That
gentleman watehed its approach with some gentleman watehed its approach wits
doubta concerning his own chances of a aseat. It was not a coach, but a thirg called a
"mud-cart"-a kind of wide open w.gon set on strong elastic springs, and having
several low-backed seate, which extended sover the wheels to afford more room. Every
seat wan full except one on the elevated perch of the driver, and thither Middleton
clambered with somendifieulty, and wrapped himself as well as he could from the
cold. He was just recovering from rather a severe illiness, whioh had detained him a
fortnight in that out-of.the-way place. A busy Boston hawyer, wie he calling him home, had not forne the conflnement very patiently; and not
feeling really well enough yet to bear a tiresoeing really well enough yet to
some stage drive, was just in that state o nervous irritability to bo annoyed at every
thing. As he mounted to his place his ears were groeted by a woman'slaugh-a heart \#ike, but with a pleasant sound in it for all that, At leest ho might have thought so in aurned, a little diagusted at the boisterous outbreak, and, while settling himself on the
fur robes, took a rapid survey of his fellowfur robes,
travellers.

They were none of them of a class likely seat were a sharp-visaged shaker, who had pestered him to buy a washing-machine at the publio house that morning, a sleepy-
looking elderly farmer, and his wife. The later in charge thrve bankets, a bundle, shawl, an umbrella, and her luusband, and soemed equally anxious about thom all. Four red-ahirted log-dirvers, on their way
down the river to start a big "jam" at down the river to start a bog " $\mathrm{amm}^{\text {" at }}$
Carratunk Falls, filled tho front meat, They were docent men, though rought, and
rather disposed to treat the other passengera to a good deal of obaff. On the middle neat were three persons. The drist was a country youth of the hobble-dehoy ages but with a pleasaunt, inteliligent face, interosing in spite or immaturity and freckles. with a and, girlish face, who carried in bor arme an enormously fat and incredibly liveIy baby. The other occupant of the seat Was a young womaa of cortalnly striking appearance. She seomed about twentyfour or flve had a tall, alowy figure and a ton admiltod to hininelf, aftor sovenll surveya. A brilimat complexion, an abun -it was before the advent of "frizzles"elear, strong gray oyes, a well-cut nobe, and filled with dazaling white teeth. Plainly it ringing, bointorous laugh which had so of.

## m

 aome bluesilik dress, a volvet cloakk richly
fringed and braided, a light silk hat with feathers, and a lace collar fastened with a showy brooch. Gold bracelets on her wristes, and lemon-colored kid glovas, completed
a costume whioh, though certainly becoming, could harrily be called appropriate for
a stage-coach ride in a muddy spring day. Middleton's taste instantly pronounced and its wearor hopelessly vulgar. She talk-
ed constantly, not only with the youth at hor side, who seemed to belong to her in
some way, but with all the other passengers. Her voice was a pleasant one, thoug
its its tonen, like her laugh, were so loud as to
jar disagreeably on Middleton's ear. Ordinarily it would not have occurred to him to
be thus annoyed; indeed, his sense of hu mor might have been pleased by the young woman's shrewd and ofen witty commenta
on the incidents of their ride; but to-day he was ill and nervous, and her loud tone,
her unpolished and occasionally ungramat ieal speech a and vulgarly showy dress dis-
pleased and disgusted him. Ho bore it as long as he could, and then his impatience
broke out. Not lond enough, however, to be audible to the object of it. It was to
his companion, the driver, that he exolaim ed, "Confound that woman's tongue
there no end to its infernal clatter?" The driver looked at our friend with
surprised and half-offended glance; but a moment he answered, in a tone rather
patronizing and tolerant, as though the person he addressed could really not bo "Well, strin I "Well, stranger, I guess you feel kind o out $o^{\prime}$ sorts this morning. You don't look
well, I snum. Been sick, ain't ye?", "Well, it beats all, how 'most anything
will kind $\sigma^{\prime}$ hector a follow when he don't feel just right. Now, for my part, I'd rath or hear Lymp Tucker laugh than to hear it; would cheer a fellow up if he was blu "I beg your pardon," said Middleton,
"I did not know she was a friend of yours and I meant no 末hrm any way.,
"Oh, well, there's no offense. Lymp
in't anything to me in particular; but ahe's a girl I always like to have behind my "What did you call her""
"Lymp Tucker-short Deacon Ben Tucker's daughter; oldest "Are they all like her?"
If there was any hidden sneer in If there was any haden sneer in his
words the driver did not perceive it. "Not nuch," was his emphatic reply. "The're
as pindlin' set, She's as strong as a thresh. ing machine, and as smart as chanin light
ning?" "Indeed" what can she do?"
"Well, I should like to have you men tion any thing ahe can't do."
Middleton's good breeding constraine him to express an interest in the driver feel. The latter went on confidentially. Their seat being higher than the others
the loud rattlo of the wheels kept thei words within bounds.
"You nee, sir, Deacon Tucker ho hain's
never been a strong man, and was ann nather behind hand with his farming.
rever Then they've had as sight of siokne Two of the girls died with consumption, hurt the apine of her back, so ahe ha scarcely done a day's work since. One year
the dencon's crops failed, and the noxt he the dencon's crops failed, and the noxt he
hiad bad luck with his cattio dying; and so what with sickness and all, he'd had to mortgage his farm, and it had only throe
years more to run, and everybody roekoned he'd have to lose it. Then Lymp she said
that never thould be, for she should earn the money to pay off the mortgage. She was eighteen then, and had done all the run alone. Bhe went out spinining till she
got money enough to pay her fare to Lowell, gor money enouga to pay hor fare to Lowel,
and then whe started for the factory. I car-
ried her down to the ears in my stage, and ried her down to the ears in my stage, an
I happen to koow that she hadn't but on gown to her back when sho went away
"Well, she got a good plaoe, and sho
worked straight along, and sent home Worked straight along, and sent holear
monoy-soven huidred dollirs and and of
ed off thie mortgage, and took a deed of th place in her own name to make sure againg: and tociey yan was six yearn ago or more, name place. The honite in all fxed up, and an chirp as a crieket, and proud of Lymp you'd better bolliove."
"He ought to be," said Middleton heart-
"Didn't I tell youp" nsked the other, riumphantly. "And that ain't half. She
ires a girl to wait on her mother, and she ires a girl to wait on her mother, and she sent the younger children to school-she
never had a chance for schoolin' herself-
and then-You see that boy back there and then-
with her?
"Yes
"Yes, I noticed him."
"Well, that's her brother Jolin; all the
oy the deacon ever had. He's seventeen and smart. Lymp's putting him through college, going to make a coctor of bim
"She is a noble gir
discourage her. Shets bound to laugh right through things; and that kind always have ood tack. Not proud neither, though she' got money in the bank, and can afford to
have nice things now. Some difference,
he continued proudly, with a beck gesture, "between that velvet cloak and ne dress. All bought with her own earn
Middicton did not smile; he felt rebuked. Even the velvet cloak and dress hat in the tage-coach beoame respectable to him in
connection with that cheerful, courngeous, unselfish spirit. If the girl had pleasure
in these things, why should she not enjoy in these things, why should she not enjoy
them? The driver went on, lowering his his voice to a tone still more confiden"They say-I don't know how true ' tis -
(hat Squire Danvers is kind $o$ ' hankerin" cound Lymp. He's a widower, well off,
and got a nice place. But Lymp don't take a shine to him. She told my wife she
didn't fancy second-lhand goods no way didn't fancy second-hand goods no way.

Middleton's laugh was almost as hearty as that which had so annoyed him. But he driver's gossip was here interrupted.
The coach stopped to let off the four log. ne
rivers, and Middleton gladly availed himself of the seat they vacated, it being more
sheltered from the cold wind than the high one he had been occupying. This movement brought him face to face with the owner of her with a glance of ouriosity. He had heard of thegenius factory-girl, but perhaps
had never before been knowingly in company with a specimen. There was nothing lide in his look; and the girl observing, re
urned it with a steady, unabashed gaze which there was no shadow of boldness, was more as one man regards another; and
Harvey's cye was the tirat to fall. The road was in a frightful condition Sometimes the wheels on one side sank to other were tilted up on a snow-drif. The olts and lurches were as painful as alarming, and Harvey in hin weak stato could
bardly endure them. Ho leaned back and closed his eyes, but the doadly pallor of his
face betrayed his suffering. In a momont aco betrayed his suffering. In a moment
a pleassant voice addressed him. It was the factory-girl, who said,
"You do not seem well, Sir. Perhaps it You are weloome to my mant, if you like to You are
"You are very kind," said Middleton,
curprised. "The seat is very well, I surprised. "The seat is very well, I be ough."
"Why, it is dreadful for a siok person. ure you could make youreiff more comfort "ble with it."
"Thank you very mach; but I would "ather not deprive you of it."
varm; and need it, Sir; my eloak is ver, of it. Pleane take it"" and alio leaned for vard and arranged the shawl hereiff in a mamendation. He had not energy to re-
monstrate further, but leaned back and again closed his eyes, thinking the whife
how very handsome hers were, and what a entlo touch she had.
He lay thus for sonue time, paying Hettle heed to anything; but aftor a while his at
tontion was attracted by those in frout of him. The woman with the baby was guest im. The woman wilh the baby was suest-
ioning Miwe Tuoker concorning Lowell and to factories. She had a timid, nervons manane, and spoke softly, as if frightenod a
ho sound of her own voice. She had been pretty once, but now her fave had a weary, aympathies. Mfins Tucker answered her drawing flom her the foot tliat she was on

## her way to L employme

friends in the city
"Noo." prestly asked.
"But what will you do with your baby "I thought perhaps I could gett some oue
look after him, if I had tho luck to find to look a
work."
"Hav "Haven't you any friends where you
come from that would take him-your own folks?"
"No"-rather hesitatingly. "I haven't
any folks-at least they don't care for me any roks-at least they don't care for mo
now."
" Where is your "Where is you
A fiery blush spread over the woman'
face, and her lips contracted as if with sharp spasm of pain, but sle made no answer. Miss Tueker regarded her for an
instant with surprise; then a sudden, swift lifting of the eyebrows alowed that alhe
comprehended the case. She leaned forward and said in a low tone, "I under-
stand: your husband is not living. I a stand: your husband is not living. I am
sorry I spoke of it. What a fine heatthy

There was a gentle, womanly accent oar; and the ready tact with which she b covered the poor creature's ombarrassment, turning instantly from the painful theme to that which would naturally be most
consoling, pleased and touchod him. He consoling, pleased and touchod him. He tory-girl with more of genuine admira
tion than he had often bestowed on woman. Indeed, he was not an admirer of
woman in general. A bachelor of forty, well born, good-looking, and rich, he
might well lave been a mark for man aging mammas and designing daughters, But he was not partial to female society. The truth was he had in his youth, when
not so prosperous as now, been rather not so prosperous as now, been rather
badly treated by a beautifal but worldy girl, who, after encouraging his suit, sud-
denyy jilted him for a wealthier rival. The experience had possibly somewhat sliaken his faith in woman in general; at least it
had given him a distasto for their socioty He had two married brothers, but their
matrimonial luek was not of a kind to make him envious. The wifo of one was a very high bred woman, a model of elegance
and propriety in externals, but with the temper of a demon; the other was an
amiable fool. So, on in the whole, Harvey was content to remain as he was. Unfa miliar with woman, he was, as a rule,
nuther unobservant nf thowe with whom he ruther unobservant of thowe with whom he
might be acoidently thrown, and indifferent to what thiey chose to say or do. So it was, listening now with finterest to the talk of these avo, one of whom was evidently no better than a social pariabs and the other of a standing and culture so inferior to his
own. He observed how the latter, thongh evidently comprohending the trath with shrinking or hebitation. She saw only her need, not her fault, and gave her all the
advice in her power in a tone of grave but respectful compassion.
They rumbled and jolted along, the road growing moro difficut with every mile, till, indeed, it was nearily impassible. The old
lady with the basket grew croser and more frightoned with every fresh jolt, Sho scolded the driver incensantly, ns if he wero
somehow responsible for the state of the roads, and seemed out of patience with all
the rest for not being as much terrifed the rest for not being as much territied as
beraelf. Her wretched husband alept continually, but managed to luroh forwa
every moment against the youth in front of him, till the latter very nearly lost his temper undor the infliotion, The baby
frotted and cried; and as for Harveg, he grew so tired that he began to think could go no further.
But disconifort and amnoyanoe only meemed to bring out Lymp Tuckor in groat-
er strength. She langhed merrily at each
倍 fresh mishap, ralled the old lady out or her feark, and helpod her to straighten her mashed boinnet, whiok had come to grior from the jolting stage ; and jolked away her
brother's ill-humor, and produced from her rother's ill-humor, and prodaced from her sachor an orango which quieted the erying
baby, and gavo tes weary mother s brief roit. Her unfailing gobd humor and choerfuliness had an eifoot upoo all; ovon Har-
vey partly forgot his wearinessis in the lively vey partly forgot his weariness in the lively
talk in which ate enggged him. She chatted with perfeet fraiknoses and some disregured to grummar rules; bat tha guick, wit
and the ellewd eommonsense alio displayed made amende for muohi:

At last, going down a long hill, the ca-
tastrophy which the old lady had looking for came; the stage samk with sudden lurch into a deep so sank with a the wheels snapped like a reed. Forunatey the velicle was not upset, and only stuck fast ; but they could go no farther. Here
was a cheerful state of things! The nearest house was half a mile away, and
they had the alternative of walking to hrough the mud or of waiting there in th bleak March wind for an indefinite time nce was found. The former course was plainly the wise one
and all scrambled out accordingly. Lymy
Tucker drews Tuoker drow up the skirt of her gay silk
dress, thereby making a liberal display of ankles and under-garments, but the comely of the other made it excusable. Then, aking possession of the kicking baby, and
bididing her brother give his assistance to Middleton, she led the way across the field mareh behind her.
Arrived, after considerable difficulty, at the farm-house, they had the satiffactio
of learning that they must wait at least two hours for the repair of the broken
wheel, and that they were stinl five miles ahort of the half-way house where they ha expected to take dimner. Of course they werg all nearly famished after riding
long in the cold. The good woman of the house seemed well disposed to supply thei wants, but she was alone and her larde somewhat lean. "I don't suppose you'd
want fried pork," said she, dubiously. "I want fried pork," said she, dubious
might kill "Thit a couplo of pullets."
said Lymp Tucke. "We wh altogether, baby before they would be ready."
"Well, I guess Jones' wife, down at the hain't got no bread baked then."
Ihings, never mind that. Give me the chings to do it with, and I'll have the bread
made by the time you are back from
Jones," "La, now," said the hostess, looking
doubtrully at the fine apparel of her guest, "You bring me the things and see," re clied the other, laying aside the volve obeyed at once. Mins Tucker turned up the silken sleeves, from a pair of large and
handsome white arms and tied on a bi handsome white arms and tied on a big
check apron, while the hostess flung a shavi around her head and took her way acros the field to "the corner
The gnly fire in the bouse was in the and watched the preparation of their repast. The impromptu bread-baker flirted a flousifter, twirled a spoon in a pan, mado an ficeredibly passes over a board, and in an increaibly short time had produced
large panful of biscuits, tin baker before the open fire. The ho tin baker before the open fire. The hos a mmoking dish of hot ham and egge which, with biscuits like snow-flake, mad very inviting repast.
By the time the menl was well over the ariver returned with his whool mended,
and they took the road again. Harvey, vho had paid the entertainer biber his own dinner, noticed the pale young
wotnan approach and offor to do the same.
"That is all settled," said the hostess,
nd motioned with her hand toward Miss Tucker.
Harvey felt mortifed that ho should no have thought to do that kindness himself
He overheard the poor woman's grateful He overheard the poor woman's gratoful
murmur of thanks to her new friend and the light laugh with which they were turned aside. Ho had come to Hike the sound of that laugh quite as well as the dirver. H places, he found Miss Tucker seated besid himself. Ho could no longorbear to be only himbelf to thow to his companioni all thowe mill courtesies of the road whitch oceasion allowed. Ho talked very little, however hough ho talked his very best; and his grave, respeciral demennor oikrod no indul, which roilly thrilled through all the
fis and puluses of his being. It wiss not merrely
respect for the fine qualitier he had discored in her, nor wholly his kindling admiration for her rich and glowing beauty, but
an emotion oomningled with and far tranu an omotion oomningled with and for trani-
conding both $-s$ dellcato and subtle pleas are in the prosence of a large and gracious
woman which his whole mant's nature ac knowlodged and bowed down to.
wlodged and bowed down to,
cosoluded on aitord pad

