

SOUTHERN PROGRESS.

A monthly, sixteen-page journal containing in each number some twenty narratives of the South, chiefly descriptive and pictorial. The paper is undoubtedly the best illustrated journal in the world, and the only publication which presents glimpses of Southern life and Southern people. It is a favorite souvenir with those who have visited the South; and it serves a good purpose, in lieu of a visit, to those who have never been there.

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FRANK A. HEYWOOD,
Editor and Publisher,
211 S. 10th St., Philadelphia.

IN DOUBT.

In Edith's smile there's hope and cheer
That quite dispel the somber gray,
And all the ill's of yester-year.
Are exiled from my dreams away.
When she is glad the world is bright,
Her merry laugh dull care beguiles,
Each burdened heart grows strangely
light;
There's hope and cheer in Edith's smiles.

In Neilia's tears there's blest relief
From ill's to large proportions grown;
In lessening another's grief
We quite forget the ill's our own.
And be the tears of penitence,
Or tears of joy, each one endears,
The cause is of no consequence—
There's blest relief in Neilia's tears.

My heart is by a doubt oppressed,
My heart is but a vagrant that veers;
It knows not which it loves best—
Sweet Edith's smiles or Neilia's tears.
—Roy Farrell Greene, in Midland Monthly.

A COMMONPLACE MAN

By G. H. DIERHOLD.

HERE was nothing brilliant about Dan Russell, any more than there was about No. 16, his heavy, solidly-built engine, or about the big sleek, grass-fed steers that generally formed the greater part of the load on the trains that he pulled. He was considered one of the most faithful men on the Denver road, but somehow his very faithfulness was of a kind which is generally associated with dullness. In many respects his character was strikingly like that of the road on which he ran. The Denver is a long, monotonous road that stretches up into the Panhandle of Texas over almost endless reaches of seemingly dead level prairie; but all the time is gradually rising toward the lava beds of the foothills of New Mexico, and eventually finds its way across the mountains and into the city of Denver. In much the same way there was a kind of monotony about Dan Russell, but it was a monotony of vastness. It rose by imperceptible gradations to the heights of heroism, and it is barely possible that in the end it also may have found its way into some "continuing city."

Dan never achieved even the distinction of being given a passenger run. In spite of his faithfulness, men of a different turn of mind always seemed to get the promotions. Ben Stikes, his fireman, was a much younger man, and much less experienced in railroad matters, but it was frequently remarked among their friends that Ben was already better liked in official circles than Dan, and that the fireman was likely to get a passenger run first.

There was a certain town on Dan's run known as the "Chicken and Bread" town. It was so called because of the swarm of semicivilized and totally depraved small boys who always met trains there and tried to beguile passengers into buying alleged samples of those two articles of diet. The town is still known by this name from one end of the "Denver" to the other. It is hardly worth while to mention its other name, as this one really lends all the dignity to the town which the facts in the case will justify. The town consists principally of sand hills and saloons, but as it is at the junction of two railroads it has been made the eating station for the crews of several trains. It has several inhabitants, but the one most nearly connected with this story, and decidedly the most important one in Dan Russell's eyes, was Grace Atkins.

Grace was the daughter of a saloon keeper, whose place was near the Denver depot. More than that, she was Dan's sweetheart. This is the best thing I know to say about her. The woman whom Dan Russell loved cannot have been all bad. How Dan managed to become engaged to her, or even to make love to her, I cannot pretend to say. How he managed it, even his most intimate friends never could imagine. It is a matter of record, though, that a brakeman once punched him in the ribs and asked him what the date was, and that Dan blushed violently and stammered something about "promotion." Everything went well with the affair until the unfortunate day when Ben Stikes was transferred to a seat in the cab of No. 16, and to the position of fireman to Dan Russell. Before this happened Grace made it a point to meet Dan's train every evening as it passed through the "Chicken and Bread" town, and whenever she always met it.

"Something goes under the sun," remarked one of the habitual loungers around the depot one day, just after No. 16 had pulled out.

"What is it?" inquired another.

"Great Stikes."

"Yes! Well, she is to'ble new. She isn't met No. 16 but about 40 times this last month."

"She ain't never met it on the right side of the cab before. Did you notice it? She alivers stood on the left side till to-day."

At this there were several significant grins in the crowd, and several shoulders were shrugged. After several moments of silence spent in looking after the disappearing train, one of the loafers remarked, sententiously:

"D—good-looking man, any way!"

Even Dan Russell's most ardent friend could never have claimed that this imprecation was intended for him. After this the loafers noticed that Grace stood on one side of the cab just about as often as she did on the other. It is barely possible that Dan may have noticed it also, but there was never anything about his swarthy, firm-set face to show it. As the months went on his fireman continued to be as "good-looking" as ever, and showed no sign of any injury from the "damning" he had received. Finally a time came when Grace failed to stand on either side of No. 16, or to meet it at all for over a week. Neither man in the cab showed the slightest sign of missing her.

"Something's up," the loungers whispered.

pered one to another; but no one had an opinion to venture as to what that "somethin'" might be.

I'm in trouble, an' I've needed you awful. Why haven't you come to see me lately?"

"I never know you was needin' me," faltered Dan.

"Folks have been saying such awful things about me," sobbed Grace. "They pretended like I asked you to come to the saloon just on purpose to get you fired, so that maybe Ben could get your job. Even pa talks that way. You don't believe I done it on purpose, do you, Dan?"

Dan merely shuffled his feet uneasily. "I'd do a heap fur you, Grace, but I ain't tellin' no lies for nobody. What do you want with me?"

This reply was spoken, not sternly, but in so many, straightforward a tone that all Grace's hypocrisy failed her. Instead of sobbing convulsively, as she had at first thought of doing, she merely said:

"Dan, you and me never was fitted for each other. You know that."

"I've known for a long time we was different."

"Well, I know I'm not good enough for you to wipe your feet on," cried the girl, giving way to a tempest of genuine tears, very different from those she had been planning only a few moments before. "I want to marry Ben, because he ain't no better than I am, and because—because I love him. Pa swear he'll kill us both if I ever have anything more to do with him. He swears I have treated you like a dog—an' I have. Pa and I had such a racket to-night that I wouldn't go home again under no circumstances. I'd die first! Ben's pullin' an extra to-night. I would have arranged to meet him at the depot and run off with him, but I know pa'll be there with his Winchester, so we'll go no."

"Now, you won't!" exclaimed Dan, hurriedly, as he jumped down from the cab: "I'm goin' myself."

This was the nearest that Dan was ever known to come toward displaying any resentment toward Ben. As he strode away one of his brakemen came hurrying after him.

"Say, Dan," he queried, anxiously, "you ain't goin' over to Atkins' are you?"

Dan nodded.

"Well, I wouldn't. The Ol' Man's in town—so they tell me; kem in at 3:40, an' goin' out on the south-bound. God only knows what he's stoppin' here for, but if he was to ketch you in that saloon, he'd fire you, shore."

Dan muttered some confused reply, but still kept on toward the saloon. It was nearly dark now, and when he opened the door the big coal oil lamp hanging behind the bar had been lighted. Passing through without stopping, he hurried into the room behind. There he remained for about five minutes in conversation with Grace. Just what passed between them nobody knows, but when Dan reappeared in the saloon it also may have found its way into some "continuing city."

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It was the "Old Man." There is no need to give his name or his official station. He was Dan's superior officer in railroad circles, and that settled the matter. Dan hung his head and hurried out into the gathering darkness to make what he knew would be his last run on No. 16.

"What in the devil brought you in here just at this time?" growled Bill Atkins, as he scowled at the newcomer.

The "Old Man," who was not so very old after all, bowed rather deprecatingly.

"A young lady sent me a note, requesting me to call. I suppose it was on business of some kind. It was Miss Atkins, your daughter, I presume."

That night Grace had a stormy interview with her father. The more he stormed, the more she wept. It had all been intended for a joke. She had sent for the "Old Man" just to tease Dan and to make him a little jealous. She had never once thought any harm could come of it. So she protested between her sobs. But her father only reiterated with a lion-like roar that although he knew she was one of the blankest fools in Texas, he knew very well she had never been such a fool as that.

Of course Dan was not discharged; that distinction is reserved for higher officers in railroad circles. Engineers never get fired; and that was what happened to Dan. If he had been a man of another kind, he might have worked the proper wires and got off with only a short lay-off. Even if he himself had begged hard enough masters might have been compromised. As it was, he merely gave up his place without saying a word. Nobody was surprised to learn that Ben Stikes had been promoted to Dan's place at the throttle of No. 16. In a few days Dan began quietly to look about for another job. He soon obtained a place under the section foreman of a section only a few miles from the Chicken and Bread town. As the foreman was a married man, he and his family lived in town, Dan bunked alone in the section house. It was an humble job for the former engineer, but it was better than nothing.

III.

One night in January Dan was roused from his sleep by some one pounding on the section house door.

"Who's that?" he growled, sleepily. "It's me!"

Dan recognized the voice, and it must have thrilled him through and through. "In a minute," he shouted.

Hurriedly dressing, he opened the door and stepped out into the night. It was cloudless, but the force of a Texas "dry north" was raging.

"Good Lord, Grace!" he shouted. "You oughtn't to be here. This wind's enough to give you death. Wheew, but it is biting! And, besides, you oughtn't to have come here to my house by yourself, 'way in the dead of the night."

"I came because I wanted to see you."

I'm in trouble, an' I've needed you awful. Why haven't you come to see me lately?"

"I never know you was needin' me," faltered Dan.

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"Dan, you and me never was fitted for each other. You know that."

"I've known for a long time we was different."

"Well, I know I'm not good enough for you to wipe your feet on," cried the girl, giving way to a tempest of genuine tears, very different from those she had been planning only a few moments before.

"Now, you won't!" exclaimed Dan, hurriedly, as he jumped down from the cab: "I'm goin' myself."

This was the nearest that Dan was ever known to come toward displaying any resentment toward Ben. As he strode away one of his brakemen came hurrying after him.

"Say, Dan," he queried, anxiously, "you ain't goin' over to Atkins' are you?"

Dan nodded.

"Well, I wouldn't. The Ol' Man's in town—so they tell me; kem in at 3:40, an' goin' out on the south-bound. God only knows what he's stoppin' here for, but if he was to ketch you in that saloon, he'd fire you, shore."

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