

MRS. BUCK TUPPER.

My profession is that of civil engineering.

After a very unsatisfactory year spent in the employ of certain mushroom railroad companies I resolved to seek a shorter route to fortune by joining the throng that was just then rushing to the silver mines of the southwest.

But, alas, for the best laid plans of an unsophisticated tenderfoot! Six months later I found myself one day stranded in a wretched little mining town without a dollar in my pocket.

How I happened just then to meet and make friends with Colonel Dingler it is no part of my purpose to relate. Suffice to say that when he offered to send me 75 miles into the country with a party of men who were to take charge of one of his ranches I accepted without demur.

There were five of us, with all possible diversity of character and bringing up. Dennis O'Flaherty was a brilliant young Irishman, the son of a New York alderman. He had broken with his family because of his disposition to flirt with pretty girls rather than to "study for orders," as had been intended.

St Larkins was a typical down easter, big and rawnboned, and until six months ago had never been beyond the New Hampshire hills. His very opposite was Ross Harper, a dapper little fellow who, in spite of his sombrero and brace of pistols, looked very like one of the dummies that used to adorn the front of his clothing store back in Cincinnati, but for all that he was plucky and clear grit to the backbone. Then there was Buck-Tupper.

Just where he hailed from no one ever seemed to know.

He seemed to be a part of the wild west himself, and his knowledge of its bold, wicked ways was something marvelous.

He had a playful habit of galloping across the country, firing right and left simultaneously, or of dashing unheralded through shops and saloons on his mustang. Buck was an inveterate gambler, though something of a bungler it seemed—at least his earnings went regularly into the hands of the faro bank dealer at Waho.

One afternoon as Buck and I were returning from beyond the canyon, where we had gone in search of some missing cattle, we came upon the trail of a company of horsemen.

From the broken bits of saddle, cooking utensils and papers that were scattered about the gorge, it was evident that there had been a runaway. As reading matter was at a premium just then, I was off in an instant and was gathering up the papers, which proved to be of recent date.

So absorbed did I become in their contents that it was some minutes before I noticed that Buck also had dismounted and was examining with great interest something that he had picked up from the roadside.

It proved to be the photograph of a woman—a fine, oval face, the slightly waving hair brushed simply back from the low, broad forehead. The eyes, that you would have sworn were a clear gray, seemed to look into your own with a sweet, trustful expression. Several times during the ride home Buck took the picture from his blouse, regarding it with an air of pleased ownership.

When I came into the house after putting away the horses, I found him busily engaged in fastening the picture to the smoked wall above the chimney piece.

"It ain't no place for such," he said, nodding his head at the picture and glancing apologetically about the room.

"But Buck Tupper's proud to give you the best he's got."

Looking upon the matter as a great joke, when the others came in I led them to the picture, presenting them with mock ceremony to Mrs. Buck Tupper. The name seemed to tickle Buck's fancy, and he repeated it over and over to himself with a pleased chuckle.

From that time "Mrs. Buck Tupper" became a household word with us, but it was not until some weeks after this that we learned how much of a reality she had become to the eccentric fellow. One day, when one of his chains from Waho was in the midst of a somewhat doubtful story, Buck had interrupted:

"Gimpsey, I don't 'flow that's just the talk a right nice woman likes to listen to," glancing significantly at the face on the wall. Gimpsey stopped, disconcerted and astonished, but he did not finish the story. I think he went away believing that Buck was a bit touched; indeed I am not sure but that the rest of us shared the opinion.

It was evident that for some reason a radical change had taken place in him. He went no more on his boisterous crusades, and on Sundays, when he was off duty, I had found him several times trying to spell out the words in the little Bible I had carried with me in my wanderings.

For several weeks flaming bills had been posted about announcing that there was to be a great time at Waho on Christmas eve. However, when I mentioned it to Tupper he shook his head slowly:

"Naw, I did think some about it, but Mrs. Buck Tupper—looking up at the picture with a half smile—"I 'flowed if she was here she'd rather I wouldn't."

Seeing that I was disposed to listen he went on: "I never had no bringin up, I reckon, but I sort o' felt from the first as though that picture was a token, an I says, some day you'll find that woman herself, Buck Tupper. Of course I never could be fitted for such," sighing humbly, "but I made up my mind to be decent an squar anyway."

For more than a month we had been annoyed by cattle thieves, but in spite of the fact that we had been re-enforced by a daring company of men, they continued to elude us. One bright, moonlight night, however, we came down upon a party of them. Our men at once opened fire. At first they showed fight, but as so far outnumbered them their leader, with a signal to his men, put spurs to his horse and in a moment they were galloping down the gorge, with several of our party in pursuit.

They had gone but a short distance when a shot took effect, and the horse of one of the outlaws fell dead.

Larkins and I hurried forward to prevent the rider's escape, but as we lifted the saddle, by which the rider had been pinned to the ground, the long cloak and broad sombrero fell back, disclosing the fact that our captive was a woman.

At this moment one of the men came galloping back with the news that Buck had been shot. This of course put an end to the pursuit, and we hurried back to the ranch with the wounded man.

O'Flaherty and I took charge of him, while Harper was left in the outer room to guard the prisoner. From the first it was evident that Buck's wounds were fatal. He was conscious, however, though his mind seemed to wander at times.

"I reckon I'm goin' home," he said feebly. "I never was half decent; I never knowed how; but, Jim," with a pitiful, pleading look, "if you see Mrs. Buck Tupper, I wish you'd tell her—that—I tried."

I thought that the experience of these months had effectually hardened me, but this was too much, and on the pretense of wishing to relieve Harper I left the room.

It was not until I was alone with the woman that I looked at her. Then I was transfixed with astonishment. As she sat there, the lamplight falling on her cold, rigid face, it needed no second glance to convince me that she was the original of Buck's picture.

This then was the angel of purity at whose shrine the poor fellow had been worshipping!

My first thought was he must never know. And yet I reflected how much it would mean to him to see her face. Going over to where she sat I hurriedly told her the whole story.

"And you want me to go to him?" Her face was cold and unfeeling, but there was a singular sweetness in her voice.

"Yes, only that he thinks you are"—"I understand," with a faint smile. After explaining matters to O'Flaherty I led her to the bedside of the dying man and left them alone together.

When I returned some minutes later, she sat beside him, and he was holding her hand.

A change that I could not describe had come over her countenance. There was a subdued light that only tears can give to a woman's face.

"You'll make a little pra'r for me," he was saying pleadingly.

"I—can't!"

"Yes, little one," very tenderly. "I 'flow you do feel broke up, but I never just knowed how, an the angels'd hear such as you."

The woman turned a hunted look upon the rest of us, and then slipping from her chair dropped upon her knees:

"Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take."

At first the words seem to choke her, but there was something so solemn about it all that I do not think it occurred to one of us that there was anything incongruous in the repetition of the childish prayer at this moment.

Buck repeated the last words over after her:

"I pray the Lord my soul to take. —Yes, I 'flow he will," and he was gone.

Of course we could not think now of dealing with our prisoner, so, after a hurried consultation, we put her on Buck's pony, and Harper and I rode out to the trail with her, and the last we saw of Mrs. Buck Tupper she was vanishing down the gorge in the gray morning mist.

The following summer I returned to Boston, and as the years slipped away my western experience became gradually an uncertain memory.

One evening late in December as I was walking up Duane street my attention was arrested by the sound of music that came from the Salvation Army barracks across the street.

I have a friend in Jesus; He's everything to me; He's the fairest of ten thousand to my soul.

I crossed over and stood for a moment in the crowd that surged about the door. The singing had ceased, and a woman was speaking. I could not see her face, but her voice was a singularly musical falsetto.

"Though your sins be as scarlet—do you hear that?" she was saying. "Scarlet—that means blood—an the Bible says no murderer can enter the kingdom. But he can wash the murder out of your heart, bless his name! He says, 'I will make them white as snow.'"

Seized with a sudden curiosity, I mounted one of the benches to get a glimpse of the speaker's face. A pale face, with clear, gray eyes and waving, brown hair—where had I seen it before? What was the vague memory that for a moment seemed only to tantalize me? I had gone back through the years and the same face—only younger and fuller—was looking at me from the smoked wall above the chimney piece.

"Mrs. Buck Tupper!" involuntarily the words came to my lips. At this moment the woman's eyes met my own. A confused look overspread her face, and she faltered in her speech. Could it be that she knew me? No, but she had seen the look of recognition in my face, and recognition to a woman with such a past must be always disturbing. I reflected, as I stepped down and joined the crowd outside.

"Who is she?" I questioned of a strapping fellow with a flaming badge upon his breast.

"That's Captain Mildred," speaking enthusiastically. "The devil hates that woman, I tell you! Why, she'd go through anything to get a poor wretch out of his clutches. Why, she's a"—"But I did not wait to hear the rest. Here, I mused, was a fit sequel to poor Buck's love story, and as I walked away the song floated up again, clear and triumphant:

"And sweeping up to glory, To see his blessed face, Where rivers of delight forever roll, He's the King of the valley—The bright and morning star, He's the fairest of ten thousand to my soul."

—Mattie M. Boteler in Cincinnati Post.

A Sliding Experience.

The story comes up from below the city about a man who attempted to cross the Androscooggin on the ice and was swamped, together with his team. He had been hauling wood across the river for several days and had just one more load to haul.

As the water was up on the face of the ice he first thought to put off hauling it, but the thought that perhaps there would not be another chance to haul it made him go across. When he started back, he thought he wouldn't go in the same track where he had hauled the rest, so he went a little above.

The ice began to crack slowly when he got to the middle. Quick as a flash he unfastened the two trees and one held back. Then he struck the horse violent ly with the whip. At the same time the sledload of wood went through with a crash. He commenced to sink with it, but when the horse had been struck he jumped ahead, and breaking the off hold-back jerked the man off of the load and dragged him to the shore with the reins. There he stopped, and the man got up.

When he looked back the top of the wood and the shafts could be seen sticking out of the hole in the ice. The water was not deep. He says that he would rather lose the wood than go near the hole again. It is frozen in now.—Lewis-ton Journal.

A Living Japanese Salamander.

Thomas S. Hill, the young naturalist of Knoxville, Ia., who is spending the winter at Paso del Norte, Tex., has recently come into possession of a rare curiosity—a Japanese salamander—the gift of a friend who is now "doing" the orient. According to the descriptive tag which was pasted on the tin box in which Mr. Salamander made his long trip, the creature was caught in one of the fresh water lakes of the Japanese mountains on the 4th of July last. Unfortunately the tag does not state whether the specimen is a young or an old example of the salamander family. Naturalists who have examined it since its arrival at the Paso, however, declare that it is about 7 years of age.

It is exactly 3 feet and 9 inches in length, has four legs, like an alligator, and a very extensive caudal appendage. The head is broad and flat, very "snaky" in appearance; the eyes so small as to be hardly discernible. In color the creature is a muddy, dark brown above, and lighter underneath. The entire skin is covered with "warts," or excrescences like those on a toad. When pressed upon these warts exude a viscid, acrid fluid, which is probably its only means of defense.—St. Louis Republic.

The Biggest Panorama in the World.

Within a few days there will arrive in New York for shipment to Chicago a painting valued at \$300,000 and of such huge dimensions that two freight cars will be required to bring it to this city. The painting is a panorama of the Bernese Alps of Switzerland. It will be placed on exhibition at the World's fair in a specially constructed building, having the distinction of being the largest panorama ever painted.

When it reaches New York, special rigging will have to be employed to take it from the vessel. The roll of canvas being 60 feet long, two freight cars provided with a device for turning short curves will be used for its transportation. Much of the material to be used in the construction of the panorama building is included in the shipment, and no time will be lost in putting it together when it reaches Jackson park—the aim being to have the panorama on exhibition March 1. After the World's fair the canvas will be shipped back to Switzerland.—Chicago Herald.

Heavy Damages For a Demolished Nose.

A jury in the circuit court has placed a definite value on a handsome nose in a verdict rendered in a case which has been in the courts for four years. The case is that of Emery Bruce against A. A. Bombeck and wife. Bruce alleged that while sitting in his buggy on the Southwest boulevard Mrs. Bombeck drove by at a very rapid pace, and her buggy collided with his, owing to her careless driving, with the result that his nose was so badly crushed that it has never regained its shape. Bruce further alleged that his nose was a particularly handsome one, and he considered it his strong point of beauty. The jury sized up his nose and awarded him \$675 damages.—Kansas City Letter.

Stubber Bands Permitted on Postal Cards.

Several days ago Dr. W. W. Parker inquired of Postmaster Russell whether rubber bands could be used around the new double postal cards. The official could not answer the question, and the physician wrote to the postmaster general in reference to the matter. Dr. Parker has received a reply stating that bands could be used.—Richmond Dispatch.

Doing Society.

The young man about town is "rushing" society just now for all it is worth. One of the smart set writes to a friend: "I have been invited out every night for two weeks, but have accepted only one bid."—New York Tribune.

Waiting For the Modern Woman.

Mrs. Lynn Linton, who has constituted herself the judge and censor of woman, has come forth in The Nineteenth Century with a new grievance. It is woman as a housewife whom she holds up to public scorn this time. Home-made bread, says the lady, is as extinct as the dodo and home cured hams as scarce as great auk's eggs. She laments the demotude into which brewing and winemaking have fallen, forgetting that this is scarcely a theme for poetic regret, and she utters a last despairing wail because we have no longer "the pretty girls who mused in sweet security." And all through the article she takes the unique ground (for her) that women should be the playthings of love, gracious and graceful, living to please and be pleased. No thought has Mrs. Linton for those who are compelled to go out into the world to fight, and fall or stand, as the conditions shall direct.—Chicago Tribune.

Acquiring Foreign Languages.

It is unusual for a person who goes into a foreign country after he has grown to adult years to acquire the language of that country well enough to conceal his alien origin, but there are exceptions. There is a German in New York, who has been here only six years, who speaks English without a trace of accent, although he never studied the tongue until he arrived in America. A professor of French in this city says that Englishmen and Americans betray themselves more by stress on the letter "I" when they try to talk his language than in any other way. Frenchmen are more "stumped" by the sound of th than by anything else in English.

One of them, who declared that he could pronounce anything in our tongue, was asked to say "Theophilus Thistlethwaite." He threw up his hands and exclaimed, "Ah, barbarian!" This sound is trying to the Germans likewise, and one of the early things in Puck, when that was a German paper, was a series of pictures representing a Teutonic waiter twisting his neck and cracking his teeth in the attempt to say "Thanks."—New York Sun.

What Science Has Done In Agriculture.

Not only has intensive cultivation taught us how to draw a larger return than formerly from a particular soil and a given surface, but by the selection of seeds we have doubled and tripled the formation of sugar in beet roots; by like selections, the production of the potato has been augmented, and we are seeking, with certainty of success, yet more considerable increase in the production of wheat. No less progress is reached in the production of fruits and vegetables and of cattle, to the daily amelioration of the general condition of the human race.

This advance has been promoted partly by close acquaintance with the general laws of living nature as revealed by disinterested science—laws which are the essential foundation of every application, and equally and in a way no less worthy of admiration by the efforts of inventors, those men of practical ingenuity who labor at the same time for the increase of their own fortunes and for the good and profit of mankind.—P. E. M. Berthelot in Popular Science Monthly.

Heroes In Many Walks of Life.

Whoever has a high and worthy purpose at heart, whether of truth or duty or love, and also has the strength and courage to work, to sacrifice and to suffer, if need be, for its sake, is worthy of the name of hero. One quietly denies himself pleasure or comfort or ease for the aged parent or sick child. Another gives up cherished plans because they would interfere with the claims of a dependent family. One faces the displeasure of friends and society sooner than forsake his principles; another employs all his power in defense of the weak and against the oppressor.—Philadelphia Ledger.

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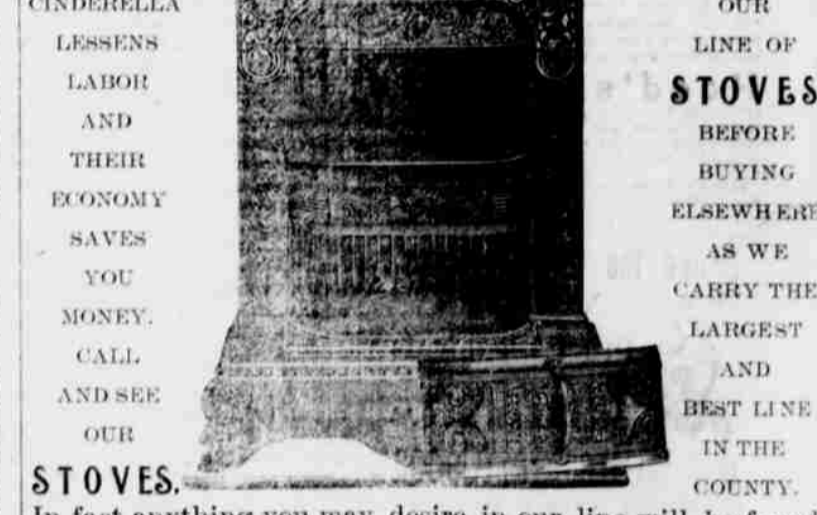
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