

THE SPINNING WHEEL SONG.

By JOHN FRANCIS WALLER.

Mellow the moonlight to shine is beginning; Close by the window young Eileen is spinning; Bent o'er the fire, her blind grandmother, sitting, Is crooning, and moaning, and drowsily knitting—

A DREAM MELODY.

"I suppose I've been ill! I wonder what's the matter with me?"

Collin Stuart opened his eyes, and struggling into a sitting posture saw that he was in the shabby bed sitting room in the dull side street which for a dreary time now had been his "home."

He was still only half conscious and painfully weak, but gradually his brain cleared a little, and bit by bit memory came back.

"So she didn't turn me out, after all! She must have looked after me, too, and found money for medicine and food. Her bark was worse than her bite, poor creature! I darest say she had pressed enough herself at times, especially if many of her lodgers are as unprofitable as I am."

"How much did I owe her, now, before I was taken ill? How long have I been lying here in bed? And, worst problem of all, what am I to do with myself now I have my senses back again? Life was pretty rough before; it will be impossible now."

Another glance round the room freshened his memory again—the open piano, the loose sheets of torn music carelessly strewn all around. However long the illness had been in duration, no loving hand tended him, only grudging service (given, perchance, as an alternative to an inquest) had been bestowed on him.

"I remember! I'd reached the end of all things; not one penny left—no work—season flat—couldn't sell music or get it sung, not one solitary engagement through all those awful weeks. Only the clothes I was wearing left! Not a friend in the whole world I could turn to for help—bread and water for a week—then water without the bread, with the Frenchman's experience to follow; no sooner had I fought the horse to live on one straw a day than the brute spit me and died!"

"But I didn't die! No; here I am, unfortunately, alive. I've been under the waters of fate once, and like other bodies risen to the surface. I shall go down again directly. Mrs. Wilcox thinks she can turn me out without being had up for manslaughter or anything of that kind. Shall I rise the second time through the casual ward or be allowed to die quietly in the gutter? Heaven knows; I don't!"

Another long, weary pause, at the end of which the landlady popped her head in at the door, gave a grunt which might either have been satisfaction or disgust on realizing the invalid was conscious—better; then dived back to the kitchen, emerging therefrom a little later with a basin of very weak soup and a piece of bread, which she set down with a clatter on a small table near the bed with the remark:

"You can feed yourself again now; the time it's wasted every day a-looking after you no money could ever pay for."

"I'm sure I'm very grateful," was the shamed reply. "Have I been ill long?"

"Mor'n two weeks," ungraciously, "an' me scared to death with all this talk o' smallpox about."

Collin started violently. "But it can't be that—there is no rash!"

"Good thing for you it wasn't," was the sharp retort. "It's delirium, the doctor says. You've been a-playing that there piano to death, but there ain't enough on those bones to suit me; it's all noise an' no meat in piano. Never no more musicians take my rooms, and out you go just as soon as ever you can set foot to the ground."

"I must owe you an awful lot," he murmured, brokenly. "I see medicine, and food, and wine, besides the rent; you must be a kind of pantomime fairy disguised as an—"

"Don't you go poking your fun at me," she broke in shrilly. "I'm a poor hard working honest woman. Fairy, indeed! The very idea! What you've had you've paid for, or, it stands to reason that you'd have gone long ago."

"Paid for," blankly; "why, when I was taken ill I was behind with my rent!"

"And who'll blame me for paying myself out of the money in your pocket?"

et" hectoringly. "There you was a-lying dead (so it looked at first) on the floor, and when the doctor was fetched, he says food, fire, wine an' good nursing. 'Who's to pay?' says I, and he says, 'You'd better look among his things for his money. In the meantime, use this,' giving me a sovereign. One of the other lodgers sat with you while I run out for the medicine, an' afterward we went through your things together."

"Ten pounds there was in two five pound notes, an' 15 shillings in silver. I just got the gentleman to sign his name to its being all right, which, thank heaven, he's here an' can prove, an' in course I took out the three pounds owing for rent, an' paid the doctor back his sovereign, an' used the rest as it was wanted. What's left is in that there box on the table, an' another week's rent due tomorrow."

She was hard, but honest. There was still a remnant of gold among the silver—enough to last, please heaven, until he was strong enough to crawl about again, with the hope of earning a precarious living.

Where the money had come from goodness alone knew! A purse of gold, where not one copper piece had been! As Collin lay back on his lodging house pillow (hard and rather grimy) unshed tears burned his eyeballs as he thought of that doctor, who, seeing at a glance that he was dying from sheer starvation, had not hesitated to give the "two pence" of the Good Samaritan.

"The mere money I may repay some day," he thought; "but the action, never! Whether one pound or fifty at the last day, it will speak—it will have a thousand voices. God will hear them."

As soon as he could crawl, he dragged himself to the piano. If even now he could only be in time—to win that grand prize offered by the Conservatoire at Florence for the best setting of a song to words supplied by them—£250 English money, with the situation of harmony master at a large salary too, perhaps, the cleverest group of students the world had ever seen.

There was an exquisite but maddeningly elusive melody in his brain—an angel song; but his head was weak from illness, and it was evidently doomed to remain one of those untold dream witcheries which thrill most soul musicians at times and draw away their thoughts to cloudland. He could not hum it, could not find its beginning or end, though he tried each note in the gamut; but he felt it, he had dreamed it; some day—too late, perhaps, to make use of it in this world—it would come to him in its full, glorious beauty.

Song after song, tune after tune, he painfully evolved, only to throw them aside with a cry of despair when finished.

"Mechanical! wooden! Correct harmony? Yes, but oh, ye gods, how commonplace, how evenly on the dead level!—and only 24 hours left before the MS. must be posted. I am like a drowning man who sees the life belt hanging just only out of his reach. The prize, the position, the melody, and my utter inability to grasp it. What is that?" spring to his feet and almost ceasing to breathe as certain notes, halting, faintly, but still gloriously beautiful, reached his ear. "Who is that? What is that?"—A long pause, then he said deliberately, resolutely, though his face was white as snow, "That is the music that shall win the prize! It is mine, not his! I dreamed it. I can write it into something that will electrify the world; my harmonies shall be transcendently beautiful, his are hopelessly faulty; the melody is worthless to him, to me it is salvation for soul and body!"

The notes were played through again slowly, tenderly, with wrong chords, with right chords, with one finger only, a rich deep voice hummed them, a girl's clear soprano corrected the man to a curious minor resolution that Collin's soul had already leapt to—they—these unknown two—had given him the clew to his dream melody; theirs was of the earth earthy; he would turn it into something that was worthy even of heaven itself.

Down he sat and set feverishly to work, and the melody fitted the words, as a glove the hand:

Hail, victor in the generous strife, This is the golden hour of life; The struggle and the task are done, The guerdon and the chaplet won.

Thine is the fadeless olive crown, Blazon and badge of bright renown; For thee the poet's lyre is strung, For thee the song of triumph won.

He wrote on and on, and on! Night passed into day, and day nearly into night again before it was finished, and he managed to stagger out and post it himself; then he fainted, and Mrs. Wilcox told him he must leave her house at the end of the week. She couldn't abide invalids, besides she had a chance of letting her rooms for almost double the money; her first floors were going, and new people coming in who wanted an extra room.

Collin was thankful to go. He felt like a thief who has robbed a blind man. He was a thief, and he had stolen what was far more precious than gold—he had stolen fame from an old man, a foreigner, from a girl perhaps as poor as himself—and he hated himself for it. He had done it almost in his delirium, but as health and strength returned every hour, so did his moral sense of right and wrong. He was a thief.

The letter with the good news came to a dreary London attic, one of those tiny, ill-furnished rooms which shelter broken hearts and hide blighted hopes from the mock of the world.

Collin Stuart had won the prize for his superb setting of the classic ode—he held the check in his hand for £250, with the formal offer of the post he had craved, with more than formal appreciation of his work, for the famous Signor Torno pronounced it worthy of the highest praise.

Collin threw the letter down in bitter contempt. "Stolen honors—a giant's robe," he muttered, "only, thank heaven, there is still time to make restitution. I will take it there tonight—now, it may be to them what it was to me—that it would have been to me if they were honestly mine. Perhaps the melody was hers—that beautiful dark eyed girl I used to see passing up and down the second floor back—perhaps it was the old foreigner's I saw with her just before I was taken ill—they will pity and forgive, the temptation was so great."

But they also had left Mrs. Wilcox's apartments, he found—they had gone a few days before he himself had done so.

"She—Miss Giacomio—was a governess and had lived here for three years," explained Mrs. Wilcox, vexed, "and paid to the day all that time. Then her uncle came and took her away—he hadn't any children, and is quite a rich old man, I believe, an' she's going abroad with him. She was his sister's child, an' there'd been a quarrel over the marriage, an' they'd lost sight of each other. Anyhow, the parents are dead now, and the signor he's adopted Miss Giacomio for his own; their address, sir? Now, let me see; they went from here to one of them big hotels—Cecil, I think it was."

Collin contrived to cut short the rest of her voluble talk, and started off to walk to the Hotel Cecil; he was glad from his heart that the girl had found a friend and the prospect of happiness—in all ways possible. "My mother," said John B. Herreshoff to the writer in 1899, "is 88, and still enjoys good health. If I have one thing more than another to be thankful for, it is her care in childhood and her sympathy through life. She is one of the best of mothers, and I feel that I owe her a debt I can never repay." She has since died.—Walter Wellesley in Success.

It was the only restitution he could make.

"I had set my whole soul on winning that prize," stammered the culprit, with downcast eyes. "I thought of it by day, and dreamed of it by night—then I was taken ill, and a wondrous melody made itself known to me; strange, sweet harmonies ran through my fever so that waking was almost a pain, for with coming back to this dreary world the angel tune vanished, and I could not catch hold of it—it seemed still in my soul, but elusive, like a shadow which cannot be grasped—then—then one night I heard it played in another room. I heard it hummed and strummed, not the harmony but the ghost of the melody, and my delirium was not over. I entreat you to believe it was not the true Collin Stuart, but some remnant of the fever fiend who did it. I stole the melody and elaborated it, harmonized it, as I had heard it played in my dreams, and I sent it in as my own; it won the prize—it is here—yours, not mine!"

"No," said Nina Giacomio, softly laying a detaining hand to stay the retreating he tried to make, "it was always yours, Mr. Stuart; even in your fever the ruling passion of your life came out; there were many hours when you were alone, untended, and you used to get up and play wonderful music—dream music—which drove one into ecstasy to hear, better, far more beautiful than I had ever heard you play before."

"That prize melody was yours, and I used to pick out just the air on my piano afterward sometimes. I have remembered other tunes, but I liked that best, it is your very own—and the appointment also—and I am happy for your sake!"

"I had one other dream, too," he said, in almost an inaudible tone, "as sweet or sweeter than the music. There was a purse found in my room, a lady's purse, with a name hastily erased, yet

not so thoroughly but that some letters were left—"

"You must forgive," she cried quickly. "The good luck came to me just then; my uncle offered me a home. I knew I should have enough money for always—and—and I was passing the door when you fell and fainted. I knew why, and—Mrs. Wilcox has been made hard because her own fight has been so bitter—those on the coach cannot understand how the wheels hurt unless once they have been under them themselves."

And after all they did not pass out of each other's lives—the good luck had come at last!—THE ENDS.

BOYHOOD OF THE HERRESHOFFS.

John B. the Blind Builder, Worked Under the Guidance of His Mother.

When the America won the first international yacht race at Cowes, England, fifty-two years ago, the world little knew at the time that on a little farm at Point Pleasant, Bristol, R. I., two children were playing who would give yachting and rapid navigation generally an all-round, far-reaching impetus such as, in all the wide world, they had never felt before. The elder, John B. Herreshoff, a sandy-haired, blue-eyed, earnest-looking boy of 10, although foredoomed to a life of blindness, could then see, and had already begun to whistle out pretty toy boats. Only three or four years later he built his first boat for actual use, which was considered a marvel of beauty and speed. At 15 his eyesight failed him forever, but he would not let anything discourage him, so he continued to study boats, and to build them, too. The younger, "Nat," a rather reddish-haired, ruddy-faced, roguish toddler of 3, at the time of the Cowes contest, was noted chiefly for his irrepressible inclination to run away to the shore near by, at every favorable opportunity, and lie down on his back in the sand and kick his heels exultantly in the water. He was often found asleep in this position by his anxious mother, one chubby hand clasping a wisp of seaweed, the other full of wet sand, and the rising tide washing his bare feet. Whenever he was missing he was first sought for on the shore, where, if he was awake and saw that his movements were noted, he would generally spend his time in watching passing ships or sailing chips or toy boats.

When older grown, he attended the primary, intermediate and grammar schools, and later, the high school, under the principalship of Thomas W. Bicknell, now living in Providence, who says he was always well behaved and studious, only an ordinary pupil in grammar, reading, spelling, or history, but bright in physical geography, algebra, geometry and chemistry, and remarkably keen in natural philosophy. At this time he was tall for his age, thin, rather slender, somewhat loosely built and had a noticeable forward inclination of the head which became more and more pronounced from a habit he had of closely watching rivals in his many boat races, craning his neck in order to see them from under the boom.

Mr. Bicknell says that the mother of the young Herreshoffs, although a very busy woman, managed to visit the high school two or three times a week, on an average, and encouraged her children, some of whom were blind, in all ways possible. "My mother," said John B. Herreshoff to the writer in 1899, "is 88, and still enjoys good health. If I have one thing more than another to be thankful for, it is her care in childhood and her sympathy through life. She is one of the best of mothers, and I feel that I owe her a debt I can never repay." She has since died.—Walter Wellesley in Success.

QUAINT AND CURIOUS.

An electrical gridiron has been devised to kill flies. It stands vertically, and the moment a fly alights upon it death ensues from electric shock. The dead fly drops onto a horizontal shelf underneath.

Some large beetles are as good as circular saws. They seize a branch or twig with their deeply toothed jaws, and whirl round and round until the twig is sawn off. They have been known to saw a twig as thick as a walking stick in this manner.

At the time of the Roman occupation of Britain five distinct species of dogs were there, most of which can with certainty be identified with those of the present day. There were the house dog, the greyhound, the bulldog, the terrier and the slowhound.

A curious superstition prevails in the highlands of Scotland, that if a cat be carried on a cart, and the wind blow from it to the horses, the latter immediately tire; and if any part of the driver's clothing be made from cat-skin, the horses will feel as if they were drawing a double burden.

Loss of fortune and loss of his practice so affected Dr. Edward Stanton of Kokomo, Ind., that he became demented. He imagined himself an ox, and strutted on all fours through the pasture of the country farm, with the cattle, and ate grass.

Miles of subterranean corridors, lined with tombs and cells, were constructed years ago, far below the magnificent cathedral at Kiev, Russia. In these cells over 1500 acetics perform their daily devotion and duties—live, eat and sleep, in the grim company of their dead predecessors. For a short time each day they ramble in the beautiful gardens.

BEATING A RAILROAD.

It Cost Mrs. Willie More Than She Had Saved.

Mrs. Willie Westcott, of Riverside, visited her friend Mrs. Waddleson in Evanston last week and had a splendid time. Only one thing marred the pleasure of the occasion. That was the unreasonable obstinacy of the railroad companies.

"It's a perfect shame," said Mrs. Willie, "that the Northwestern charges 35 cents for a ticket from Evanston to Chicago."

"I know it," her friend agreed. "I can't see why they do such a stupid thing. But I have a twenty-five ride ticket that you may use going home, so that you can ride to the city for 17 cents."

Mrs. Willie was delighted to be able to save the 18 cents on the return trip and was pouring out her thanks when Mrs. Waddleson said:

"That's too bad! I forgot all about having arranged to go in early tomorrow morning, so I shall have to use the ticket myself."

Then they got to figuring on the matter.

"I know what!" Mrs. Willie exclaimed. "I can put the ticket in an envelope addressed to you and drop it in a box when I reach Chicago, so that it will get out here in the first mail in the morning."

This her friend pronounced a fine scheme and Mrs. Willie was complimented upon her cleverness in having thought of it.

When it was time for her to start for home Mrs. Willie paid her friend 17 cents for the ride and 2 cents for the stamp which was to bring the ticket back. Mrs. Waddleson insisted on furnishing the envelope free. Then they kissed, Mrs. Willie cried "Now be sure and come soon," and the train started.

On her way to the city Mrs. Willie began to worry. She was afraid the ticket might be left lying in a letter box for a day or two if she posted it in the ordinary way, and thus her friend would be unable to use it. The more she thought about it the less likely it seemed that the ticket would be returned to its owner in time to be of use the next morning unless something extraordinary could be done.

At last she addressed a benevolent-looking gentleman who sat near her: "Are you going back to Evanston this evening?" she asked.

He said he was.

"Well," she went on, speaking in her sweetest, most appealing tones and permitting a pathetic look to overspread her beautiful face, "I am awfully anxious to have this ticket go back so that my friend will get it the first thing in the morning. Would you mind taking it and dropping it into the Evanston postoffice for me when you return this evening? Then it will be sure to be there."

He was delighted to be of service, and Mrs. Willie went on her way rejoicing. After arriving at home it occurred to her that the envelope containing the ticket might for some reason be overlooked by the carrier in the morning, so to make sure she called her friend up by telephone and told her to send to the postoffice if the ticket didn't reach her in time.

The telephoning cost 15 cents, which with the 17 cents for the ticket and the 2 cents for the stamp made a total of 34 cents. Still Mrs. Willie couldn't understand why her husband laughed when she told him how she had avoided paying the railroad company 35 cents. Two days later she complained that the benevolent-looking man had either forgotten to post the envelope containing the ticket or else was a wolf in sheep's clothing. Her husband's loud laughter then convinced her that he was coarse-grained or else had a low streak in him somewhere.—Chicago Record-Herald.

Rain Brought No Orders.

Philip D. Armour one day received a very long letter from an agent in regard to conditions of trade in the country through which he was traveling. Page after page was devoted to telling his employer that the "weather and uncertain crop conditions were responsible for the meager orders, and not a lack of energy or perseverance on his own part. Rain was needed in that section. With the first downpour hope would enter into the despondent community and an order commensurate with the benefits granted to a parched earth could be expected." Rain saturated the earth, lengthy letters continued to arrive, but no orders.

"How about orders?" wrote the merchant, who was weary of footing non-productive expense accounts and reading long letters. "Write, and let me know in the fewest possible words what merchants say now that they have rain."

By return mail the famous merchant received a letter which told him in a few words the reception accorded the agent in the newly drenched territory. "Dry up, old man, dry up."—Detroit Free Press.

Gobbler Killed Man.

The story from Oklahoma of a two-year-old child being killed by a Plymouth Rock rooster reminds one of a tragedy in North Carolina, which is related as follows:

"Many years ago a North Carolina judge or ex-judge, Judge Spencer of Anson, was killed by a turkey. He was a very old man, and was sitting in the yard with a red skull cap on his head. The red attracted the attention of the turkey, angered it, and it flew upon the wearer of the cap and pecked, spurred and beat him to death."—Charlotte (N. C.) Observer.

Lots of men will never lead the procession until they are dead.

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