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Select Poetry.

A BUTTERCUP.

A little yellow buttercup
Stood laughing in the sun;
The grass all green around it,
The summer just begun;
Its saucy little head abrim
With happiness and fun.

Near by—grown old, and gone to seed,
A dandelion grew;
To right and left with every breeze
His snowy tresses flew,
He shook his hoary head and said:
"I've some advice for you.

"Don't think, because you're yellow now,
That golden days will last;
I was as gay as you are, once,
But now my youth is past,
This day will be my last to bloom;
The hours are going fast.

"Perhaps your fun may last a week,
But then you'll have to die."
The dandelion ceased to speak,—
A breeze that capered by
Snatched all the white hair from his head,
And wafted it on high.

His yellow neighbor first looked sad,
Then cheering up, he said:
"If one's to live in fear of death,
One might as well be dead."
The little buttercup laughed on,
And waved his golden head.

SAVED BY TWO MINUTES.

JOE was not half as good-looking, but Jennie liked him a great deal better; and, indeed, it was only sometimes that, in a caprice, she fancied she liked Mark Maldon at all.

Joe Thurston was the driver and Mark Maldon the fireman of freight-train No. 99, which stopped regularly all the year round at Redwood Station to let lightning express No. 70 pass.

No. 99 whistled at 10:55 P. M., invariably; at 11 Joe had Jennie in his arms, kissing her almost to death. This was, of course, after they were married.

Jennie lived in the only house, and kept the only store, there was at Redwood, and all the company she had after dark was her old grandfather and the little dog—at least, till the train arrived, and then Joe and Mark made their appearance.

Thus the courting was done. Somehow, although each of Jennie's lovers kept a sharp eye on the other, yet both found opportunities to propose. She accepted, Joe, and when she informed Mark next night what she had done he turned pale, and then congratulated her, and when he got aboard his engine he was unsober.

It was the beginning of his ruin; and on the night Jennie and Joe were married—which was but a brief ceremony, as Joe was pressed for time—Mark Maldon was not in a condition to take his place on the train, and on the day following the company dispensed with his future services.

From that time Mark, as the expression is, went to the bad. His little savings he proceeded rapidly to drink up, and this dissipation made the usual changes, and soon, in appearance, manners and speech, and the rest, he was a different man.

Sometimes he dropped into the little shop, and more than once Jennie spoke to him in reproof, but with gentleness; and it was only when she perceived that those well-meant reproaches made him a great deal worse that she ceased to offer them.

It is a terrible sight to see a human being sinking in the dark and dreadful pool in this way; but down, down he went, and no mortal hand could save him.

I don't know when or how it was, but by imperceptible degrees Jennie grew afraid of Mark Maldon. He had never uttered one word of love to her after her marriage, nor had he seemed to like her husband the less; but somehow whenever she saw Mark's white and swollen face coming in at the door, or beheld in the distant woods his bent and furtive figure gliding softly over the broken twigs and dry grass like a ghost, her heart felt a nervous pang, and she wished he would go away to live somewhere else, or—was it wicked?—that he might even die and be at rest.

Matters went on much as usual till one evening in October, when, about 10 o'clock, looking up from her sewing, Jennie beheld a pallid face at the window staring in at her intently.

Something jumped into her throat, and she could not stir or speak. But then the face went away, and presently the door opened and Mark came into the shop.

"Didn't know me," he said, advancing and leaning across the counter. "I hope you are not frightened, Jennie. It was thoughtless of me; but I just wanted a peep at fireside-comfort, a happiness I fear I have missed, eh? You did look so cozy and content sitting there, and I'd give something handsome to have a pretty wife waiting at the hearth for me; and really you mustn't mind my eavesdropping, Jennie, will you?"

There was something mournful in his looks, voice and words that touched her deeply; and this was the more noticeable from the fact that for once he was entirely sober.

"Yes, Mark, you frightened me terribly; but it's gone now. Why don't you do better—you know what I mean—and I am sure you will not find it hard to get the pretty wife and the domestic happiness both."

He shook his head.

"Too late! I've missed my tip. I don't blame anybody, though—only my luck, you know. Joe is due pretty soon now, isn't he?" He glanced at the clock and nodded, and then said: "I've felt awfully tired and cold all the evening, and—and lonesome. I don't believe I ever knew myself to be so lonely before," and he laughed in a melancholy way, fiddling at the same time with the scales on the counter. "And I declare," he went on, glancing around oddly, "this is such a pretty scene that it—it makes my heart ache, Jennie, to think I have no share in it. The pleasant glow of the chimney corner for Joe, and the cold snow for Mark! Such is fate, and a fellow oughtn't complain, ought he?"

Jennie never felt so uncomfortable in her life. She was not afraid of him any longer; but she wished he would go.—Still he stood there, talking in the same melancholy strain, and at length came the shrill scream of the engine's whistle outside, and then, very soon after, entered Joe, smoky and begrimmed, but all smiles and good humor.

"Four minutes late," said Mark, glancing at the clock.

"Yes; my fireman was taken sick at the Cut above," said Joe, after kissing his wife as usual, "and I made the run from the last station alone. I don't know what I'm to do unless——By Jove! I just thought of it—I can get you to go on with me, Mark."

"The company mightn't like it, Joe," said Mark, with the same strange, depressed smile.

"In a case like this there's no choice. I cannot keep my train here all night, and I can't go on without a fireman.—Come, I'll take the responsibility and make it worth your while."

Jennie looked uneasy. Mark Maldon rubbed his hands together in a feeble, imbecile sort of way, hesitating.

"The company didn't treat me right," he replied; "but that wasn't your fault, Joe. Well, I'll help you out. I always do a friendly turn when I can."

"Good! There's the express now," added Joe, as the whistle of No. 70 sounded, and the train went thundering by. "Let's get aboard at once. I must make up for lost time."

"Very well; I'll just get my coat and be on the engine in two minutes." And Mark Maldon hurried out.

"Good-by, Jennie," said Joe. "I must be off."

"Joe," she hesitated, "I half wish you were not going to take that man!"

Joe stared.

"Why?"

"I don't know. I don't feel satisfied."

"Pshaw, Jennie! Mark never harmed any one but himself, and he couldn't harm me if he wanted to. I guess I run the engine, don't I, little girl?"

"Please don't take him?"

"And keep my train standing here all night and be discharged to-morrow morning? Nonsense! I must clear the track, darling. You forget that there is another express yet. You don't want a collision, do you? Good-by, Jennie."

"Take care of yourself, Joe," she said, pale and troubled, and almost trying to detain him. "Don't leave your engine a minute."

He laughed.

"I never do. Against the rules."

A few minutes later freight No. 99 was on its way. Joe at his accustomed post and Mark in his old office of fireman.

"Now, what's the instructions, Joe?" said Mark, much more cheerfully, his spirits rising with the speed they were making as they tore along through the dismal night.

"Well we go on hard as we can till we reach Clear Spring, and there we pull over to the south siding and let No. 80 express pass, and then we have the right of way all the rest of the route."

"After Clear Spring there is no siding till we reach Apsley Junction, seven miles beyond?"

"None. We wait sixteen minutes, if necessary, at Clear Spring," replied Joe, decisively.

"All right. By-the-way, I haven't had a drink to-day. I brought a flask along," said Mark, producing the article and unscrewing the top, which formed a cup. "Take a nip—cold night—won't hurt you."

Joe shook his head.

"I never touch it when I'm on duty."

"Once and away won't hurt you, Joe. It's good stuff, and can't do you no harm."

"Well, perhaps one drink won't hurt. Your health!"

He drank.

Three minutes afterward he was as incapable of exercising his faculties as if he had swallowed a quart. His brain reeled, his sight became dim, his limbs relaxed, and he fell helpless upon the bench built against the side of the little cab.

A lurid triumph filled the eyes of Mark Maldon. He flung the bottle out of the window and seized the handle that governed the movement of the locomotive.

"I have owed you a long debt, Joe!" he shouted above the roar of the wheels, "and now I can pay it with compound interest! You took everything from me and made me what I am, and now fate gives me my revenge!"

Joe was incapable of moving, but his senses in some degree still remained.

"What are you going to do?" he gasped.

"You shall see."

The wretch pulled the lever, and the engine leaped suddenly as a horse bounds when pricked with a spur. Every pound of steam she could bear with safety from instantaneous explosion was put on, and the train dashed forward at lightning speed.

"Remember Clear Spring siding!" gasped Joe, hardly conscious.

"I shall remember to pass it!" yelled Mark, with demoniac joy, above the clatter and crashing of such mighty machinery. "I looked into your home to-night, Joe Thurston, and saw your happiness, and then I asked myself where was my home and where my happiness. I saw your wife—the woman I loved, and of whom you robbed me. It was a comfortable reflection—all that love and peace for you, all the shame and despair for me! My chance to get even came before I dreamed of it. You are in my power now, and I'll use it. We both die to-night!"

He stooped and seized Thurston's watch.

"Every minute brings us nearer to death. Ha, ha! We are at Clear Spring already," he cried, glancing out; "but we don't stop. No, no! We go on till we smash into the express, and be ground to atoms!"

This horrible design seemed to sober Joe somewhat; he at last comprehended it.

"My God! Mark, have mercy," he groaned; "think of my poor wife. Reverse the engine or we are lost!"

"I do think of your wife, and that nerves me to go to my death smiling and joyously, because you go along with me," returned this fiend. "More steam, more steam, if we do blow up. What care I?"

He turned to the coal-tender. There was a flash in his face, a report rang out and he tottered, and dropped down among the wheels. Something hot spurted upward—blood—and the train jolted.

A woman clambered down from among the coal. It was Jennie, pale as death, revolver in hand.

"You, Jennie?" moaned poor Joe; "or is it fancy?"

"It is I, Joe. I distrusted that man, you remember, and before the train left I armed myself and sprang on to the last car. You made such speed that I have been all this time getting here; I wasn't used to running along the roofs, you know, and leaping from one car to another; but here I am, and just in time, Joe."

"God bless you, darling! but I fear it is too late. Where is my watch?"

"That villain took it with him when he dropped under the wheels. What is to be done?"

"We must go on just the way we are going now. If we can't reach Apsley Junction before the express we are lost."

And so they still tore on through the murky night, plunging deathward with every second, Jennie looking steadily ahead.

"I see a lantern, Joe."

"A lantern!" he cried, trying to rise. "It is the switchman at Apsley Junction!"

At the same instant both heard the weird and ominous scream of a whistle.

"It is the express approaching at the other end!" shouted Joe, with the sudden energy of despair. "If we have two minutes in our favor we are saved! What is the color of the lantern, Jenny, darling?"

"Red, and he waves it up and down. He is running across the track!"

"Sound the whistle four times!" screamed Joe. "It is the signal to switch us off!"

She knew how. Three shrieking blasts and a long concluded wail. The watchman had set his lanturn down. One minute! Over the rails they jumped and were safe on the siding! With a rusty groan the watchman closed the switch. A flash and a yell, and express No. 80 had safely passed! Both trains were secure. Two minutes!

"Kiss me, Joe—no danger now," she whispered.

He caught her just in time, for she had fainted. Already he had reversed the engine, and the train was standing still. The old switchman, with his lantern, came hobbling over.

"You whistled in the nick of time," he croaked, tremulously. "There was only two minutes between you and eternity, my man."

"Two minutes," said Joe, "and a woman's loving heart!"

And that was true.

Serenading a Dutchman.

THE Orphans' Glee Club of our place concluded to serenade Miss Peterson upon a given evening. One or two of the members were a little tender about Miss Peterson, and they thought that maybe they might make a favorable impression by giving her a little midnight music. Unfortunately, upon the very day of the serenade, old Peterson moved his family about four blocks down the street; and his house was taken by an old German butcher named Frick. The Glee Club hadn't heard the news, and late in the evening went round. Ranging themselves upon the pavement they tuned up and began.—They sang two songs without obtaining any response from the fair Peterson, although one of the infatuated members was encouraged by the conviction that he saw something white at one of the upper windows. Finally, when they were dashing through "Come where my love lies dreaming," the sash in the second story went up with a crash, and a head was protruded. When the song ended Peter Lamb had barely time to say, "There she is!" when the voice of Frick floated down to them.

"Say, poys, you have one larch, big stummicage, hey? What vor den you howl in dot manner, hey? I coom down and get you medicine; I gife you baragoric to mage that lightning, hey?—Wald a minnid. I coom right down."

"You don't understand," said Mr. Boggs. "We were singing—a serenade, you know."

"Ah! hah! you coom to serenade me? You sing der music for me, hey hey?—Dot is wat you call singing, dond it? Vell boys, I tell you something. I haf one liddle schall tog oud in der garten yonder, named Schack, und ven I trod on his dail he sings petter as you."

"Shut up, you old fool, and go to bed. We didn't come to serenade you."

"No? Ish dot so? You come to serenade der tog deh. I call him up, so ash he can hear you. Maybe von your legs bide him in der mouth. He likes dot. You serenade him oud git some mead at all ad once."

"Where is Miss Peterson, you Dutch idiot?"

"Miss Benderson hafe mofed avay.—Somebody tolt her you poys vas comin' and she clear right oud. You go town and sing to Miss Benderson, and der olt man'll rush oud and blaze avay mid de shod gun. I saw him lont it last night.

"Never you mind now; where has she moved? If you don't tell us we will stay here and sing all night."

"I'll see aboud dot. You vait till I coom down a minnid."

About three minutes later a German gentleman named Frick emerged from the back of the house carrying a pistol and accompanied by a dog the size of a Bengal tiger. As soon as the club saw the dog they scattered, and as the last man turned to run, Mr. Frick called after him:

"Poys, wend you stahy und sing all nide, to his schmall liddle dog? Ah! hah! you go avay, don'd id? Dunner and blitson! If you could sing der vay you run, you do good enough for angels."

The club is studying up some fresh music for Miss Peterson.

The Chances of the Battlefield.

An exchange says: Battlefield statistics show that it takes a man's weight in bullets to kill him. This is a clumsy statement of an interesting fact, and only the absolute absurdity of the idea that it expresses so much more clearly than the one intended would prevent a general misapprehension of the writer's meaning. The Chicago *Tribune* has published statistics to show that the same fact exists in regard to riots, and that for each person killed in the late riot in that city, bullets having an aggregate weight equal to that of an average man were discharged by the police. The total weight of metal discharged was one thousand pounds, and assuming the average weight of the men to have been one hundred and forty pounds, the weight of metal divided by the assumed average weight of a man, gives a result of seven and one-seventh people injured. This result of the *Tribune's* estimate tallies with the number of casualties, which consisted of seven men killed and one boy wounded. The statistician who made the calculation might have added another to it, that the chances against a man being killed by a volley of musketry in a battle or riot are nearly 2500 to 1, supposing each bullet to weigh about an ounce. For all that, the one chance against a man isn't a pleasant one to face.

☞ They were telling yarns about shooting, the other day. Said one of the marksmen: "Some years ago I was out in New York State hunting grouse. There was an old fellow along who was near-sighted. We were just at the edge of the farm, when suddenly one of my favorite game cocks jumped up on the fence and he drew a bead on it, mistaking it for a grouse. I didn't have a second to lose, and I just threw up my rifle and quietly knocked off the left nipple of his shot gun at fifty yards, so that when the hammer fell the nipple and cap wouldn't be there—see?"

"You saved the bird, then?" chipped in an attentive listener.

"No," said Austin, sadly; "I picked out the wrong nipple: and the fellow fired the right barrel, and blew my $50 game cock all to blazes." The crowd quietly dispersed.