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Select Poetry.

DER DOG UND DER LOBSTER.

Dot dog he vos dad kind of dog... Und ketch dot ret so sly, Und squege him mit his little teeth, Und den dat ret vas die.

"But, Joseph, had you selected a wife?" I asked.

"No, I intended to do that as soon as I could, though you may say I was rather young to be thinking of it. I built a house, got a considerable stock of cattle, made a flower-garden for my wife, and even put up pegs and nails she would want to hang her dresses on. I intended that same autumn to mount my horse, ride through the Wallamet Valley, find my wife and bring her home."

At the notion of courting in that off-hand style we laughed a little. Joseph laughed too, as if the recollection pleased him.

"You think it strange, I see. It was not so very strange in those days out there, where girls were as scarce as angels. There was not a girl within forty miles of me; and I assure you that the very thought of one, as I drove in those nails for her garments to hang on, went through me like a thrill. You don't believe? Go West yourself and try it."

"But I do believe." "I had about two hundred and fifty head of cattle, a good house with a garden, a young orchard, vegetables growing, sweet-scented flowers,—all in readiness for the wife I hoped to bring home to bless me and to take care of these my possessions. And what do you think happened to them? There came such a plague of grasshoppers upon the valley that everything perished. Crops, orchard, flowers, grass,—every green and delightful and promising thing; the grasshoppers destroyed all. I considered myself disappointed in love too.—Though I had not yet been out to find my girl, I knew she was somewhere in that other valley waiting for me; and when the greedy grasshoppers ate up everything I felt that I had been jilted. It actually gives me a pang now to think of those useless pegs on which my imagination had so often seen a girl's pink cotton dress and white sun-bonnet. I became misanthropic—said to myself that between Fate and the grasshoppers I had been hardly used.—Packing up my books and a few other traps, I bade adieu to the Rogue River Valley for ever, and started for the mountains. It was a long journey, as I had to drive before me the stock which was left me. There, in the mountains, I settled down again, built myself a fort and played hermit. No jilting girls should come near me now. A regular fort—a stockade eighteen feet high, with an embankment four feet high around it, and a strong gate in the middle. My tent was in the midst of the enclosure, with my books and household gods, firearms and all the rest of my property stowed away in it."

"Were you afraid of Indians?"

"Indians and white men. Yes, I saw a good many Indians at first within the range of my rifle. They learned to keep away from my fort, finding it did not pay to attempt an invasion. Down in the valley below there were mining-camps; and you perhaps know what some hangers-on of such camps are. I sold beef—that is, heads of cattle—to the miners; and as I had sometimes a tidy sum of money by me, it was necessary to be careful."

"I herded my cattle, drove them to market, cooked, studied, wrote and indulged in a mixture of misanthropy and rifle-practice. By the time I had entered on the second summer in the mountains I felt quite at home, and was getting rich. After all, the life had its charms. A man cannot quite tire of it when he is but a few years out of his teens."

"And the girl-wife?" "I am coming to her. Having had time to forget my ill-usage, a reaction set in, you see, and I thought, after all, I must ride to the Wallamet to see after my girl. But I was not in the hurry over it that I had been before. This is all very dull, you will say, but there'll be some stir presently."

"I was sitting outside writing, when a shadow fell across the paper, and, looking up, I beheld a skeleton standing there before me. Accustomed as I was to lonely encounters with strange men of all kinds, my hair stood on end as I stared at the spectre. He was the merest boy in years, pretty and delicate by nature, and evidently reduced to this shadowy state by starvation. His story

was soon told. He had left Boston on board a vessel bound for the North-west Coast, had been wrecked at the mouth of the Umpaque, and been wandering about the mountains ever since, subsisting on roots and berries."

"He was—" "No, I assure you, the boy was not a young woman in disguise, if that's what you are thinking. He was just a poor, weak, half-starved lad named Edwards. I fed and nursed him until he was able to work for himself, and then I got Sam Chong Sung to let him take up a claim alongside a Chinese camp, promising to favor the Chinamen in a beef-contract if he would be good to the boy. I still continued to see a great deal of him."

"One day two Chinamen stole some of Sam Chong Sung's horses, and he offered four hundred dollars to Edwards if he would go after the thieves and track them. Edwards asked my advice, and I encouraged him to go, telling him where I fancied he would find the men. So he started in pursuit, and I confess I missed him."

"A man came to my fort one day later who was naked and starving. He was a bad looking fellow, very, but you will say a man naturally does look bad when his clothing is nowhere and his bones protruding his skin. I clothed him, fed him, cared for him kindly until he was able to travel, and then he went away.—The next Sunday I was sitting outside my fort, as customary on that leisure day, reading some translations from the Greek poets—for I dare say you remember I was never much of a hand at the original—when, chancing to look off my book, I beheld a vision."

"A what?"

"A vision. A vision of a lovely woman. She was riding up the approach to my fort on a fine horse—riding gracefully and slowly, as if to give me time to get over my surprise; and I believe I needed it. The picture she made in my mind now: I see the very flicker of the shadow and the sunlight across the road, and the glitter of some steel that fastened her horse's trappings as he arched his neck in impatience of her restraining hand."

"That vision, breaking in suddenly, as it did, upon my solitude, gave me the queerest sensations. I was just spell-bound. Not so she. Reining in her horse at my gate, she squared round on her saddle and looked at me, silently asking my assistance to dismount. I helped her down—what else could I do?—and then, at her request, gently preferred, went to put up and feed her horse. Had she dropped from the clouds? I did not know."

"When I turned indoors my guest had got her habit off. Evidently, she meant to make herself at home. A tall, young, beautiful, well-dressed woman.—Her eyes were large, black and melting; her hair was superb, her manner easy. She was hungry, she said: would I give her something to eat? And while I was making preparations to give her of my best, she read aloud one of the Greek translations—an ode to Diana—commenting upon it herself. That she was a woman of culture and education, whatever might have brought her into her present strange position, was obvious. Well, now," continued Joseph, "you can guess whether a young man, isolated on the mountains, ruined by the grasshoppers and jilted by the girl of the Wallamet Valley, was bewildered or not. Entertaining goddesses was not in my line."

"What with reading and eating, our acquaintance improved fast. She offered to sing a song, and gave me 'Kate Kearney.' I might have lost my head too perhaps—to say nothing of my heart—but for a certain inward latent doubt. I did not care that my girl should ride about, elegantly attired, on prancing horses, and drop down unexpectedly on hermits. Still, it was a pleasant feeling to find one's self near her, and certainly a novel one. I asked her her history and she told it me. She was of a good New England family, reared in affluence, well educated and accomplished, but by a freak of fortune she had become reduced to poverty and exile from home."

"What was it, Joseph?" "Ah! what indeed? The old story, I suppose, but I did not ask her. She had made her way to California, resolved

to get on and get money; and she had got it. She went about from camp to camp with stationery and various articles needed by the miners and others—sold them these things, wrote letters for them, sang to them, nursed them when sick, and carried their letters express to San Francisco to be posted. For all these services she received large payments, and she had also had a good deal of rough gold given to her as specimens. Did she like that kind of life? I asked her, so contrary to her early habits, and she answered me quickly: 'It is not what we choose that we do in this world, but what Fate chooses for us. I have made a competency and gained a rich and varied experience. Life is not what I once pictured it would be, but I am content.' She sighed as she said it; and I didn't believe in the 'content.'"

"But what had brought her to you that day?"

"She had not told me herself then, but presently I asked her. I shall never forget the smile with which she turned to answer. It pretty nigh disarmed me. We were sitting somewhat close too; her flowing silk gown touched my knees. Altogether, I began to think of those useless pegs in my house down in Rogue River Valley. But what she said pulled up my wandering thoughts and turned them to present things. 'Shall you be surprised to hear that I came to do you a real service?' she asked. And she went on to relate that, having had to pass the previous night at a place not many miles away, in a house where the partitions were thin, she had chanced to overhear a plan for murdering and robbing me, the villain-in-chief of the plot being the starved and naked wretch whom I had sheltered and sent away rejoicing not many days previously. All in a moment, while I was pondering on the doubtful problem of gratitude, a fancy came over me that she might not be telling truth—that it might be just an excuse got up to justify her own visit; and I playfully hinted as much. 'A woman does not trifle with subjects like these, nor does she deceive when she goes out of her way to do a service,' she answered. 'I rode off from that house the other way this morning, made a long detour, and came here to warn you. And now that I have done it, if you will please get my horse, I will ride away again.' All fair, that, I, full of thanks and repentance, asked her to stay longer if she was not perfectly rested; but she declined, and I brought the steed round and helped her to mount him. Once in the saddle her humor changed; she smiled and reminded me that I had not been polite enough to invite her to return. A week of reading, talking, riding, trout-fishing and romancing up in those splendid mountains would be very charming; perhaps she would come if I asked her."

"And did you ask her?"

"I did not. A young man with a reputation to sustain up there in the mountains couldn't invite a young lady to stay a week with him: could he now?" cried Joseph quaintly; which set us both laughing.

"So I parried the question as easily as I could, and she rode away. In going slowly down the trail she turned and kissed her hand to me with a gracious sweetness. I assure you the struggle within my own mind was great at that moment; and I don't know whether I have forgiven myself even yet for what happened afterward."

"What did happen?"

"She came back again. She came back again, and I drove her away. That is, I made the best excuses I could for not readmitting her, saying we should perhaps have fighting and murder and what not in my fort that night, and it would be no place for a delicately-bred woman. The pretty and modest girl who was to come from Wallamet Valley and hang up her pink garments on my pegs, had rushed into my mind, you see. But I never like to confess to this part of the story, because I get laughed at.—But don't you think I did right, having my reputation to keep up?" he went on thoughtfully. "She finally rode away, not having been invited to get off her horse, leaving me in anything but a pleasant frame of mind. From telling myself I was a bear, I turned to the other subject—the contemplated robbery and murder of myself. Had she simply invented that little fable? or was it a true bill? I felt inclined to believe it

the latter. Anyway, I deemed it well to be prepared for all contingencies, barring and bolting my fort against intruders and sitting up late over the fire. This was Sunday night. On the next Tuesday morning three or four men rode up, one of whom was the traitor, my former hungry and naked protege. He no longer attempted to conceal his true character from me, but said he and his comrades were determined to 'clean out' the Chinese camp, and he asked me to join them in the raid. I was on my guard in answering him, simply saying I would have nothing to do with robbing the Chinese—that they were my friends and customers, and I thought they had best be let alone. With that he went off. That same afternoon Edwards came in, having re-captured some of the horses. He was very tired, and asked leave to stay with the horses at my place till next day. I said nothing to Edwards of the gang just gone away or that (as I suspected) they had talked of making a raid on the Chinese only to throw me off my guard; for it was my fort on which the attack was undoubtedly to be made."

"Dusk came on. I sent Edwards, dead tired, to bed, made a great fire in the tent, and sat by it, facing the window. My expected visitor came, the villain! He made believe to have been drinking, and put that forward as a plea for asking shelter until the morning.—The instant he was inside I made the gate fast, driving the big wooden pin home with an axe. I caught a gleam from his eyes as I was doing this which—"

"But why not have made the gate fast before he entered?" I asked.

"Because he was safer inside than out. A conviction had come over me that this man was some most desperate character. His comrades were no doubt waiting near, and his plan had been quietly to open the gate to them."

"Had you no arms but your rifle?"

"I wanted none, for we understood each other, my rifle and I. This villain understood us too. I don't think, either that he liked to see Edwards sleeping in the tent. The lad was not good for much, but still, he was somebody. It would now be a contest of skill between the fellow and me. He was waiting his opportunity, and so was I. He sat on one side the hearth, I on the other side, our eyes fixed on one another."

"You guess, I dare say, that I have a quick ear, for you know what my temperament is—all sensitive consciousness. My good hearing had been cultivated, too, by listening for the Indians. By and by I detected a very stealthy movement outside the fort, and then a faint chirrup, such as a young squirrel might make. Up sprang the man, but I covered him with my rifle, cocked. He saw the movement, showed his teeth and drew out a pistol, but not before I had ordered him to throw down his arms or die. He hesitated: he saw that in my eye and aspect which made him quail.—While I held the rifle levelled and my finger on the trigger he threw down his arms—pistol and knife—with a dreadful oath. I had the best of him, and he knew it, for before he could have put his pistol into form or rushed on me with his knife the ball from my rifle would have been in him. His language was awful—and we are not nice in that respect, you know, in California—the foam lay upon his lips. He demanded to be let out of the house, denouncing me as a robber and a murderer. To all his ravings I had but one answer—to be quiet and obey me and he should live; dare to disobey me and he should die.—He sat there, cowed, on the opposite side of the fire, not daring to make even a doubtful motion. Then I told him what I knew—that I had heard what he was and what he meant to do. With that he broke down utterly, or pretended to do so—cried like a child, declaring that now he knew my pluck, and I had been the first man ever to get the better of him, he loved me like a brother. All the same, love or no love, he had to sit where he was, and I in front of him with my rifle on my knees. There was a long night before us: he could have no liberty in it, and the restraint was terrible to him. One moment he laughed uneasily, the next cursed, the next cried. It was a strange experience, was it not? To pass away the time, I asked him to relate the history of his life. He said he

JOSEPH'S ADVENTURE.

"CAN'T you tell us some of your adventures?" I asked of my friend Joseph, who had returned from his many years' travels in the bush, and was sitting with me and my wife. And, though he had been absent so long, he was, so to speak, a young man yet.

"Adventures? Well, I have met with plenty. Rough ones, some of them."

"Please tell us of one," chimed in Mary.

Joseph laughed: "I can tell you of a queer one that I met with in the mountains."

"Oh yes, do! Which mountains?" "In California—up in one of its wild districts."

"That will be the very thing."

"When I started from home to settle in unfrequented districts," began Joseph, "I set up a theory that no man should ask a woman to marry him until he has prepared a home for her. It is surprising how much you begin to think of a wife West yonder; which arises, I suppose, from the extreme loneliness of one's existence. I was no exception. The land I took up was in the Rogue River Valley, and after I had got it a bit ship-shape I worked away with one object in view—to bring home a wife."