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Select Poetry.

THE SILVER WEDDING.

Come wife, sit here, and we'll rest a while
Till the merry dance is o'er;
Our silver wedding has made me feel
As if youth was once more mine.
I've quite forgotten my fifty years;
Dear wife, can it be true
That twenty-five years have come and gone
Since I loved and wedded you?
Our daughter there—God bless the child!
For she carries her mother's face;
Just as you looked when you won my heart
With your innocent girlish grace.
How fair she is!—What? bless my soul!
Wife, what is that you say?
"Our little girl has given her heart
To that rascal"—young John Grey?
Coaxed mother to tell me, did she, eh?
Well wife, it never can be;
I'll never consent—you bear me, wife—
Just tell her that from me,
What is it you ask?—"If long ago
Your father had answered nay,
What would I have done?" H'm, well, I think
I'd have—married you anyway.
"Judge John by myself," you say? Ah, well,
The boy's a good fellow enough;
But I don't encourage this falling in love,
And this courting, and all such stuff.
What is it you ask me?—"Have I enjoyed
This silver wedding?" There, there!
When a woman attacks the weak side of a man
The game—is hardly fair.
Well, because of our silver wedding, wife
(Dear, dear, how fast time flies),
I can't say no more to the child we love,
The girl with her mother's eyes.
So here's a kiss for the bride you were,
And one for the wife you are,
And another to crown this happy night,
Of which you are the brightest star!

THE "WILD CLAIM."

"WELL, no. She's not exactly mine, nor yet my wife's; but we claim her all the same."
These remarks referred to a remarkable fine, not to say formidable looking young woman, who had just reined a high mettled young horse out of the home gate into the townward lane.
"Take the kinks out of him," said the old man, as he closed the gate after the cavorting steed. To which remark the fair horsewoman made reply by flinging kisses from her whip hand, and dashing away into a cloud of dust.
"Yes," he said in response to my further question, "she's my gal; but she's not my da'ter, nor she ain't my wife's da'ter."
"Brother's?"
"No. No relation to either of us by blood."
"Walf?"
"I dunno much what a walf rightly is. I call her a peremption."
"Do you mean a pre-emption?" I asked, gently.
"Well, no matter if ye call it a peremption or a pre-emption," he answered a shade testily. "What I mean is, that I took her up as a wild claim on the unsurveyed lands of the U. S."
"Well," and I laughed a little as I answered, "that's another way of getting children."
"Purty good way, though, if ye happen to get the kind that suits ye as well as that'n suits me."
"Seems to be a fine horsewoman," I said, half musingly, as we were approaching the entrance to the house.
"Step in," he said; "the door's open, and that shows ye the old woman's not to home; and the way she'll raise Cain, and lecture on flies when she does come home will be music in this camp, you bet you," and the man chuckled inwardly until he developed a touch of

asthma that set him coughing in a way that was more comical than serious.

"Now," said he, when he had recovered, "let's go out to the barn to see the colts. There is where I can talk best. Though I ain't a fust class talker no time, I can get on better when I'm seeing a good, healthy colt reaching for his hay."

"I reckon, now," he said, after having shown me his horse seriatim, "you are thinking I'd ort to tell you how I perempted the gal that went out the gate on the jumping brown colt. Well, sit down here, and I will tell ye; but fust wait till I say a word about that colt she's a riding. Now, ye might think, seeing a woman on him, that he's a picnic horse, and that all his cavorting is only frills and 'passare doings, but I tell ye he means it. He's a son of a gun on hoofs. I call him Quien Sabe, because I don't know his pedigree. He had just as good a chance to be a Belmont as to be a Patchen, on the side of the stre, and which it is no one knows. His dam was Abdallah and Medoc, and that kind of a mix, ye knows, makes power and ambition till ye can't rest. He looks and acts like a Patchen, but goes like a Belmont. Lainey, that's my gal's name, say's he's the strongest, inginrubberest, long-bottomest hoss she ever had under her. And she's a judge. She's naturally a judge as well as by experience. But I, for my part, I wouldn't throw a leg over Quien Sabe—not once—for the price of him, and I refused a thousand for him when he was a two-year old. He's raising five now, and Lainey's been riding him off and on for two years."

"Where did Miss Lainey, or, that is to say, Miss—Miss—"

"Woods—Lainey Woods, that's her name. My name is Moasick. Elden Moasick."

"Ah, yes. Where, I would ask, did Miss Woods find a field for the development of her peculiar talent?"

"That's what I'm going to tell ye," said Mr. Moasick; looking very seriously, yet somewhat comically, at me, he shook his finger and added: "But don't ye ever fall into the idee that Lainey don't know much above or below a saddle. If ye ever should fall into that idee and happen to be a-conversing with her at the time, she'll take the starch out o' ye mighty quick—and ye won't be the fust young fellow that's gone up the flume that way."

And here the venerable Mr. Moasick had a very slight attack of risible asthma. When he recovered he said:

"The way I perempted Lainey was this. I was in California when the Reese River mining excitement broke out in Nevada in 1862, and wasn't doing much good. I bought a cheap little Mexican jackass, packed my blankets, grub, tools, and cooking outfit upon his back, took the road behind his tail and went a foot into the Nevada mountains, away east of Reese River, determined to find a silver mine. I had a little money on hand and a little more a-coming to me from good men, when I started. I sunk it all in two years and worked hard, but found nothing in the mining way wuth talking about. In the summer of '64 I heard of the drouth in California, and of how cattle and hosses were dying there of hunger, while where I was there was any amount of good hoss grass. Now is my chance, I thought. I'm losing big money not having stock to eat this grass. I took my jackass and started for East Nevada on foot along the over land stage-road for California, calculating to fetch hosses on the shares to Nevada. Besides my jackass, I had also a dog—a dog that perempted me—a mixed dog—a kind of St. Bernard and shepherd dog—and he was a mighty wise dog."

"On the stage-road them days there was no houses—no houses anywhere near it—only the stables and 'ostlers' quarters at stations fifteen to twenty miles apart. At these stations weren't no women or families—just men, and mighty hard citizens most of them men was. There being no place to stop at or fool away time on I kept right ahead, day after day, with my percession. There was fust the jack, then me, then the dog, one behind the other, all as solemn as could be."

"I wasn't feeling no ways cheerful myself, but by the looks of things when

my face wasn't too thick with dust, I was the cheerfulst of the lot. If the jack wasn't solemn his looks belled him, and as for that dog, Nep, being a black dog, with a down tail, I think he was the most serious critter I ever did see. He seemed mostly to be on the point of going to sleep, but he wasn't half as sleepy as he was sleepy looking. There was mighty little carrying on day or night within a half mile of him that he didn't sabe. And the fondest dog he was of little children that ever I saw."

"Well, I used to make with my solemn little percession twenty or thirty miles a day and, as I had about eight hundred miles to go, ye see, including delays, I was in for a month's steady tramping. Some days I would travel for hours with one or another of the west-bound emigrant wagons or trains, as they came creeping along toward the end of the hard journey across the continent, foot-sore, weary, dusty, and dilapidated. These trains had children with 'em of all ages, and when my dog got in among them children he was happy. He waked right up, raised his drooping tail, and was a new dog. But I never camped at night with any of these trains on account of my jack being liable to make mischief among the emigrant stock, and so I gin'ely waited only long enough at the common camping places to let my animals drink and to fill my water keg with fresh water, and then I'd pass on a mile or two or more and go a little off the road to good grass and some kind of shelter, if any was to be had. In such a place I would unload Canary (that was the jack's name) strip him of his saddle, give him a piece of biscuit, scratch his head a little, tell him how handsome he was, and let him go to grass. I always found him in sight, sound asleep in the morning. After letting Canary go I would gather a few sticks or dry weeds, make my little fire, cook my little supper, eat it, give Nep a bite, roll out my blankets on the ground, lie down and sleep soundly till after daylight. Nep mostly laid down along side of me on the edge of my blankets, and though he often growled in the night, I never paid much attention to him unless he got to be extra ferocious; because, while I knew the plains were prowled over every night by coyotes, just as well as Nep knew it, it didn't need to affect me as it did him. I wasn't afraid of no coyote."

"One night, howsomever, after I had made a very long and mighty tedious day's tramp, I thought the dog was mighty onsettled about something; but after rousing up a couple of times and finding nothing, I laid down and fell into a very heavy sleep, from which I did not awake until near sunrise. I don't suppose I should have awoke when I did, only that I thought I heard a child's voice saying:

"'Oo mus' not make such a big noise wiz oo nose.'"

"Well, sir, I opened my eyes, and there, standing beside my face, was a four year-old girl, holding Nep by the ear with one hand, and shaking the forefinger of the other hand at me, repeating:

"'No; oo mus' not make such a big noise.'"

"I was not, and never had been married, up to that time, and didn't know much about children, but I began right there to feel like a father. I took the little blue-eyed, red-cheeked, white-haired plumpness, and sitting her upon my breast, I was just going to commence talking to her, when she said, pointing:

"'Look at oo dog.'"

"And sure enough, there was that fool dog just a tearing around camp, a-walloping his tail on the ground, and every now and again jumping high over me and the young one, as he had plumb lost his nateral senses. He was the gladdest dog I ever see."

"'Now,' I said to the young lady, 'what is your name?'"

"'Lainey.'"

"'Where do you live?'"

"'In ow wagon.'"

"'Where does your mamma live?'"

"'Oh, my other mamma, she's dead, the bad Ingins killed her. Now me's got another mamma.'"

"'Where does the new mamma live?'"

"'In ow wagon.'"

"'Where is the wagon?'"

"'Down there,' pointing forward."

"Down where?" said I, rising with the child in my arms.

"'Down there,' pointing again."

"'Oh, no, there isn't any wagon down there. That's away off the road.'"

"'No, oo ask'e dog. He knows.'"

"'I looked inquiringly at Nep, but he had fallen into his old, solemn, sleepy look again."

"'Where did you sleep last night?'"

"'Oo knows. I sleeps wiz oo and 'e dog.'"

"I held the child in my arms, and looked all about the sage covered plain, and up and down the lonesome, desolate dust-line of road, but I could see no sign of camp-smoke, nor any object indicating civilization."

"'How far did you walk, to come here?'"

"'Oh! such a long long way—me and 'e dog. I so tired I go to sleep, and 'e dog tuss me in 'e face and wake a long way, some more, and come here to sleep wiz oo.'"

"'Well, now, Miss Lainey, you set right down here on the blankets, along side of the dog, until I get us some breakfast,' and I put the child out of my arms."

"'Me vewy hungwy.'"

"'All right! We'll soon have some breakfast. Which do you like, Miss Lainey, tea or coffee?'"

"'Toffee, and heaps of sugaw.'"

"'And so, chattering along to the child, I fussed around until I got our little breakfast ready in the midst of the wilderness."

"She was a very hearty young lady, and did justice to my rough efforts to please her palate, and after breakfast she insisted on a large pan of hot water to 'wass 'e disses,' but as I could not afford the luxury in the midst of perpetual drought, we compromised the matter by my agreeing to let her ride on top of the pack animal's pack. This arrangement delighted her no little for a while, and also suited me first rate, until she got into the idee of standing up like a circus rider. She never had much sense of fear. I argued, and even scolded against this circus business, but it was no use, and finally I gave her a rope's-end in each hand, which suited her mighty fine, until she got too sleepy and laid down on top of the pack and fell fast asleep, while I walked beside the pack to see that she didn't fall off."

"I didn't reckon that we should go far without hearing inquiries for a lost child, yet, as I passed emigrant wagons, and was passed by other emigrant wagons, they had none of them lost a child or heard of a child being lost."

"My little percession wasn't quite so solemn after we got Lainey, cause the dog, instid of walking behind with his tail drooped, now marched in front, with tail and head up; and Canary, calculating to keep up with the dog, stepped a heap more lively than he did before, and we gee hawed splendidly. And now if ye think that when Lainey was standing up on top of Canary's pack that we wasn't some circus, ye'r mistaken."

"I don't know what the emigrants and stage drivers took me for—whether they thought I was a Mormon running away from too much wife, or a widderer in distress, or a man who had killed a family in order to steal a gal-baby and a jackass and black dog—but I took myself for a man with a powerful responsibility on his hands."

"The fust two or three days I was awful feared I wouldn't find any one to take Lainey off my hands. Then, by jing, I began to dread meeting or finding any one who would take her. And at last, to tell ye the truth, I left the regular stage road and sneaked off over the Sierra into California by an old abandoned route."

"I got some changes of clothes for Lainey here and there from emigrant women, piece at a time, and by the time I got down into the coast counties—'cow counties' some calls 'em—I was mighty handy in taking care of that young lady."

"I got down to my stopping place well on a ranch, rented a little cabin in a little town—not such a very little town—and went to keeping house and attending to my hoss speculation. I hired an old Mexican woman to look after Lainey when I waan't at home."

"At last it came Christmas day and I had Lainey by the hand, going up street

as big as could be, to fill her stocking, when we meets a lady, and down drops that lady on her knees on the board-walk right in front of us, and, reaching out her arms, she said:

"'Lainey Woods! Lainey Woods! Thank God, I have found you at last!'"

"And that lady took my baby into her arms and began kissing her."

"Well, it cut me so to the quick that I started away without saying one word, and wouldn't stand no such nonsense, but she came a crying and a tearing after me, dragging the women by the hand."

"'He's my papa—my new papa. I won't stay wiz nobody but him.'"

"Well, you see, to shorten a long story, the lady and me talked it all over—how she was Lainey's mother's friend—how the Indians had killed Lainey's mother, and how disease and grief had killed the father—how disease had prostrated the friend—how Lainey had wandered off in the desert at night—how part of Lainey's father's property, consisting mostly of fine brood mares, was left over in Nevada, temporarily in charge of the Overland stage company—in fact, how all this business and this child and this friend needed a man to look after 'em. So it came about, one way with another, that I married the lady, fathered the child and got into the hoss business."

"Which being just about what I wanted to do, makes me free to say that my wild peremption in the desert was a pretty lucky lay out."

"Yes, indeed, very lucky," I said.

"But now, after all, don't it seem to you as if the black dog went off in the night and stole that young 'un?'"

Here the venerable Moasick had a slight asthmatic paroxysm, and as we walked toward the gate out of which Quien Sabe and his rider had made their picturesque departure, he finally succeeded in saying:

"Wall! That brown colt's yours for just what I told you. Say the word and I'll hold him for you mos' any reasonable length of time."

I'll say the word, and I'll put up the money, but I'm not going to be in any hurry about taking "that brown colt" away from the scenes of his childhood. If I were a married man it might be different—but I've got my eye on your "Wild Claim," you understand.

Rag, Tag, and Bobtail.

The writer, when a young man, worked for some time at his trade in a certain village which had, however no denominational church, but a very large building was used by all ministers who came along and wanted to preach. It was called a Union house of prayer. A Methodist minister came along and made application for the privilege to preach there on a certain evening. The directors told him there was no objection to his preaching provided he could command a congregation; they told him there were many young men in that village, that would always attend the meeting and when the minister was preaching they would get up and stamp out of the church, thus annoying the minister and whole congregation; and so they would continue to act every five minutes during the service, and the directors had no power to put a stop to such actions. This minister told the directors to leave it to him and he would settle it. When the time came to preach, after taking his text, but before commencing his sermon he told the congregation that at many places where he preached he generally found a certain set of young men who loved to go to the churches for the purpose of disturbing the preacher and the congregation, and he found that they were divided into three classes. The first was the "rag," the second the "tag," and the third the "bob tail." He then proceeded with the sermon. In the course of ten minutes up jumped one young man, who stamped out. "There goes the rag," cried the minister, and went on preaching. In ten minutes another jumped up and went out; "there goes the tag," said the minister, "and now look out for the bob tail." He then resumed his preaching, but the "bob tail" did not go out, and there was a good and quiet meeting.