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GENTLEMAN · JIM

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"STEPPING HEAVENWARD."



BABY JIM.

Printess, Mrs. Elizabeth (Payson).
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BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"STEPPING HEAVENWARD."



NEW YORK :
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,
182 FIFTH AVENUE.

2018982

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GENTLEMAN JIM.

THERE'S some things that ought to be wrote down, I mean written down. Now let me see ; it is nigh upon twenty years ago that a young fellow worked in these here mines, and handled his tools so ill that he got the name of "Clumsy Joe." If anybody met with an accident going down the shaft, it was always him ; if anybody got blowed up and singed, he always did. His face, it was never handsome, but the red scars of his burns made it ugly ; and his hands, rough enough before, had got unshapely and inconvenient to use. But ugly as he was, and clumsy as he was, he'd got a soft heart under his jacket, and the

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school-master's daughter caught and held it fast.

The way of it was this :

It wasn't that she was the prettiest girl anywhere round, though she was ; nor that she had the prettiest ways of any of them, though she had. It was the loving-kindness she felt for everybody in shame or trouble. If a fellow got chaffed for his awkwardness, and was burning with shame, she'd lay on a soft word that cooled and soothed him. If one was dismissed for some trifling fault, rest she would not till she'd plead him back again. If there was an accident, and a fellow's face was made horrible to look at she'd work at it and shape it, and bear with it, and say, over and over again :

“ It's the heart I look at, not the face ; and the scars of burns are not half so marring as seams of sin.”

I wasn't the only one she was kind to : it

was all the same to every man, woman, and child for miles round. I knowed it, and yet I wouldn't know it.

All the same, I never had the least hope that she would ever love me. I knowed she never could love such a silly softy as I was; but it was some comfort that she did not care any more for the other men than she did for me.

But, blundering as usual, I have run on all this time without a word about Gentleman Jim.

When he first come among us, I remember that, after one look at his face, I looked sharp at his hands, thinking to see them soft and white, with pink nails. But they were grimy and used to hard work, so it was plain he was made of clay, like the rest of us, only he was made of a kind out of the common. He never took airs upon himself, but mated with us all, friendly and agreeable. For all that he hadn't

been in the mines a month before we all spoke of him as Gentleman Jim. Nobody would have dared to call him such a grand name to his face, he wouldn't have stood it if they had. And as I watched him from day to day, I said to myself, "Here's a man fit for Rosemary"—there! her name has slipped out at last! He'll go raving distracted about her, and she'll do the same by him as soon as she knows it, or my name aint Clumsy Joe.

But he hadn't been among us many days before her father took to his bed and never left it again.

Now, she had plenty of friends who would have been glad to help her nurse him, but no, nobody was to do for him but herself. She said she had promised her mother, on her death-bed, not to let him miss her love and care, and she never would, not she.

Well, the old man lived on and on, and she began to flag. She get hardly any sleep, and

never went out to breathe the fresh air, and it made my heart ache to see her young life wasting away. For I could see her, plainly, through the low cottage window. "If he doesn't die soon, she will," says I to myself.

A NIGHT'S ADVENTURE.

And I made up my mind to be on hand when she broke down; leastways, if it was not when I was down in the mine. So I kept watch of the house and of every step she took, and one night she stepped to the door; dear me! she knowed I couldn't sleep when she was awake, and—

"Joe?" says she.

"Yes," says I.

"If I could go to sleep for just five minutes I should be all right," says she. "You just watch father five minutes, and I'll wake up bright and strong. And, Joe—"

By this time we'd got into the house, and

she had staggered to the bed where her father lay and was asleep; asleep like one dead. It was a cold, stormy night, and the fire had got low. I took off my shoes and crept, softly, to the grate and put on coals; then I looked for something to cover the poor little lass with, but could not find either shawl or blanket, so I took off my coat and spread it over her shoulders.

The old man was asleep, too, and I hardly dared to breathe, lest I should wake them. After a while a great, noisy clock began to strike one, two, three; I thought if I let it go on to twelve they would certainly wake up. So I stole along to stop it.

Now there was a little table setting near the bed, with cups and bottles and what not on it, and what should I do but upset it and make noise enough to rouse the whole village. The old man awoke with a start.

“Whatever are you about, child?” says he,

‘to make all this din just as I was going off into a doze. I sha’n’t get a wink of sleep to-night. Is the kettle boiling? Make me a cup of tea, then.’

Now here was a pretty mess I’d made of it! I knowed no more’n a baby where the tea was, nor how to make it if I did.

But I crept round and opened boxes, and felt of this bag and that, and at last lighted on it. Now how much to boil? If it was coffee I should know; but should a fellow put down more or less tea to boil? At last I took a couple of handfuls, poured in a tea-cup or two of water, and set the tea-pot on the coals. After a while I looked in, and if the water hadn’t boiled away! I poured in more, and again more; and just as the clock struck one, and the kettle had boiled nearly an hour, I thought the tea must be done, so I poured out a cup and carr’ed it to the old man. He took one swallow and made such a

dreadful face that I saw I had made some blunder.

“What devil’s broth is this?” he cried out. “Are you trying to poison your poor old father?”

I knelt down on the floor and put my mouth to his ear, and says I:

“It isn’t HER. It’s me!”

Just then the fire flared up, and he saw that the lass was not by his side. His fright was a sight to see. He thought I had murdered his daughter, and was now trying to poison him, and being weak and low, he began to cry, like a child, and beg for mercy.

“Hush, sir, hush!” says I, ready to burst; “put out your hand and you’ll feel her lying asleep by you. And as for me, I’m Clumsy Joe, nursing of you, and letting that poor soul get a wink of sleep.”

“It’s not like her to sleep when her poor old father never closes his eyes. You’ve mur

dered her, I am sure of it," he said in a feeble voice.

"Indeed, sir," says I, "you've slept nearly all night, and as to the poor lass, she's not dead, but all wore out. Put your hand on hers, and listen to her breathing."

At that he took her hand in his and was comforted, and spoke kindly to me.

"I know you now," says he, "you're Clumsy Joe. But how the child sleeps! Are you sure you haven't given her some drug?"

"I've give her an easy mind," says I, "and nothing else. She knew I'd do the best I could for you. I humbly ask your pardon about the tea. I thought if I boiled it an hour it would be beautiful."

He tossed about a while, and, at last, fell asleep again.

I had time now to think of my hand, which I had scalded pouring out the tea, but would

not run the risk of waking them by trying to do anything for it.

So the hours went on and on; daylight began to dawn, and I was growing giddy, for, of course, this wasn't the first night I hadn't been to bed; no, nor the second, or the third.

And it was getting toward time to go down into the mine and set to work! And suppose now she didn't wake, and I was missing when my turn came? Well, I'd out with the truth, and say why I couldn't help it.

But who would believe that story?

Who would believe that the school-master's daughter set Clumsy Joe to nurse her father when she might have had Gentleman Jim, with all his handy, noiseless ways? And was her name to be mixed up with mine? I had been shivering with cold for several hours, but now I turned hot.

She must wake up, and I must go.

“Rose!” says I.

She never stirred.

I went round and touched her.

“Rose!” says I.

She smiled, but did not open her eyes.

“Yes, I know he’s awkward, but he’s faithful, he’s faithful, and I’ll only sleep five minutes,” says she.

I grew wild with terror. At the risk of offending her forever I must go. What must she think when she awoke? The physic all upset, the cups and vials broken, and all the tea wasted! No, she’d never let me cross her threshold again.

And I was no scholar, and couldn’t leave a bit of writing to explain my ill-luck, oh!

I rushed out and rushed home, if home it might be called, where there never was a woman set her foot, and we men did for ourselves.

“What’s come over you, Joe?” says one.
“You’re as near white as grime permits.”

"It's nothing," says I, "but a scalded hand."

ANOTHER VERSION OF THE NIGHT'S AD-
VENTURE.

They passed out, one after another, at that, only Gentleman Jim stayed behind.

"Let's look at your hand, mate," says he.

"But you'll catch it if you're behind-time," says I.

"I don't suppose they'll murder a fellow," says he. "Whew! No wonder you're white. Sit down. Here's a cup of coffee. There, I call that a scientific bandage, and you're all right. Eat your breakfast, and then go to bed."

"To bed?" says I. "To work you mean."

He smiled to himself, lifted me up, chair and all, and set me down at the table.

"Behave yourself, and eat your breakfast," says he. "And Joe, lad, promise me that

you'll never go on another spree. Pick out some good, modest girl and marry her. Depend on it, there's only one thing purifies a man more than love for a good, modest girl, be she dead or alive."

"Jim," says I, "don't I know that? Don't you ever talk sprees to me again. What have I ever done to make you think I'm a wild fellow?"

"I never will suspect you again, dear mate, and there's my hand upon it. But you see, when a young fellow is out night after night, what wonder if one has his fears? I say fears, Joe, because I've always loved you, and took an elder brother's right to look after you. And now you really *must* go to bed. You're as weak as a baby."

"But my work, Jim!"

"What am I as strong as a giant for if not to help a mate in trouble?"

I looked up at him, and for once let him see

how I loved him. But I should be ashamed to tell what I got for answer.

Oh, Gentleman Jim!

As he went out I tried to follow him, but fell back in my chair, weak and helpless, and soon went to sleep, and never woke till the men came home from their work, laughing and talking, at night.

“Here’s Joe, thinks it a broiling day in July, and so sits in his shirt-sleeves,” says one.

“And catches his death of cold,” says another. “See how his teeth chatter.”

“Come, Joe, you’re best off in bed,” says another.

I crawled away and into bed. I really thought I should shake to pieces I was so chilled through and through. At last I fell into uneasy sleep, but was gradually roused by the talk of two men; I knew them by their voices—Tom Jinkins and Lazy Luke Hobbs

“He must have been drunk,” says Luke.

“Drunk?” says Tom. “Why, he’s as drunk as a beast, still.”

“They say he frightened the old man to death with his antics. First he puts the girl on the bed, and tries to smother her with his jacket. She falls into a swoon, and that satisfies him, for he thinks she’s dead. Then he takes bottle after bottle and breaks them on the old man’s head till the bed is a sight to behold. Then he pours physic all over the floor, till your feet stick to it. Then he takes all the tea in the house, half a pound, if not more, and sets it on to boil, and tries to make the old man drink some of it.”

“What was you skulking round there for, anyhow?”

“That’s my business, not yours. I see Joe pacing up and down, like a sentinel, and not at all as if he’d been drinking; but when I saw him go into the house, I thought I’d see what was up, that’s all.”

“I never knew him to drink,” says the other. “All the same, I’m glad he’s got caught at it.”

“Well, of course, the fool will be dismissed, and if he gets off at that, he’ll get off cheap. You see, they have his coat; there’s no getting round that. And, for my part, I think he ought to be tried for murder.”

“If it comes to that I’ll bolt,” says Luke. “Let the Lord blow him up in the mine if He chooses, but I aint a-going to swear away his life. I wouldn’t swear away a toad’s, for that matter.”

“No, you’re too lazy. But here comes Gentleman Jim. Let’s see what he has to say, now, for his dear Joe.”

By this time I was sitting up in bed with every hair standing on end. Was things as they said? Had I been drunk? Was I drunk now? Had I tried to smother the little lass? Had I scared her father to death? Was he

really dead? Had I really killed him? I tried to cry out, but my voice failed me. Then I heard Gentleman Jim's, calm and clear at first, then angry with righteous anger.

“What do I think of him, now? I think of him as David thought of Jonathan. There isn't one of you fit to pass him the salt. There isn't one of you would sacrifice a night's sleep for his best friend, and here's this Joe's lost his reason by dint o' watching night after night over an old man that never had a kind word for him.”

Then everybody spoke at once, and I could not make out a word till I heard Jim's voice ring out,

“SILENCE!”

and all became as still as the grave. Then another voice, trembling, tearful, passionate by turns, set my heart beating till I had to hold on to it with my two hands.

“It is nobody's fault but mine,” she said

“I went to sleep thinking to get strength for what was coming. For the doctor said my poor father would only live a few days. And I was jealous of letting any one else do for him, and so kept up night after night, night after night, till my head got confused, and I could not remember the doctor’s directions. And all the time here was this poor lad you’re all abusing, pacing up and down in the cold and the rain and the snow, never asking for, never getting a kind word from me, watching for the moment when I should give out. And I only thought to sleep five minutes! I did not know I was used up. And when I woke, rested and fresh, what do I find tucked about my shoulders but this coat! You all know it. Yes, it’s Clumsy Joe’s. He deprived himself of it through the coldest night ever known here, that a poor, weary lass, with a great sorrow before her, might get rested against it came.”

Here a rough called out that she was welcome to make Clumsy Joe her young man if she liked, and with one stride Jim was upon him.

“Take back those words!”

The man was as strong as a lion, but he quailed before Jim’s eye.

“I meant no harm,” he said.

Then Jim offered the poor weeping girl his arm, and walked away with her as if he was a lord and she a lady.

Of course I did not see all that, but it was told me afterward.

And later I found I had been very ill for a week, and out of my head. During that time the school-master died, and was buried. I asked the surgeon if I had hastened his death by my clumsiness, and he said no. You see, we have so many accidents in the mines we keep a surgeon, us miners. Single men pay him so much a month, year in and year

out, and married men twice as much, and then he is bound to see us through any illness or hurt that comes to us.

COMPLICATIONS.

When I was strong enough to get out again, I found that Rosemary's strength all gave out as soon as her father's funeral was over. The wives and the girls of the miners were too rough to be fit to nurse her; in them days women worked in the mines with the men, and grew strong and coarse with the hard work. So the surgeon got a nurse for her. She didn't know, and I didn't know, that Gentleman Jim paid that woman her wages. I might have knowed it; it was just like him.

I wearied the surgeon asking him how the lass was, and he always made the same answer—

“If it had not been for the sleep she had the night before her father died, it would have

been useless to try to save her. As it is, it will take time. She is completely worn out."

It did take time, but she battled through. The first day she was up and dressed I made bold to go and see her.

And I saw signs of Gentleman Jim's having looked after her during her illness; little bits of fine carving, such as women like; a bird-cage, such as he used to make; a pretty table for her work-basket.

But when I led the way for her to speak of them, she said she understood they came from me. And then again, she hadn't seen Jim since the day he took her home after she had brought my coat.

I couldn't make her out, nor him out. She seemed so changed; so happy, and as if she expected something that was going to make her happier yet.

"It must be Jim," I thought.

And why not? There wasn't a worthy man

among us youngsters that wouldn't be glad to get her for his wife, and she knowed it. Then why shouldn't Gentleman Jim be like the rest?

At first the thought tore me to pieces, selfish dog in the manger that I was!

"He sha'n't have her! he sha'n't have her!" I kept crying out in my secret heart. And I grew cold and sullen to him. Before that, if he got out of wicks or powder, or anything else in his chest, he was free to take what he would from mine. But now I let him go to any inconvenience; touch my tools he should not.

He never said a word beyond, "Why, Joe, lad?" and that as kind as a woman.

It's hard on a young fellow in the midst of such a battle not to have a mother, or a woman he could make a mother of, to counsel and strengthen him. As for me, it seemed as if Satan had got hold of me, and never would let me go. Oh, what a horrid thing to be tempted of him!

But there is One stronger than Satan, and He condescended to whisper to me, a poor, grimy miner, working underground.

“Joe,” says He, “what have I done for you? Anything?”

“Yes, Master,” says I, “you’ve saved my soul.”

“Then have you nothing to do for me?” says He.

At that my hard heart melted, and I had to go and hide in a dusky corner, lest my mates should see me a-crying.

I hadn’t thought before that He cared how I came out of this fight. But I knew now that He did care, even for me, even me. And if He would stand by me, and help me bear it, I could let Jim have her.

But Jim was queer. He didn’t see that she loved him, and she wasn’t any nearer to him a year after her father’s death than she was the day after, when he took her home in such

a lordly way. The poor thing began to wilt. I wouldn't have you think she was love-sick and silly ; there was too much to her for that ; but you know how a plant droops that lacks water. She had a smile and a pleasant word for everybody, and was as reserved and modest to Jim as a shy hare ; all the same, I knowed her heart by mine.

It's wearing to see them you love suffer ; and after a time, and another fight with my evil heart, I got so as to stand the idea of their getting married to each other. And yet, further along, the notion of their having lads and lasses of their own.

This put me up to saving my wages, for, of course, Rosemary's children must have schooling, so's to keep step with her.

A MIDNIGHT ASSAULT.

Now her cottage was in a lonesome place, and she lived there all by herself. It did not

seem dangerous; our men respected her too much to molest her. But one night a fellow I'd had a chance to do a kind turn for, came to me most mysterious, and winked at me to go out of doors with him. I went out, and says he :

“ Rosemary's your sweetheart, isn't she ? ”

“ Not she ! ” says I. “ Do you suppose she'd look at a fellow like me ? ”

“ I don't see why not, ” says he. “ Anyhow, you care for her, don't you ? ”

I owned I did.

“ Well, ” says he, “ Big Mike has been persecuting her off and on, and to-day I overheard him lay a wager that if he couldn't have her one way he'd have her another. Of course he'd been drinking, or he'd have kept his plans to himself. But he'll attack her as soon as he thinks you are asleep. She's all alone in her house, you know, with nobody to defend her, and though I'd like the job my-

self, I'll let you have a hand in it, Joe, for what you've done for me."

"What! two against one?" says I. "I'll never consent to that. But I thank you, all the same, for this warning."

"But suppose he gets the upper hand of you; she'll be in his power then."

"He'll not be in a state to hurt a fly," says I, "when I've done with him."

"But he wouldn't mind putting an end to you. And he's as strong as a giant."

"Ay, but he doesn't love her, and I do."

"Well," says he, "you turn in and sleep till near midnight, then I'll call you. A baby might knock you down as you are now."

"Sleep!" says I, "do you suppose I can go to sleep?"

My blood boiled till I could almost hear it hiss. To think of that white, innocent lamb at the mercy of a wolf. And suppose he killed me, what would become of her then?

I went in and looked at the clock. It was after ten, and the tired men had, mostly, gone to bed. Only Big Mike sat pretending to read a newspaper, and Gentleman Jim sat carving a bit of wood.

I must make believe go to bed.

Jim and I had made up long ago, and as I passed him on my way from the room, I gave him a sign to follow.

“Jim,” says I, “if you love me, go and get into my bed with your clothes on, pulling the coverlid close up, as I do. Then when you feel a rough hand steal across your face you may know it’s Big Mike feeling if it’s me. And as soon as he is satisfied that I’m there, he’ll be off in pursuit of your little girl.”

“My little girl?” says he.

“Yes; Rosemary. He mayn’t mean to do more than frighten her, but I won’t risk it. And don’t you dare to interfere, only be there to defend her if I’m overcome.”

Jim was quick at taking an idea.

“All right,” says he, and in two minutes I was flying down the road to the cottage by a cut across lots I thought Mike didn’t know. But he did, and had the window partly open when I reached and seized him with one hand and closed it with the other.

This gave him an advantage over me, and his blows with both fists came down on my face and eyes like rain. Then he shook me till I felt as if every bone was dislocated, and pulled at my ears till it’s a wonder they didn’t fly out, and at last he got me by the throat.

But I did not lose heart. I had not been drinking, as he had, and what strength I had was natural, and seemed to grow instead of failing. And the thought of what might happen to that dear one if I failed to protect her, made me free myself from his grasp as by a miracle, and we closed in.

And all of a sudden the monster fell heavily

to the ground, and lay motionless. I sank down, too, utterly spent, but there were a-plenty ready to look after me. Rosemary had been awakened by the opening of the window, and when she heard it closed again, she had the wit to see that there was two in the business. She got up and dressed herself, and listened to the blows that rained on me till they ceased; then she came out and tried to find us, but it was so dark she could see nothing. But just then Gentleman Jim came hurrying up with his lantern, and when he saw me he dropped it, caught me up in his arms, and carried me into the house. And before long some of Mike's mates got wind of his condition, and brought an ambulance and carried him off.

I was laid on the school-master's bed, and Rosemary washed the blood off my face, and felt of every bone till she found one broken, and Gentleman Jim went for the surgeon,

who set it, and told me my face looked frightfully now, but would look far worse by to-morrow.

You can't suppose that after that I was going to hang out my colors for her to see and get disgusted at, and, as it was a broken arm, and not a broken leg, I got away with Jim's help, and had six idle weeks before I got to work again. I was not uneasy about her, because they all said Mike was in no state to molest her at present. He had been a hard drinker, and had other dissolute habits, and it took him three months to get well.

JOE'S SCHEME FOR ROSEMARY.

After I was at work again, and as strong and hearty as ever, I began to lay my plans for Rosemary's safety against Mike was out again. For he would have a double motive now to assail her ; besides gratifying himself, to spite me.

One night Jim and I sat up later than common, and says he :

“ Joe, you’re an odd stick.”

“ I’ve been thinking the same of you,” says I.

We both laughed in a silly, awkward way, and at last Jim says :

“ Don’t you mean to get married, Joe, my boy? ”

“ No, never,” says I.

“ And why not? ”

“ I have my reasons. And you, Jim, don’t you mean to get married yourself? ”

“ *No!* ” quite short and stiff and hurt.

“ Why not? ”

“ I have my reasons.”

We sat silent a good while after this.

Poor Rosemary!

“ The fact is,” says Jim, “ the girls don’t take to me.”

“ Would you want more than one to do that? ”

“Why, no; and not even one. I don’t take to girls.”

“Then you’re a cold-blooded, hard-hearted booby,” says I, not knowing what I said, and thinking of Rosemary, “to let a girl wilt and droop for love of you, and never so much as see it!”

“What do you mean, Joe? Who do you mean?” he cried out.

“There aint but one girl round here worth your looking at,” says I, quite sulky.

He turned pale, and then red, and then pale again.

“Have I been to blame?” says he.

“Why, if you’ve got a heart as hard as a millstone, and I begin to think you have, I don’t know as you’re to blame.”

“But I thought she liked you. The day she brought your coat—”

“Yes, she *likes* me, but she *loves* you. Oh, Jim, couldn’t you warm to such a good, sweet

girl? Isn't there any gratitude in you? Is it nothing to be loved with such pure love as hers?"

"Gratitude is one thing and love is another," says Jim. "She might be the Queen of Sheba for all me. I like her, I admire her. I've hugged myself with the thought that after you and she had got married I'd have, maybe, a home with you, and dance your little lads and lasses on my knee. And I've saved here, and saved there, to give them a schooling equal to their mother's. And I was hoping to have one of the lads named for me, and one of the lasses for—well, no matter, it's all a dream, and I've waked up with an awful heart-ache."

"What was your mother's name?" says I.

"Hepzibah."

"And you was thinking of a-giving one of Rosemary's lasses such a name as that?"

“Who said anything about my mother?” says he.

“Why, I thought you did. Anyhow, you had her in your mind, hadn’t you?”

“No, Joe; I’ve a good mind to kill myself. What a miserable mess it is, all round. You love Rosemary, and she doesn’t love you; I don’t love her, and she does love me; at least you say so. Why should she care for me? I never said twenty-five words to her, and she doesn’t know me at all. The next time there’s a blast in the mine, I’ll go and get blowed up. A fellow that’s made a good girl unhappy isn’t fit to live.”

“But, Jim, would you rather kill yourself than marry that dear little girl?”

“Of course I would.”

“But it is a sin to kill yourself.”

“And not a sin to marry a girl you don’t love, I suppose?”

“If you cheat a girl into believing you love

her, of course it is a sin ; but if you treat her fair and square, tell her you'll be faithful and kind to her, and she's a mind to run the risk, it is her own fault if you don't satisfy her."

"And you think Rosemary the sort of girl to run such a risk?"

"I don't know," says I.

"Well, I am so sure she isn't that I'm going to propose to marry her. Will that suit you, old boy?"

"And what if she says she'll have you?"

"Why, she shall have all I offer her. And now let's be off to bed."

"But, Jim, she's so unprotected, living there all alone. She needs a man to look after her. When Mike gets loose again, what's to become of her? Think of that."

"I'm thinking of sleep," said he.

But we neither of us closed an eye that night.

The next day I saw by Jim's face that I

was not to bring up this matter again, and I went to my work with a heavy heart, and it turned out, if there was any difference, his was heavier than mine.

He washed and dressed himself in the evening and went out, I knew where. I sat up, waiting for him, but it got to be midnight, and he hadn't come. One minute I'd think she has accepted him, and I've been the man that sent her her happiness, and now Jim's got near her he's happy, too. Then the next minute I would feel uneasy, and afraid he hadn't been nigh her, and there's no knowing what desperate thing he'd done.

At last I couldn't stand it another minute, and rushed out and to her house. She came to the door in a minute.

"Joe?" says she.

"Yes," says I, and went in.

"You are the best fellow in the world," says she, "but clumsy they call you, and

clumsy you are. To think of your putting it upon Gentleman Jim to come a-courting to me, when he doesn't care two pins for me. Come, now, you've just got to confess. Wasn't it you that put it into his head that I loved him?"

It wouldn't have been the least use to lie about it; and, anyhow, I'm as clumsy at that business as at better ones.

"Dear," says I, "don't be angry with me. I did it for your good. I have often and often said to myself, 'I'd give her my two eyes if she wanted them,' and here was a chance to give what I valued far above my eyes; yes, to give the girl I love to another man. What more could I do? It would be something to die for another, but it's more to live for her, yet live without her."

"Dou you love me all that, Joe?" says she
"You never told me before."

‘But you knowed it, Rosemary; you knowed it, all the same.’

“No, no, no. These things has to be said over and over to some girls before they get to believe them. I thank you, humbly, for those words. I sha’n’t forget them. If you ever get hurt in the mine, and you’re sure to get hurt, I shall have you brought here, and shall nurse you as I did father.”

By this time we was both crying. I never see her so humble before, and I had hard work not to fall at her feet and kiss the floor she stood on.

At last I said, “Dear, would you mind telling me what passed between you and Jim?”

She smiled and shook her head.

“No,” says she, “I won’t. I promised I wouldn’t. But, Joe, he’s just splendid.”

“Haven’t I told you so a hundred times?” says I.

"I *will* tell you part of what passed between us," says she. "It isn't the part I promised not to tell. But I can't do it facing you. I'll write it down."

I've got that writing yet. She forgot that I couldn't read writing, and I was ashamed to remind her of it. I carried it round with me till it nearly fell to pieces. Oh, how I wished I had somebody I could trust to read it to me.

ROSEMARY'S WRITING.

Gentleman Jim came into my house looking so white that I thought he was in awful pain.

"Rosemary," says he, "this is a lonely place where you live."

"Yes, very lonely."

"And it's not safe for you to live here by yourself."

"Joe never'll let anybody harm me."

"But Joe can't spend his life pacing round your house. He lost his reason once for want

of sleep; and he has been pounded nearly to death by Big Mike. Another such smashing would kill him. But as your husband he could protect you without danger to himself."

"Did he tell you to say that?"

"No; but you know he has risked his life twice for you."

"Is that any reason why I should ask him to marry me? Ha, ha! I think I see myself doing that!"

"Well, now, I'm going to ask you a plain, straightforward, blunt question. Will you marry me?"

"Then let me ask you a plain, straightforward, blunt question. Do you love me, Jim?"

At that he turned all colors.

"I don't pretend to be sentimental," says he.

"Well, *I do* pretend to be, and what's more, I am. And marriage isn't a bargain made between a man and a woman; it's two hearts melting into one. If you were the last man

on the earth, I would sooner die than marry you. What have I ever done that you should fancy I would? Have I ever followed after you? Have I so much as asked you to come to see me? When you had the ague did I go and nurse you as I did the others? Then what *have* I done that you should suppose I'd fling myself headlong into such an offer as yours; an offer without so much as a pinch of love in it?"

"It's plain I've made an ass of myself," says he.

"No; it's all along of that good, blundering Joe," says I. "He put you up to this nonsense, I know he did."

"Well, I won't deny or affirm it," said he. "I know I was a puppy, and thought that you—that you—"

"Oh, out with it," says I. "He made you believe I loved you. But I aint the sort of girl that pines in secret after men that

never gives her a thought. It is true you're the handsomest man I ever saw, and you don't smoke or drink or chew; and every way you're far above the other men; almost a gentleman--they all say so. But if I'd got to choose between you and Joe, clumsy as he is--thank heaven I haven't--I'd take him with his homely face and ill-shaped hands, and great, big, warm, true, innocent heart; indeed I would! But I'll have neither of you!"

AN EVENT IN THE MINE.

So I didn't know what the upshot of Jim's offer was, for all he would tell me was that she wouldn't marry a man who didn't love her, not she! But from that night she held her head up, and went on her way, strong and brave, neither keeping out of Jim's way, or getting into it, and to me humble and gentle as a little child.

As for Jim, he never said a word. For two

or three days he was quieter than common, and then everything fell into the old track.

Some months after that two of our men was set to put in a shot for blasting, and Big Mike, who was beginning to do light work, was one, though only a shadow of what he had been. They had finished their task, and were about to give the signal to be hoisted up, when Mike says:

“This match is too long.”

“No, it aint,” says the other. “You give the signal and go up, and I’ll light it, and hurry after you.”

Mike only gave a sort of grunt and tried to break the match, but, finding he couldn’t, laid it on a flat stone and pounded it with a sharp one. And, if you’ll believe it, cut it shorter, but kindled it at the same time! They rushed to the shaft like madmen, shouting to the coadjutor at the windlass, and each got a foot in the bucket before they remem-

bered that only one could be hoisted at a time.

“Go aloft, mate,” says the other man, and took his foot out of the bucket. And then came a noise like seven thunders, and fire and hot coals flew in his face, and he was caught up and dashed a hundred feet away, and lay there stunned. He’d always hoped he should go to heaven when he died, but when he came to himself, he was certain sure he was in the other place, suffering torments for his sins. And he remembered all of them. He remembered how, when he was a little lad, he had robbed a bird’s-nest; how he lost one of his mother’s knitting-needles, poking for something in a crack in the floor, and then never owned it. And how he had had turns of wishing it wasn’t wrong to do bad things, and neglecting to say his prayers till he’d got into bed, and then went right to sleep.

There was pain in his body, but worse pain in his soul, when he thought he was lost.

Then he heard the sound of a pickaxe that ever ceased, never ceased; another lost man, doomed to everlasting work in everlasting mines.

Well, less a sinner than himself, he thought; permitted to work, though never so hard, rather than lie, alone and weary, and in pain, doing nothing.

So time went on, and the ceaseless sound of the pickaxe went on and on, day and night, if there was any day. The man wondered at himself that he could not die; wondered that he felt no anger against the Almighty Being who had disappointed his faith and hope and plunged him down to hell. And yet was that hell where, though hope was gone, faith held on, as dogged as dogged, and kept on saying, "Though He has shut me out of heaven, and well-nigh broken my heart, I believe in

Him! I believe in Him, and if I can, always will?"

And he thought the ceaseless sounds were coming nearer, and gave thanks that his awful solitude was not going to last forever.

"God is just as well as good," he said to himself. "If I deserved this torment He was right to send me here."

Then he felt a little whiff of cool air blowing on his burning face, and a familiar voice full of tears.

"Here he is, poor fellow," and there was Gentleman Jim, with his lantern, shouting, "Mates, I've found him!"

And the next minute there came the sound of distant voices drawing nearer; sad, solemn voices, under the breath, and then another shout that made the mine ring again:

"And he's *alive!*"

THE RESCUE.

Then, in his joy and surprise, the man swooned away, and never knew how they got him up the shaft, or saw the coffin that had stood waiting for him, or heard the woman's voice that defied them all to nurse him if they dared. It all made talk for a year or more.

But the man came to his senses at last, and if he had thought he was in hell before, he believed he was in heaven now. He was lying on a cool, soft bed, and there was somebody always there, day and night, doing everything mortal hands could do to soothe the pain and the weariness that came and went; and there was the sound of a girl flitting in and out, with hands whose touch healed every fiery burn it rested so lightly on.

He never knowed whether the time was long or short. He lay dreaming, as helpless and weak as a child; two angels taking care of him, speaking words that were sweeter than

any music, handling him as tenderly as they would a baby just born.

One night he dreamed that he was woke out of his sleep by their voices, though they spoke low.

"He'll never want to go down into the mine again," says one.

"He never *shall* go down again," says the other.

"But what will the poor fellow be fit for?"

"To be *my husband!*" says the other.

"You don't mean it!"

"You will see."

"God bless you, Rosemary," says he.

"He *has* blessed me. He has brought me to my senses. He has let me see this dear lad's soul. And I see it so plain that when I look at him, all scarred and seamed and marred as he is, I can't see anything else."

"God bless you, Rosemary! What a mercy that you didn't marry me."

“If you had loved me, there’s no knowing how I might have slighted this poor lad, Jim. I’ll confess now why I pined and wilted at one time. Joe had told me that he loved me, and I knew I loved him, but he stopped there, and never asked me to be his wife.”

“The lad dared not look so high; besides, he thought you were pining for me.”

“Are you sure? Well, then, I shall have to ask him to marry me. I never thought to come to it, but now I must. Too high! Oh, Jim, how could he think that? Why, I could go on my knees for him! It was something to risk his life for me, but to think of his *giving* it to his enemy!”

When the man did really wake up he was thankful he had had one good dream. All the others had been dreadful, and frightened him so that cold drops stood on his forehead, and sometimes, without thinking, he would cry out. Then, just as a mother runs when her

baby cries, two little feet would come hurrying to the side of the bed, and a sweet voice begin to sing,

“Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber,”

till he fell off again.

And after many and many a long week, she knelt down by his side one night and says, “You are well enough now to say your prayers. Do you know ‘Now I lay me down to sleep’?”

Of course he did, but he liked best to say it line by line after her; it carried him back to the time when he was a little lad, and knelt at his mother’s knee.

“There, that will do. Don’t weary your poor head trying to think out something else to say.”

Later on she would sit by the side of the bed, mending his clothes and telling him stories. Her head was as full of stories as an

egg is of meat. At last Jim, if it was Jim, could go back to his work, and she could take the whole care of the man. Very often she fell asleep in her chair, being easy in her mind now, and then he would try to slip the bandage off his eyes, so as to get a little peep at her. This was hard work, for every finger was bandaged separate; but he managed it, with patience, took one look, and hurried everything back like a boy who been stealing apples or pears.

She was given to talking in her sleep, and sometimes would say things that made the man's heart leap up in his breast for a minute. But only for a minute. He knew dreams went by contraries, and that she spoke just opposite to what she felt.

One day she slept longer than common, and laughed, and laughed at something on her mind, till the man lay and laughed too, a silly softy!

“You needn’t be afraid, Jim,” says she. “I always know my own mind, and never knew it better than I do now. If I wait till he’s seen his face, wild horses couldn’t persuade him to do it. No, no; there’s no time to lose, and next Sunday shall be the day. It’s the greatest joke in the world! And the best joke! I believe I shall laugh in the parson’s face!”

Bless her, how she laughed! The man had no bandage on his eyes now; his eyes was saved as by a miracle, and he loved to see her so happy in her sleep. And surely such innocent mirth came out of an innocent heart that has nothing in it but the fancies of a little child. And yet what a woman she was, and how willful when she pleased!

Now it was in the month of December that the accident happened, and one Sunday Jim says to the man, “I’m going to get you up to-day and dress you. Mike has spoke for the privilege of helping me. He’s a changed

man, Mike is. You wouldn't know him. He got such a scare that day that he's mended all his ways; and see here! he's been round among the fellows, and they've made up this purse for you! You needn't look so dazed, man. It was the least he could do after what you did for him."

Mike came in upon that, and when he saw the man, he began to cry like a baby.

"Does he know?" he whispered to Jim.

"How he looks, do you mean? Hush! Of course he doesn't."

WAS IT A DREAM?

Then they took him and put clothes on him, everything new and clean and wholesome; he never was dressed so in his life, not even on Sundays; and Mike cut his hair and shaved him, and then they set him in a chair, and caught him up and carried him to the window. And instead of bare trees and snow

as he expected to see, not realizing how long he had been ill, lo and behold there was the world looking like a picture-book. How blue the sky was! It seemed to him he'd never seen it before. And the green grass, full of flowers, that he used to call weeds; butter cups, daisies, clover-blossoms; was there ever anything equal to them?

"Well," says he, at last, "heaven can't be equal to this. I hope there's a snug little corner in it where the streets are not covered with gold, but grass grows and flowers blow, like this, and my mansion, be it ever so small, located there."

Then Mike and Jim went out, and the man's heart felt ready to burst, and he wanted to thank God for sparing him to see the beautiful world once more. But his head was weak, and all he could think of was, "Now I lay me," and so he folded his hands and said that.

Then in came Rosemary, dressed in white, with a sprig of apple-blossoms in her hair, and another in her belt, and she knelt down by his side, and smiled and said, "Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?"

And when he could not answer for amazement and bewilderment, and an awful delight that weighed him down, she rose to her feet. Gentleman Jim came softly in and placed him on his, and holding him so that he would not fall, and the next thing he knew he and Rosemary were joining hands, and the parson making them two one.

As soon as it was over Jim caught him up and ran and laid him on the bed, and opened another window, and poured some brandy into his mouth.

"Don't you go to dying of joy, old fellow," says he. "Now, now, don't be a fool; behave like a man on your wedding-day!"

I never heard of anybody's dying of sur-

prise and joy; if such a thing ever happened it would have happened then.

Before long they all went away, and Rosemary came into the room in her every-day clothes, and they was just as they was before; and he began to be afraid he had been dreaming. He looked at her wistfully, as much as to ask her, but she took no notice, and day after day went by, leaving him in a mist.

At last he says to her:

“Will you bring me a glass, and let me look at myself?”

“Indeed, and I won’t, then,” says she, laughing, and looking saucy.

Then he begged and beseeched her, and fretted till he made himself ill. You see, he thought if he looked *awful* he should know she hadn’t married him.

So she brought the glass, and when he saw his face he cried out with a bitter cry, and it fell from his hands and broke to pieces.

“Yes, it was a dream, a dream, a cruel dream!” says he.

“Look here, dear love,” says she, all in a tremble, “what is this on the third finger of my left hand?”

“A gold ring,” says he.

“And who put it there?”

“I don’t know,” says he.

“Well, *I* know, and that’s enough.” And she kissed him on the face, that hideous, red, scarred face, never handsome, but frightful now.

“Rosemary,” says he, solemn as death, “are you married to me?”

“Yes,” says she.

“And they *let* you fling yourself away on a fellow fit for nothing but to hire out as a scarecrow? Where’s Jim? I’ll knock him down! Where’s the parson? I’ll *kill him!*’

“They *let* me, did they?” says she.
“Which of them had a right to let or to

hinder? I'm my own mistress, and I know my own mind. And Jim said, 'God bless you, Rosemary,' when I told him what I was going to do, and the parson said the same, and Big Mike said, 'I never!' which was as near to saying grace before meat as *he* could get."

"It's Beauty and the Beast, Beauty and the Beast!" says he. "I'll murder everybody!"

"What a nice, pious, heavenly frame you're in!" says she. "Is this all the thanks I get? You'll murder everybody because you've won a pretty, saucy, loving little wife, who cares everything for a man's looks, and nothing for his heart? For shame, you dear, old, clumsy wretch, you've jammed the pin of my 'kerchief into my neck. I'm glad I married you when you hadn't the strength of a baby!"

And now Jim came smiling in, looking so pleased that the man hadn't the heart to upbraid him, though he did remonstrate.

"Oh, it was none of my doings," says he

‘I wanted her to wait till you had seen yourself in the glass, but she wouldn’t. Such a self-willed, generous little piece, as she is! She said she never could persuade you to marry her after you’d once seen how disfigured you were, and so she had you taken up and dressed, like a big baby as you were, when you hadn’t strength to stand, and were too bewildered to know whether you were asleep or awake. And you deserve it, old fellow, and there aint a man in the mines begrudges you your bliss.’

So, little by little, not from day to day, but from week to week, the man’s strength came back, and love flowed round him like a river.

Rosemary got the school-master’s place and earned her honest penny, and she taught her husband his a-b-abs, and set him copies, and scolded him, and laughed at him, and hugged him, and kissed him, and he minded her like a great, big school-boy; for the thought of

his looks kept him down. He never got to be much of a scholar, but he learned enough to help get his living by writing letters for the miners. Some of them had mothers, and some sisters, and many more had sweethearts to write to.

HOW GENTLEMAN JIM BECAME AN UNCLE.

Meanwhile, Jim says to me, "Joe," says he, "you're to let me have a corner in your home, you know."

Says I, "Ay, ay, Jim, if Rosemary's agreed."

Jim burst out laughing.

"Just as if I didn't know enough to speak to her first," says he.

So he came, and we both said we had a brother, nothing less, and we never had any fallings out, but lived together in great love and peace, till a little lad came and abode with us, and we named him Jim. And after that the other one was always Uncle Jim

There were times when Rosemary would whisper to me that Uncle Jim had known a sorrow sometime in his life. But after the lad came she never spoke of it. If there had been a lonely spot in his heart the child filled it up. And he'd been lavish with his wages, and almost provoked Rosemary by buying things for her that she did not need, such as flowers in the winter-time, if anybody ever heard of such waste, and to pay for their transportation besides, for, of course, none grew in our rough neighborhood. But now all was changed; he was hardly willing to spend a penny, but saved for little Jim.

For a young fellow that had never had anything to do with babies, he was the handiest; and little Jim would cry to go to him, even when his mother was holding him. And she never begrudged him the comfort he got out of the child; and I don't think an own sister could have made him happier than she did.

And women are quick to see things we men don't notice ; she always had flowers at his plate, morning, noon, and night, summer and winter ; or, if she couldn't get flowers, a sprig of evergreen or geranium. I can see the smile he always gave her when he came to the table ; it was just like a girl's.

IN THE MINE YET ONCE MORE.

Now, one day Rosemary and me were at our dinner, the child tied into his high-chair between us, and all talking and laughing together, when Mike came tearing in like a whirlwind.

“ The mine's fallen in, and Gentleman Jim is in it ! ” says he. “ And you won't forget, Joe, how he worked day and night to get you out ! ”

And with that he was gone.

And in the twinkling of an eye I was after him, and Rosemary crying, bitterly, after me.

When we got to the mine there was a great

crowd of men, women, and children, all in confusion together; the chief engineer miles away, his assistants too horror-stricken to give orders, nothing being done, and every minute worth an hour.

“Give me your hand, Joe,” says a voice at my ear. “I want to climb up where I can be seen;” and in a minute she was on an old pump that stood near.

“Men!” she said, and she said it thrice before the hubbub ceased; and then every eye was turned to her and the baby in her arms, and every ear attentive, and the chief engineer himself couldn’t have given plainer directions. I hadn’t time to marvel at her then, but afterwards I asked her how she knew, and had she ever been down in the mine. She said she never had, but that she had seen pictures and studied books; and then her father had explained what she did not understand.

Now when she had set us all to work with

a will, she turned girl again and sat down and cried with the rest.

The first thing was to get down into the mine, but the tubes and all the masonry around the shaft had been blown a hundred feet away, and it was long before they could be adjusted. Then when we got down, the lamps went out, and two men fell dead at my side.

Rosemary stopped crying when she heard this, and sent men off for an ambulance, and we tried, once more, to descend. I never thought to ever enter a mine again, but Rosemary cheered me on, and we reached the bottom safely, and felt about in the dark, for the lamps would not burn.

So we worked all night, sending up one body after another, and to each of them, not knowing which was dead or which was alive, I says, loving and tender, and ready to burst with grief, "Is this you, Jim? Is this you?"

But none made answer.

By ten next morning the ambulance was full of the dead and the dying.

Again we went down, and among huge blocks of coal we found six young lads, nearly worn out. They had not dared to move for fifteen hours, but lay huddled together, expecting to die every minute. After we got them up, and my wife had fed them, carefully, with her own hands, they revived so far as to tell us how they had escaped.

Like all the lads in the mine, they loved Gentleman Jim, they said, and kept to work near him whenever they could. When the mine fell in, they were hemmed in with him, but before the lamps went out, he discovered a crevice a lad could be forced through, but a man could not. He made them each take a little coffee from his can, spoke cheerily to them, sent his dear love to Rosemary and me, and little Jim, then he kissed them, and they clung to him and kissed him, and some said

they wouldn't go; but he said they must think of their mothers crying up yonder, and made them promise never to tell a lie, or utter a wicked word, or go a day without praying to God. That made them love him all the more, and they clung to him again, and cried aloud. But, one by one, he put them through the crevice. It did not take long to hear this story, and in no time some of us were down in the mine, shouting to him to call out to us through the crevice. But no answer came.

And the next I knew, there were my wife and the little lad.

“He'll answer the lad if he's alive!” she said.

And then she looked the child in the eye as she always did when fain to make him mind, and says she, “Call Uncle Jim!” and the little one called out, shrill and clear:

“Uncle Dim! Uncle *Dim!*”

And there came a faint, faint, faint sound in answer, and then all was still again.

We rushed about in the darkness, striking our pickaxes at random. Rosemary, trembling for the child in the bad air, went up sobbing, and the men began to whisper that nothing could be done in the darkness. And at last Mike and me toiled on alone, and almost hopeless, when somebody came down with a lamp, and it burned!

It was my wife with hot coffee, and after we had taken it, we moved about with fresh courage till, at last, we saw a crevice that might be the one Jim passed the lads through. It did not take long to enlarge it, and soon we three stepped over the barrier, and the light of the lamp fell on his beautiful face. He lay on his back, like one peacefully asleep, with something folded in the hands that lay upon his breast.

No one spoke a word, and in half an hour we had him home, we three, and we knelt round the bed and chafed his hands, and put

brandy to his lips, but he never moved, and heeded neither our tears or our cries.

Then Rosemary unclasped the hands that were not yet stiffened in death, beneath which lay a paper, on which was written in his own hand, "Jessie!"

Rosemary opened it as she opened God's book, reverently, and there we saw a shining tress of a woman's hair, and a golden ring from a baby's head, with one faded flower.

We folded them away with him in his coffin, and we knew now what had made him so unlike the rest of us; so gentle, so kindly, so unable to care for even such a girl as Rosemary. It was a pure love in his heart for wife and child gone from him; for their sake he eschewed evil and loved goodness; for their sake he gathered little children about him and held them to his breast as he should never hold mortal maid.

"He told me about it," Rosemary said,

“the day you made him come to make love to one he couldn’t love, and made me promise to bury him with the hair and the flower on his breast, under his folded hands, just as we found him. Oh, how he loved her!”

And then she fell into my arms and cried her heart out.

And I told Rosemary what he said to me that morning long ago :

“ Depend on it, there’s only one thing purifies a man more than love to a good, modest girl, be she dead or alive.”

We made a green grave for him just under the window where Rosemary sat at her work, and planted flowers on it ; we knew now why he loved to deck her with them. And every spring the apple-blossoms lighted down upon it, and reminded us of our wedding-day, and what flowers he bade her wear then.

And over and over and over again I made her tell me whose pickaxe it was that the

man half dead in the mine heard day and night, day and night, after everybody else had given him up, and at last found and saved him. Oh, Gentleman Jim!

Our wee lassie was not long in coming after this, and amid tears and smiles we named her

JESSIE.

And now good-bye, Gentleman Jim! Gentleman Jim good-bye.