ORIGINAL DEFECTIVE

ROY'S EXPERIENCE.

[Written for the RECORD-UNION by Len.]

"Gayly the troubadour touched his guitar," merrily sang Roy Somers as she drew on her gloves and looked at herself in the glass before going out.

"Quite in touch with the times—a touching instance," said her brother Lee, stretching himself lazily on the sofa.

"Say, Roy, what do you suppose he touched it with? Pity it had not been touchwood, and then that lullaby Eve sang to a preadamite would have been extinct," he said, teasingly. "Where are you off to anyway, sis?"

"Well, Lee Somers, your memory is about as good as you are. Have you forgotten that I must buy my ticket if I sail on the Queen of the Pacific?" said his sister.

"Yes; but I wanted to forget," said he, dolefully, springing up and putting his arm around her. "How can I do without you?" And then seeing tears filling her eyes he said: "My landlady will have me down to a fine point in training for a light weight. To save her substance she will have me a shadow when you return. She says in one breath, 'Have some pie, Mr. Somers? John, take away the pie.' And in the morning she asks, 'Will you have an egg?' and I feel sure she wants to add, 'Or have you had one?'"

The mimicry of manner and tone brought a smile to Roy's face. Then her brother went on:

"Roy, I will miss your company so much. You are my gauge to keep me straight. I wish we need not be separated."

"I wish so, too, dear," says Roy, tears filling her dark eyes. "But the chances are too good to lose, and your salary won't support us both. I hate to leave you and go away alone with strangers, but whatever is, is right, and we must be brave about it, and possibly our long lane will have something nice around the turn awaiting you and I."

"A stump to upset us likely," said Lee, gloomily.

"We may land on our feet, then," said Roy, cherrily, as she kissed her brother and left him, stopping at the door to say: "Lee, come and meet me at 6:30 like a dear, for it is my last evening."

Roy and Lee Somers were orphans who had lately come from the East, Lee to obtain a situation in a national bank, and Roy after some months had answered an advertisement for governess in the southern part of the State and was to leave by the steamer Queen of the Pacific the following day.

The parting came, sad, as all partings are, but Roy was a brave little woman, and though the tears glistened on her long lashes she tried to appear interested in the novel scene around her. The passenger list was filled with all nationalities. "Travel," as some one observed, "always brings out the best in everyone." Cynical ones say, "Yes, when they are seasick." But the Pacific gives no one an excuse for such nonsense, and the Captain declared, "Every passenger who missed a meal on his boat was fined $5."

He was saying this in his cheery voice as he walked around the deck getting acquainted with the people who were now under his jurisdiction. He was an elderly man, with a fine presence and was a very popular commander. He stopped at Roy's side and inquired kindly if she was traveling alone and her destination. Roy answered him in her frank, bright way. Soon the dinner gong sounded and he said, "You will be at my table, and I shall look after you, if you will permit me, and tell me your name, so I will know what to call you," he said, smiling kindly at her.

"Roy Somers," she said simply, answering him.

He grew pale, and grasping the rail he said hurriedly, "Are you a native daughter of this State?"

"Oh, no," said Roy, "I am a New Yorker. I have only been here a little while."

"You must be a relation of mine," said the Captain gravely. "That is my name, and I am from that State. What was your mother's name," he asked, "before she was married?"

"Margaret Lee," she said softly, "but she died two years ago, and my brother and I are orphans."

The Captain staggered against the rail and covered his face with his hands. Roy looked at him wonderingly. Finally he spoke.

"She was my wife," he said, "and you—you are my own daughter.

It was Roy's turn to be surprised. "You must be mistaken," she said. "My father died some years ago I am sure. I cannot remember him, it was when I was very small."

The Captain for answer drew from his pocket a photograph case, and opening it, Roy saw on one side her mother's face, and on the other side Captain Somers, taken years ago, but still bearing a strong resemblance to him.

"Why was it you never told, or wrote, or even came to my mother all these years?" she said gravely, and a little scornfully.

"There was a grave mistake, an error. It seemed impossible to correct it at the time. Now it is too late, too late," and he groaned.

"Come to my room and I will tell you, but don't scorn me, for you are all that is left me to love now."

Roy followed him, but on arriving at the door the room was found occupied by a lady passenger who had dropped in to see the Captain, a golden-haired, vivacious little widow, with a curious gleam in her large, light blue eyes; a gleam like a glint of steel, showing a strong will. She came forward gracefully, cordially greeting the Captain as an old friend. He, turning, introduced Roy as his daughter.

"Ah!" she murmured, turning and scanning Roy curiously, "I understood you had no family, Captain," smiling at him.

"Not here; they have just come from the East," he said, quietly.

"Your wife, too?" she asked rather breathlessly.

"She is dead," he said gravely, "but my son is out here, too. We have been separated a long time now, but please God we will spend the rest of our lives together."

"How pleasant for you; how happy you will be; I envy you their love and company. Life is so lonely when one is alone," said the widow, plaintively drooping her long, golden lashes over her eyes, after looking pensively sweet at the Captain. A curious smile crossed his bronzed face as he glanced keenly at the fair widow.

"I was lonely till I saw Lee and Roy," replied he; "Now they are both companionable, I will never be lonely again."

Although quite fascinated with the widow Merlin, he had the good sense not to divulge all his life to her, but she knew more than he thought, and bided her time, knowing that all things come to him who waits. She sighed very audibly, and then drawing her pretty figure up, she leaned over to Roy and said sweetly, "You and I, my dear, must be firm friends. I know I shall love you as my own daughter," and with another effective droop of the long lashes, "You are so like your father."

This effusive little speech missed its mark. The Captain was gazing lovingly at Roy, and she was reading his very soul, as if to assure herself that all he had said was true; but she thanked Mrs. Merlin politely.

At the first glance of the widow Roy had taken instinctive dislike to her. The cool, steely glitter in her eyes repelled, and yet attracted her against her will.

The dinner gong sounding, Roy went down on her father's arm, the little widow following with a decided pout on her ripe, red lips. This new-found relationship interfered with her plans.

The dinner hour passed pleasantly; Roy was happy and chatted away, and the little widow was charming every one with her wit and gracious, lavish smiles. After dinner she pressed Roy to come to her room; and Roy consented. She had not been long there when she had a curious, sleepy sensation stealing over her. A weight seemed on her brain. She tried to throw it off, and listen more attentively to Mrs. Merlin's voice, but it sounded far off, and beat like a faint pulse in her ears. Roy had never fainted in her life, but when she recovered consciousness she was in her own stateroom, and the stewardess, Nellie, was bathing her head, and Mrs. Merlin was saying, "Ah, poor dear, the heat and motion of the boat was too much for her," meanwhile passing her jeweled hands over Roy's brow, and flourishing them, it seemed, unnecessarily in the air, till even the stewardess, noticing the flashing gems, said: "Lord, Miss Merlin, how yer rings shine; every last one of them like sparkess."

Mrs. Merlin left Roy for a little while and sought the Captain, first telling him "Roy was sleeping off a bad sick headache." It was late when she left his room, but she had adroitly found out most of his history; her bright eyes and sweet, smypathetic smiles and judicious encouragment had won his confidence.

The next day Roy kept her room; her brain seemed torpid; she could not think; bewildering ideas crowded her mind, but no definite subject. Before night she had an idea that at the next stopping-place, a seaport town, she must leave the ship. Mrs. Merlin never left her. When she was tossing restlessly on her bed, those small, jeweled fingers were ever ready to smooth her hair or touch lightly her forehead.

The fog had come in and Captain Somers had to be on duty. He longed to be with Roy, but, save for a few brief moments, he could not spare the time.

The first officer of the steamer, Mr. Bell, had been introduced to Roy and had fallen desperately in love with her sweet face and pleasant manners. Bell was a fine fellow, and Captain Somers thought everything of him. He was a fine specimen of manhood—a six-footer, with light brown hair and mustache, and a clear blue eye that was not asnamed to look his friends in the face. With a keen appreciation of fun, honest and manly, he was altogether an agreeable fellow, and when on duty every inch a sailor. The words of the old song applied to him: "For his heart was brave and free; ever open, like the sea." On that first day out he had taken every opportunity to be near Roy. She had thought him very nice—in fact, it was the old story of mutual attraction. Looking over the sea he would think dreamily of the girl so near him, and how bright life would seem if he could always be with her. He would start from his revery with a sigh at the impossibility of such a thing, and the steamer's engines would echo a pouff-pouff as if very cynical over such a sudden attachment to an acquaintance on the first officer's part.

The stewardess, Nellie, ever on the alert for seasick passengers and tips, seemed to scent a love affair, and, being very much in love with the first officer, was exceedingly jealous of the few attentions Bell had paid to Roy.

Nellie was an original character—a feature of the boat. Her robes were features, too, in their cut and make; a tilt in the front breadths and a dip in the back ones gave her the appearance of the pert little bird called a wagtail, as she flitted to and fro, taking sea biscuits and hot coffee to the rooms.

One morning as they were making the first port the air was misty and cool. The first officer, off duty, was sitting on the steamer rail patiently awaiting Roy's appearance, not knowing she was sick. Nellie came flirting by; and as she passed, with malice intent, she sent a whole cup of coffee over him, pretending the while that the motion of the boat had caused the accident. Bell was too much of a gentleman to swear at a woman; but, if glances like arrows could have pierced, Nellie would have looked like a feminine St. Sebastian. She grumbled an apology, but Bell was too mad to heed it as he tore away. Nellie could be heard muttering audibly, "Sitting for all the world like a frog on a log waiting to be shoved off; gawking at her door as if his eyes were gimlets and could make a hole big enough to see that pale-faced ruin. And she's as shaller as a pie-plate and would float in mighty little water, and the yaller-heded widder woman is after the Capting. It must be in the minx." And Nellie sniffed contemptuously, and went below to row with the cabin boys to vent her feelings.

Roy felt too weak to arise, and all that morning the widow was on the quarter-deck, and the Captain was ready to declare "that she was the kindest little woman he had ever met." She would rush down the stairs every half-hour to see how the dear child was feeling, and never once failed to tell the Captain when she went.

"She was charming, sometimes witty, free and easy, but not bold,
Like an apple, ripe and mellow, not too young and not too old."

And Captain Somers was losing his head, grey as it was, and his heart, too, almost, under the charming sweetness of the Widow Merlin. Her smiles were all for him; even her sparkling eyes would soften dangerously when she met his glance and her long lashes, quickly shading them as she smiled, would have won stouter hearts than his, for be it known sailors have usually tender hearts.

That night the boat swung in to the pier at a noted watering-place. Many passengers not awaiting the train left the boat to take carriages to adjacent towns.

At the 8 o'clock breakfast Captain Somers went around for Roy. She was not there. Her satchel, her shawl strap, all were gone. He went on shore but could find no trace of her. He was nearly crazy with grief.

Mrs. Merlin came on deck buttoning her wrap, and begged to know if she could not do something. "The poor child; how sad; could she have been kidnaped," murmuring all this breathlessly, sympathetically.

Mr. Bell was told, and he, too, helped in the search, but she had disappeared as mysteriously as if the ocean had swallowed her. The Captain could not wait. He put the case in a friend's hands; one who promised to do all he could to find a trace of Roy.

But only her brother Lee had one letter from her, telling of "the newly-found father, and then at the last a hint of disgrace for them both, and of their having no right to their name, and a wild appeal for him not to speak to the Captain, and a threat if he did that she, Roy, his sister, would never see him again." No address and no postmark. So there was no clew to follow. The steamer arrived. Captain Somers sought Lee, and told him his life history, and Lee was satisfied, but very much worried over Roy's strange leaving her father so suddenly, but he added: "Roy is a plucky little soul. She will turn up some time." And Captain Somers could only wring his boy's hand, and hope and pray so; pray that nothing had befallen his newly-found idol.

In an old mining town up North the school term had commenced, and a new teacher, a young lady, had been engaged. Though thin and rather wan looking, it was not hard to recognize Roy Somers.

Life here was very different to her. She missed her brother's companionship, and the thought of her meeting with her father always brought a glow of indignation to her cheeks. When her thoughts went that way she thought quickly of Mr. Bell. He seemed in her present state of mind a counter irritant. Then she would sigh softly, "But he was exceedingly kind, and so nice—so nice."

There must have been some mental telegraphy at work, for Mr. Bell would look at the north star and sigh, "She was so pretty and so nice."

The mining town was between high hills, and the main street boasted a wooden sidewalk, but so steep was the grade some thrifty townsman had nailed cleats all up it, "to keep people from going back on theirselves or forrard on somebody else when a gitting up or down," he explained. A hotel, a meeting-house for itinerant ministers, a schoolhouse, several saloons, and dwellings for about two hundred people constituted the town. Roy had found an abiding place with an old couple who rented rooms, and "ate you or you could eat yourself" described in their vernacular the European plan on which they took boarders. The old lady was a nice, clean, thrifty soul, who waited on table, and was always asking Roy if she was sugared, and if paw had passed the Jersey to Mrs. Somers (she would always say Mrs. for Miss). By the Jersey she meant the milk, and paw would always tee-hee huskily at the joke, that was badly worn out after a week's use. Still they were very kind, and Roy was comfortable.

"Paw" was musical, too, and had the honor of being caller for numerous dances held in the town. Mrs. Scott would say after supper, "Now, paw, get out yer *gueitar* and tune up something tooney for Mrs. Somers and me to go to sleep on."

Her school interested and amused Roy. One of the pupils, a colored boy named Thomas Jefferson Carson, worshiped Roy, and when she told him to do anything, he would invariably reply: "Yes, marm, honey, anything you telled me I does, even if I cuts off this good-furnuthin' hed."

He had brought a yellow dog one day for a present, and as he answered to the name of Chromo, Roy would not change the name for another more classical but less appropriate.

Early in the spring a flock of wild geese had passed, and a young goose whose wing and leg had been broken, fell from the ranks. Tom had found it, tended it carefully, and although disabled, it could go around very comfortably. He had brought this, also, to Roy. She was extremely fond of pets, and these two. Chromo, the dog, and Troy, the goose, would follow her everywhere except to school. She grew quite attached to them. Troy was a most affectionate bird, and loved to be caressed. She would arch her glossy neck for the touch of her soft fingers, and give a soft honk of satisfaction as she settled down at her feet before the fire on the open hearth. And paw would say: "Maw, ain't them three just like the pictur' of the happy family in the Bible—Mary, John and so-forth?"

December came, and Roy was busy drilling the children for a Christmas entertainment. So, little time for thinking, and very little time for visiting, except now and then a walk across the ridge to Betty Martin's cabin. Betty was wretchedly poor. Her one child, a son, had supported her. Now, he had been in the valley hospital for some weeks with rheumatism, and "the wolf was very near her door." She hated to go to town and beg. The boys were a mischievous lot, and when they saw her on the street they would call out, "Hi! Betty Martin, tip-top, fine; couldn't get a husband to please her, please her—couldn't get a husband to please her mind!"

Betty naturally resented this, and her wrathy rejoinders only added fuel to their fun.

Roy heard of it, and gave her pupils a serious talking to about tormenting the poor old woman. Thomas Jefferson, with his usual volubility, said: "Yes, marm, and I will let drap a rocky stone on any feller's hed as I hear doing it. Fader says, anyways, Gord gets mad when yer yell at an old pusson wid one feet in de graber and de odder all buter, and he will put you on de anvil of his rawth and pound yer wid de hammer of his indignation," and Thomas J. rolled his eyes till the whites alone were visible, and as if he could see the hammer coming.

Roy could hardly keep a straight face at this speech, but the other children were serious till one boy said: "Tom Jefferson makes a good deacon preachin', but he is better at yellin' at Mrs. Martin."

Roy walked over one evening to see Betty. She found her in tears, because she had "nuthin" to send her boy for Christmas, and "nuthin" for herself. Roy would willingly have given her something, but her salary had not been paid and she had no money on hand. The Trustees said it would be all right when the miners had a "clean up." Everything depended on a "clean up," and it must be a good one that would settle all accounts for that year.

She walked home in the twilight very soberly, thinking how she could possibly help Betty. It seemed a hopeless case, and tears filled her dark eyes. If only Lee would help. But she would not write him for she knew he was with the Captain, for a cautiously-worded advertisement in the city papers caught her eye. It was from Lee, asking her "to write and get an explanation." Whenever she thought of doing so a repulsive feeling came over her, and she literally had not the strength of will to combat this. She seemed to see a pair of glittering blue eyes watching her and forbidding her to do it.

As she walked along the idea came to her to kill the wild goose, her pet Troy, and give that to Betty for her Christmas dinner. That was really all she had to give; but could she sacrifice the pet for poor old Betty?

The evening had grown cold, and a light snow was falling, whitening the ground; the wind whistled through the dark pine boughs. Roy felt dreary, lonely and heartsick for her brother. And could she now give up the one thing that seemed to love her. The tears came. She brushed them away bravely, and without giving herself time to think or say a word to the old couple, she went in the house, caught up Troy and an old apron and retreated. She had never killed anything in her whole life, and her hands shook nervously as she picked up the wood ax. The goose was contented to be within her arms, recognizing her mistress, and she stooped her head and kissed her glossy feathers, with a little sob in her throat, but the thought of old Betty's misery and want gave her courage. She laid the goose on the wood block, and with one quick blow of the ax the head rolled off. She flung the body down and rushed to the house and to her room like a whirlwind and had a good cry. Then she went outside, picked up her dead pet, wrapped her in the old apron, and by the light of the young moon went again to Betty's cabin. The old woman heard her call at the door and came quickly.

"I have brought you a Christmas dinner," she said in a shaking voice, as she handed in her pet, and never waiting for the old woman's thanks she sped away over the new-fallen snow to her home.

She was late for supper, but to Mrs. Scott's inquiry she said, briefly: "I have been to see Mrs. Martin." Chromo came up to her and sniffed suspiciously at her dress, then licked her hands, but, contrary to her usual custom, Roy never noticed him. Mrs. Scott said to her husband: "'Pears to me Mrs. Somers has something on her mind more than common."

"Wimmin mostly do," said he. "It's always somethin' more than extra they do and think; that is, accordin' to their own notions."

The evening seemed unusually long to Roy. A depressed feeling seemed in the air. Even the "gueitar" music did not sooth her. And when the old man picked up his violin, and practiced calling for an imaginary dance, and although Roy could distinguish the tune of "I want to be an angel," arranged to the words: "Honors tue the right, honors tue the left; salute your right hand pardners and all promenade," she did not even feel like smiling; not even when Mrs. Scott seized a chair and executed a waltz with elephantine agility, and beamed brightly as Scott said: "That's well dun, maw."

The next morning before 7 o'clock the bell in the meeting house was rung vigorously. As it was only rung for services and fires, this created general alarm, and every man, woman and child in the neighborhood ran quickly up the street to see what it meant. They were met on the steps by the Justice of the Peace, an important feeling man, very large as to size, very small as to brain. When the crowd asked the cause of the ringing of the bell, he cleared his voice and said: "Friends, citizens, Mrs. Betty has been foully murdered, evidently last night, and her body disposed of."

A thrill of horror went through the crowd expressed in a prolonged "Oh!" and a chorus of voices asked, "Who done it? Who done it?" "Swing 'em to a pine so he can't touch bottom nowhurs!" "He deserves it. Poor old woman; never touched anyone in her life."

"Well, yer can't prove it by me," said the J. P., "but Sammule Carson sez that the blood tracks go clean to Mrs. Scott's cabing, strait from Mrs. Betty Martin's. It looks black as darkness, and if yer will follow me we will unravel and unwind this double and twisted mistery." A murmur of assent greeted this proposal.

The Justice of the Peace and the Deputy Sheriff led the procession. Mrs. Scott saw them coming, and opened the door quickly. "This air real neighborly of you," she called out, "to give paw, Mrs. Somers and I a sirprise before the day gets aired. Come in, come in, do," she said, hospitably.

But the Justice of the Peace said solemnly, "Miss Scott, it ain't no such foolishness as that we cum about. There is blood tracks from your cabing to Miss Martin's, and she is murdered—dead."

"Dead! dead!" screamed Mrs. Scott, "Paw! Paw! do you hear that!"

Scott came forward and said: "Miss Martin! Lord bless me soul and budy, Miss Somers only seen her last night, and she was well and hearty; leastways, I never asked, but I presume likely she was."

"Mebee Mrs. Somers knows more about it than you. Call her here, please," said the J. P.

Roy came at once. Her face was pale and her eyes heavy, as if from want of sleep, and she walked as one in a dream. The loud talking and a glance at the crowd aroused her some. "Mrs. Somers, did you or did you not see Miss Betty Martin last evening. She is dead now, and has been murdered. Do you know anything of it?" The coarse, loud voice, the sudden ill news, startled Roy. She looked around helplessly a minute, then fell farward in a faint.

"She is the guilty one; Lord help us," said the Sheriff. And in a few moments Roy was picked up and carried down to the town, Mrs. Scott following weeping, and all the children and women following her example. Paw Scott hobbled along, fastening his suspenders as he went.

Roy came to as they reached the schoolhouse, but did not seem to realize her position. She kept murmuring, "Oh, I must leave to-night. I must. Killed her, killed her, left her, left her." These incoherent utterances seemed a proof of her guilt, and her appearance strengthened the theory.

The crowd followed into the schoolroom, and the preliminary trial was commenced by the Justice of the Peace, who recited the history of the blood marks "and how Carson could see nothing but emptiness in Miss Martin's cabin."

Then he called Carson on the stand. He commenced with questioning that colored person thus:

"Mr. Jabe Carson, how many children hev you?"

"Ten," modestly replied Carson.

"All the same color as you?"

"Well, sah, no. Dey ranges all de way from dusk till midnight, in shades, sah."

"Did you see the murder or the murdered?"

"No, sah; but Thomas Jefferson, my third son from the last, sah, saw de bloody tracks and traced 'em to Mr. Scott's; and, sah, an apun—a woman's apun—wrapped round de boolge in de do' post, sah."

"That will do, Mr. Carson. Call Thomas Jefferson."

The boy came, trembling like a leaf, and his eyes big with horror. He gave one despairing look at Roy, but she did not heed him.

"Well, my man, now tell the truth. What do you know?"

The boy looked up and said, in a loud voice, "Nuffin', sir."

"Nothing? You did, sir. You saw blood tracks to Scott's cabin. You said so."

"No, sah, not a bloody spot as big as a blue jay bird's ear. I know nuffin'. I seed nuffin' and I'se nuffin' to tell."

The story fell glibly from his lips, but great drops of perspiration stood on his black forehead. Coaxing, threats, curses even did not move the boy to speak another word.

Roy meanwhile was slowly recovering her wonted manner. She came as one out of a deep sleep, just realizing something was happening but ignorant of its cause. The women of the town gathered around with kindly questioning sympathy, but the Sheriff said, brusquely: "No questioning the prisoner till the Distreek Attorney comes. We have sent for him. He will be here before to-morrow. The prisoner will be put under care at the hotel till he arrives."

During all this time the Captain and Lee had not been idle in their search. Mr. Bell, the first officer, being in love, was just as anxious and more so. Knowing she intended teaching he wrote to every school trustee in the State, and finally happened to reach, by letter, the mountain town where Roy was teaching.

Highly elated at his success he obtained a month's leave of absence, and, with a party of young men, joined a hunting party, and, on the very day the District Attorney came up on the stage, Bell and his friends were passengers. Bell and the lawyer got in conversation, and he told Bell "that a trial was to be held in that town," and added, "if you want to see how law works so near heaven you'd better stop over."

"Who are the parties?" inquired Bell.

"A Miss Somers, a teacher, is held for murder of an old woman."

Bell nearly lost his balance off the seat at this announcement.

"Do you know her?" asked the lawyer, noticing Bell's agitation.

"Yes," he replied; "and there must be some mistake—some terrible mistake."

"I hope so, I am sure," said the lawyer. And neither spoke again till the town was in sight.

Mr. Bell was too taken up with distracting thoughts to talk, and the lawyer was reflecting on the case.

The stage rattled into town and drew up at the Palace, a most pretentious name for an extremely unpretentious looking house.

"Hi, Hank, yer airly," greeted the driver, as he swung off his seat and threw the reins to the hostler.

"I go by steam nowadays," he replied. "High pressure."

"How der you manage steam?" inquired another.

"The high esteem in which I'm held by the boss," said Hank, as he pulled off his gum coat, and the crowd yelled.

"Hank's cheek would split a cyclone in two if it hit him," said an envious man, as he heard a laugh at the popular driver's pun.

The Justice of the Peace was on hand to greet the lawyer and point with his finger to the window of the room upstairs where the prisoner was, and the lawyer nodded and said: "After dinner; for even death sometimes waits till a man dines."

Bell and his friends went in to register, Bell inquiring if he could see Miss Somers.

"Not just now," said the clerk, nervously. "She is sick, I believe."

"Give her my card, then," said Bell, as he produced one, and the clerk took it upstairs, between his finger and thumb, as if he was afraid it might get away.

Thomas Jefferson had left town. No one thought of detaining him, but it was not very long after the stage came in another vehicle drove up, Thomas Jefferson driving, and on the high board seat sat Mrs. Betty Martin. The crowd yelled and cheered, a few mystified, puzzled-looking people were silent, and no less than twelve went to help Betty alight. Soon as she was on the ground she said:

"Gentlemen, here I be back to tell you I ain't dead, nor murdered, and I'll thank you kindly to let out Miss Somers that committed the murder. It makes me sick on my stummick to see sich fools, and that Unjustice of the Peace is a whole team with a dog," she said scornfully.

"Well, there—there was murder all the same," said the Justice of the Peace, defending himself, or trying to. "I saw the blood myself."

"Carn't yer tell goose blood from mine, or is it so much like yourn. The critter that Miss Somers sacrificed for me dripped all the way from Scott's cabin to mine, and I took it to Jim at the hospital, so we could Christmas together. Jim said 'three of a kind make one of a pair.'" Betty laughed and then continued: "And Thomas Jefferson, if his hull hide is black he has a white heart, and don't let his imagination run sideways with him. Cum clear over to Jim's hospittle."

"Crazy to tell you was dead first, I guess," sneered the Justice of the Peace.

"I'll brake yer brack head wid a brick if yer say so," said Thomas Jefferson. "I knowed it all the time. Mrs. Somers, the honey, nebber done went and killed Mrs. Martin. I knowed Jim would know, and I went and found the coppse and drug her back," he said triumphantly.

The men cheered Thomas Jefferson, and a loud call for Miss Somers was heard. She came down the stairs and stood at the door. Betty flew toward her and kissed her hands, and the men all flocked around to ask her forgiveness for their suspicions.

"I never realized it, friends," said Roy. "I have been ill, and my head ached so, and I felt so oppressed I did not know what all the fuss was about. To-day I feel much better, and have been told the whole case. It was circumstantial evidence, but I don't blame you, as I came a stranger to your town and gave you no confidence. Still—" She paused, and here her eyes fell, for the first time, on Mr. Bell. He came forward and shook hands with her cordially, and turning to the men he said: "Miss Somers is a daughter of one of the most popular Captains on this coast. Your hasty judgment has led you all into a grave error. As Miss Somers was too sick to realize her danger, therefore she was not worried, as she might have been, over this case. She will probably forgive you, but not forget your kindness in wanting to put a rope round her neck."

"You are jealous of the rope, I think likely, Mr. Tenderfoot," piped a voice from the crowd; and Bell colored as he led Roy upstairs.

The meeting was too much for Roy. She reached the room, threw herself on the sofa and burst into tears. "You have made me think—think of everything. Why did you come?" she sobbed.

"Because I could not help it. I am sorry if I worry you," said he. "Miss Roy, please don't cry. You distress me." And he sat down on the sofa beside her and drew her head down on his shoulder. It seemed the most natural thing for him to do, yet his heart was beating like a trip hammer at his own temerity.

"I came because I love you," he continued. "Would it be very hard for you to love me—to be my wife?"

Roy raised her head and looked at him sadly.

"You—you," she said, "want me for your wife. You don't know that I have no name, no right to the one I bear."

"I know your whole history," he replied. "I heard it from your father, Captain Somers. Do you care to hear it before you give me my answer?"

She nodded assent, and he went on: "Your mother's first husband was a drunkard and a gambler. Life with him was impossible. She returned to her home in the East and left him in California. Report reached her of his death, and, after a time, she met the Captain and married him. Then came a rumor that he was living. The Captain left your mother and you two children in a quiet town in New York State, and came West with his ship to find out the truth. He was wrecked on the Island of Fernandez. A long time elapsed before he could leave there, and, finally, on reaching San Francisco he wrote and telegraphed, but received no reply. He found out, however, that the first husband had died on the day he married your mother—eight hours before the ceremony. Now tell me who told you differently, and what made you leave the steamer that night?"

Roy shuddered and hid her face, then mastering herself she said:

"Mrs. Merlin told me I must. She told me he killed my mother."

"And you believed her," said Bell, "without asking the Captain, or giving him a chance to defend himself?"

"I had to go. She made me, and—and—last week she would not let me write my own brother Lee."

"Was she here?" asked Bell, in a wondering tone.

"Only at night. And this week I could feel her hand, hear her voice in my ear. Oh, I am so afraid of her eyes. Mr. Bell, don't let her come near me, will you?" she said, pleadingly.

"Nonsense, darling," he said, fondly, putting a protecting arm around her.

"I know now—the whole thing is in a nutshell. She is a hypnotist, and hypnotized you to get you out of the way. I knew the name 'Merlin' was familiar. Why, she was very clever at it. She made your father feel as if he was a network of strings, and she held the main brace and made him do what she wanted him to. I believe she was in love with him, but it is all over now. She is dead and at rest, I hope. A cable-car sent her below hatches."

"Is she dead?" said Roy. "Oh, I wonder if it is a sin to be glad?"

"No; I'm sure not," said Bell. "You have not answered my first question yet. Would you find it hard to love me?"

"No," said Roy, softly.

Bell bent down and kissed her cheek tenderly.

"Will you be my wife?" he asked again.

"Yes, if you want a wife so easily influenced," said Roy.

"My dear, you are the woman I want; and the poet says: 'Though she bends him, she obeys him. Though she lead him, yet she follows.' And so, if you love me it will be all right, for you are the dearest little she I know, and I have followed you a long way."

"I know," said Roy greatfully, smiling at him. "So if you really care for me; are you sure, dear," she asked softly, "that you do?"

His answer was a kiss that sent a happy light into her dark eyes. So we will leave them to discuss a future till we see what the murdered woman was going to do.

The towns people had started a collection for her, given her a turkey and a basket of dainties to take back to Jim, and had hired Thomas Jefferson to drive her back the following day to spend the Christmas with Jim.

The next day Roy held a reception and had to forgive the whole town, and they presented her with eight large nuggets found in the "clean up," besides her overdue salary.

The stage took Bell and Roy to the city Christmas Eve. The Captain was off duty, and Lee received a telegram to look out for them.

The Captain met Roy with open arms, and her brother Lee was actually beside himself with joy.

Mr. Bell stood quietly by, and, after a few moments, he said:

"I want salvage. Captain, for bringing in this unmanned yacht. I will be owner and Captain if you will let me have her—for I've 'cast my lead in the sea of love full twenty fathoms deep'—the derelict will amply repay me."

"God bless you—yes," said Captain Somers, shaking his hand; "but not yet—not quite yet till I know her myself."

But Bell was happy, and so was Roy, at even this reply.

Lee rather grumbled at what he called Roy's hurry to leave him and their father. "I never thought you would marry such a quiet fellow as George Bell, anyhow."

"Oh," said Roy, "he is not quiet when we are together. He don't need to talk much. He is not like you. He lets me talk some."

"Oh, is that so?" laughed Lee. "But if he is as quiet as he was last night you might put a wax-covered phonographic cylinder in him, then he'd go like a buzz-saw."

Lee probably was not old enough, or experienced enough, to know that silence is one of the symptoms of Cupid's epidemic.

The holidays brought happiness to Roy and also to her father and brother, and Mr. Bell was as radiant as a lover should be. The clouds of an unusual experience had almost dimmed the lifetime of each one, but they could reflect that

The world is a great dance in which we find
The good and bad have various parts assigned.
But when they've ended—the great masquerade—
One goes to glory, the other to a shade.

THE MODEL AMERICAN GIRL.

A practical, plain young girl;
Not-afraid-of-the-rain young girl;
A poetical posy,
A ruddy and rosy.
A helper-of-self young girl.

At-home-in-her-place young girl;
A never-will-lace young girl;
A toiler serene,
A life that is clean,
A princess-of-peace young girl.

A wear-her-own-hair young girl.
A free-from-a-stare young girl;
A waste-not-an-hour,
No pale parlor flower,
A picture-of-health young girl.

Plenty room in her shoes—this girl;
A free-from-the-blues—this girl;
Not a bang on her brow,
Not a fraud will allow,
She's just what she seems—this girl.

Not a reader-of-trash young girl;
Not a cheap-jewel-flash young girl;
Not a sipper of rum,
Not a chewer of gum—
Remarkably sensible girl.

At-ten-in-her-bed young girl;
An active, aspiring young girl;
An early riser,
A dandy despiser,
We honor this lovable girl.

A lover-of-prose young girl;
Not a turn-up-the-nose young girl;
Not given to splutter,
Not "utterly utter,"
A matter-of-fact young girl.

A rightly ambitious young girl;
Red-lips-so-delicious young girl;
A clear, sparkling eye
That says, "I will try"—
A sure-to-succeed young girl.

An honestly courting young girl;
A never-seen-flirting young girl;
A quiet, demure,
A modest and pure—
A fit-for-a-wife young girl.

A sought-everywhere young girl;
A future-most-fair young girl;
An ever discreet,
We too seldom meet—
This queen-of-the-queens young girl.

—Virgil A. Pinkley.

WHAT LOVE IS.

Love is the center and circumference,
The cause and aim of all things; 'tis the key
To joy and sorrow, and the recompense
For all the ills that have been or may be.

Love is as bitter as the dregs of sin,
As sweet as clover-honey in its cell,
Love is the password whereby souls get in
To heaven—the gate that leads sometimes to hell.

Love is the crown that glorifies, the curse
That brands and burdens. It is life and death,
It is the great law of the universe,
And nothing can exist without its breath.

Love is the impulse which directs the world
And all things know it and obey its power
Man in the maelstrom of his passions whirled;
The bee that takes the pollen to the flower.

The earth, uplifting her bare, pulsing breast
To fervent kisses of the amorous sun—
Each but obeys creative Love's behest,
Which everywhere instinctively is done.

Love is the only thing that pays for birth,
Or makes death welcome. Oh, dear God above
This beautiful, but sad, perplexing earth,
Pity the hearts that know—or know not—Love.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

SUBSTITUTIONS of well-known advertised articles seem to be the order of the day. We deem it only justice to our patrons to warn our readers against this form of piracy. When you want an article ask your merchant or druggist for it and don't accept a substitute.

The Six New States.

The two Dakotas became States on November 2, 1889, and Montana on November 8th, and Washington on November 11th. Idaho was admitted into this rank on July 3, 1890, and Wyoming eight days later, or July 11th.

DOCTORS? Pshaw! Take Beecham's Pills.

A prompt return of your money, if you get neither benefit nor cure. Risky terms for the doctor, but safe and sure for the patient. Everything to gain, nothing to lose. There's just one medicine of its class that's sold on these conditions—just one that *could* be—Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. It's a *peculiar* way to sell it—but it's a *peculiar* medicine. It's the *guaranteed* remedy for all Blood, Skin and Scalp Diseases, from a common blotch or eruption to the worst Scrofula. It cleanses, purifies and enriches the blood, and cures Salt-rheum, Tetter, Eczema, Erysipelas, and all manner of blood-taints, from whatever cause. It costs you nothing if it doesn't help you. The only question is, whether you want to be helped.

"Golden Medical Discovery" is the *cheapest* blood-purifier sold, through druggists, because you only pay for *the good* you get. Can you ask more?

The "Discovery" acts equally well *all the year* round. Made by the World's Dispensary Medical Association, at Buffalo, N. Y.

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The latest and best invention for Pumping, Spraying Fruit Trees, Running All Kinds of Machinery, Electric Light Plants, etc.

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SAN FRANCISCO. CAL

DR. MARSTON'S Treatment for the cure of Lost Manhood, Impotence, Lack of Development, Kidney and Bladder Diseases, Emissions, Varicocele, etc., without stomach medicines. No failures or relapses. Cures assured. SEALED TREATISE FREE. MARSTON CO., 19 Park Place, New York.

LOST TIME.

Newton, Ill.

From 1863 to 1885—about 22 years—I suffered with rheumatism of the hip. I was cured by the use of ST. JACOBS OIL. T. C. DODD.

"ALL RIGHT! ST. JACOBS OIL DID IT."

Backache, Kidney Pains.

Place a Woods' Plaster on the back over the kidneys.

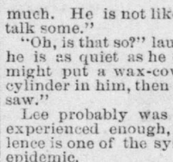
A MAN WITH A PAIN

MAY cover it with a plaster that will not let the pain get away if it's an ordinary plaster, because common plasters are not absorbed.

But Woods' Penetrating Plaster is different.

It dissolves the matter that clogs the pores, penetrates (goes through) the skin and stops pain.

Woods' Plaster is worth taking trouble to get. Druggists sell them.



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MANHOOD RESTORED! "Nerve Seeds," the wonderful remedy is sold with a written guarantee to cure all nervous diseases, such as Weak Memory, Loss of Brain Power, Headache, Wakefulness, Lost Manhood, Nightly Emissions, Nervousness, Lassitude, all drains and loss of power of the Generative Organs in either sex caused by over exertion, youthful errors, or excessive use of tobacco, opium or stimulants which soon lead to Infirmity, Consumption and Insanity. Put up convenient to carry in vest pocket. $1 per package by mail; 6 for $5. With every $5 order we give a written guarantee to cure or refund the money. Circular free. Address Nerve Seed Co., Chicago,