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FROST TIME.

Upon the meadows, far and wide,
A silvery frozen mantle lay;
And on the upland mountain side,
Frost glistened in the dawn of day.
Winter was nigh.

The former paused in early light,
His rugged face was marked by care;
Amid his locks were lines of white,
For Nature, too, had frosted there—
Winter was nigh.
—Chas. K. Lush, in *The Current*.

THE LIGHT THAT IS FELT.

A tender child of summers three,
Seeking her little bed at night,
Paused on the dark stair timidly.
"Oh, Mother! Take my hand," said she,
"And then the dark will all be light."

We older children grope our way
From dark behind to dark before;
And only when our hands we lay,
Dear Lord, in Thine, the night is day
And there is darkness nevermore.

Reach downward to the sunless days
Wherein our guides are blind as we,
And faith is small and hope delays;
Take Thou the hands of prayer we raise,
And let us feel the light of Thee!
—John J. Whittier, in *Christmas St. Nicholas*.

HELEN'S QUEST.

Captain Langton looked across at the proud, handsome face of Helen Stanley. His blue eyes were full of hearty sympathy when he turned them again in her direction.

"Poor old Helen! It is hard lives." These two had known each other well in the "better days" when Helen had been surrounded by the luxuries that it seemed natural to suppose would always belong to the only child of the wealthy Robert Stanley.

"I had such a hunt for you," observed the Captain. "Were you surprised to see me?"

"Not very. I saw by the paper that your ship had come in."

The tones of her voice told nothing of the eager search she was in the habit of making respecting the vessel.

"I wish you had saved me this trouble by letting me know where you were to be found," said the Captain. "What a pity you are so proud, Helen! I always told you it spoiled you."

"I have so much to be proud of, haven't I?" with an ironical sweep of her hand around the dingy room.

Captain Langton was silent. He felt annoyed. He had come so full of pity for her, and she seemed so determined to resist his advances.

"You are changed, Helen."

"How?"

"I cannot define how; but you are awfully changed. What has become of all the sparkle and dash?"

"I have had it all rubbed out of me, I suppose."

"Poor Helen!" Then, as if impressed with the force of a sudden conviction—"I cannot think how it is that you have not married."

She looked up quickly. "Men don't marry penniless governesses."

"You are clever," he continued, with brotherly frankness, "and most men would call you handsome."

"Which means that you don't?"

"I never did, you know. I don't admire dark women."

"You are candid, at all events."

"We two never did waste much sentiment upon each other," said he.

"But I have it," he cried, his face full of the energy and mischief that Helen remembered so well. "Look here, Helen! What is the use of your muddling on like this? Suppose we two lay our heads together and go to work systematically in search of a husband for you?"

She looked at him for a moment in bewildered surprise, then burst into laughter.

"I am not joking. There will really be no difficulty about it if you will obey my directions. You must act the part of widow—you used to be a good hand at acting—and before we reach Melbourne I wager you anything you like the thing will be done."

"What nonsense!" but her eyes from some unknown cause were kindling

into fire, and her face seemed to be catching some of the life and energy of his.

"It isn't nonsense! Ah, I could put you up to no end of wrinkles, Helen. Go on board as my sister, you see."

"Not wishing yourself back, I hope, Helen?"

Captain Langton asked the question a little anxiously; there was something so spiritless in his companion's attitude, as she watched the long, dim line of land growing more vague and shadowy as the fresh breeze filled the sails of the Edinbro' Castle.

"No. It is too late to wish for anything."

"What is it you have to say to me?" she asked.

"We must arrange our plan of action. Let me give you an idea of the material you will have to work upon. I find there are no fewer than three fellows sailing with us any of whom would answer our purpose."

"And where am I to bestow my attentions?" she asked, ironically.

"Oh, that will be a matter for you to decide."

"But you will give me the benefit of your advice?"

"Of course. There's a young fellow named Collins going out to try sheep-farming. He is of good family and has first-rate prospects."

"And the others?"

"Well, there's Doctor Duff—been home for a visit—has one of the best practices in Melbourne and a capital position; and there is old David McBrier, one of the biggest men in the colony—a justice of the peace and I don't know what besides."

"Well?"

"Suppose you try Duff?"

"How shall I begin?" and she could not help smiling at the earnest, business-like tone of his voice and manner.

"Well, let me see. There is the melancholy, sentimental widow—but I don't think that would suit your style; there is the sprightly, dashing widow, and there is the gentle, helpless widow—that is the most effective if you could manage it. Ask advice about every mortal thing, from how to make profitable investments to the arrangement of your headgear. Affect helplessness systematically, and throw into your conversation a few pathetic remarks concerning the 'dear departed.'"

"I will tell no untruths," she said shortly.

Captain Langton's suggestions were religiously carried out, and for three days "Mrs. Stanley" remained a prisoner in her cabin. At the end of that time she appeared in the saloon just as the passengers had settled down to breakfast. Her face was exceedingly pale and there were dark rings round her eyes, which wore a softened melancholy expression, infinitely touching, "young Collins" thought. Indeed, so altered was her whole appearance that Langton, rising to meet her, whispered in a tone so concerned as to bring the truant blood to her cheeks:

"Have you been really ill, Helen?"

"No," raising eyes, in which he thought he saw traces of tears.

"What has been the matter then?"

"Nothing, except that I've been following your advice, and it wasn't very lively."

"We'll soon put that all right," cheerfully; "that is your place, Helen, allow me to introduce you to your neighbor. My sister, Mrs. Stanley—Dr. Duff."

And she found herself seated between that gentleman and Captain Langton, while the "long-headed Scot" whose every faculty seemed at present to be concentrated upon his making a satisfactory meal, and the embryo shepherd, who employed all his time in gazing, sat opposite. It was evident that the heart of this hapless youth was all unprepared for the attack, for he surrendered it weakly to her and then.

And now a new order of things set in on board the Edinbro' Castle. Those who had already begun to feel the effects of ennui experienced a delightful sensation of curiosity the moment their eyes fell upon Mrs. Stanley's handsome face and graceful figure. Without effort, from the hour she took her place in their midst till the day she bade farewell to the most of them forever, she became the center of attraction of that small floating world. With consummate art she ingratiated herself with

the matrons, stole the good will of the maidens, and took by storm the hearts of the men.

Captain Langton marveled exceedingly. Could this be "acting?" Involuntarily he found himself wondering with as much interest as the rest.

It was not long before it became apparent to all that the infatuation of "young Collins" was reaching a climax and equally evident presently, when the youth sulked by himself in a corner and Helen sought the protection of the female element, that some adverse current was interfering with love's course.

"What's up now, Helen?" asked Captain Langton.

"What do you mean?"

"What is the matter with Collins?"

"How should I know?"

The saloon never echoed now the music of their mingled voices, and when Helen strolled on deck in the twilight it was no longer poor Collins who loitered beside her, but Doctor Duff.

Captain Langton murmured in his heart, "Humph! So that is her game is it?" and fell into a fit of musing, out of which condition he roused himself suddenly, exclaiming sotto voce, "Well, what does it matter to me?"

So the days glided by; wind and weather had been kind to them, and if luck still favored them, they hoped before another sun had set to sight Port St. Phillip.

Helen Stanley was the only one for whom the prospect had no pleasure. Sinking into the solitary seat her diminutive chamber boasted, she passed in mental review the events of the past few months. She became aware at length that the sounds of laughter and the noisy voices had sunk into silence. She rose and threw herself, dressed as she was, into her berth. She thought she was too utterly wretched to sleep; but she was mistaken, for it was out of a deep and dreamless slumber that she was suddenly awoke by a rude shock. With wildly beating heart she raised herself to listen. Her ears were filled with the sounds of crashing timber, the cries and oaths of men, and the noise of hurrying footsteps. Quickly she hastened on deck. Men were running to and fro, ordering, swearing and shouting at each other. One of the masts lay across the deck, and through the misty night she could just discern the black hull of a large steamer.

And now the passengers appeared hastily on the scene.

"We have been run into!"

"They are lowering the boats! We haven't a moment to spare!" and Helen felt herself being hurried along to where the ship's crew were straining every nerve to launch the boats.

"Women and children first!" called out Captain Langton.

One boat had been safely dispatched when two of the crew pushed roughly to the front.

"Stand back there!" cried Captain Langton.

"We ain't goin' to die like rats in a trap. Come on, Bill!"

"I'll shoot the first man who attempts to leave the ship!" shouted the Captain.

"Every man for himself and God for us all!" muttered the fellow, seizing the rope.

There was the report of a pistol, a cry of rage, the flash of a knife, and a woman's scream as Helen dashed between the uplifted blade and Langton.

It was with very different feelings from those of the preceding night that the crew of the ill-fated Edinbro' Castle approached Melbourne and beheld from the deck that had wrought the mischief of the new land. One solitary source of comfort and congratulation they possessed in common—no lives had been lost.

The passengers were most of them below, when Helen Stanley hurried upon deck. Looking up her eyes encountered those of Captain Langton.

"At last, Helen!" starting forward and catching both her hands in his, "Come in here; I have so much to say to you."

"And I to you."

"My own dear Helen," he began, in ecstasy.

"Stop!" she cried excitedly.

"For Heaven's sake be quiet, Helen, and listen to me! Last night—"

"Last night I was mad—mad with fright. What I did or what I said

meant nothing—nothing at all—and you take advantage and think—oh—!" She broke down, covering her face with her hands.

"Be reasonable, Helen—do be reasonable, dear," entreated Langton gently.

"Leave me! Go! I hate you!" she sobbed impetuously.

"And I love you and will not go till you confess that you love me too," he replied, seating himself determinedly.

"I will never say so—never!" emphatically.

Captain Langton sat listening to her vehement sobs till they grew less and less violent, and became at length helpless, long drawn sighs; then he drew nearer and put an arm around the listless drooping figure.

"Helen, darling," softly, "I love you and have always loved you, I think—don't move, dear—I swear I have. Do you remember the night we walked the deck together and talked of Collins? I had nearly told you then. After that Duff seemed to be carrying all before him and I thought it was his money and position you were aiming at, and tried hard to persuade myself that you were nothing to me."

"How could you think so vilely of me?" sighed Helen, with feminine inconsistency.

"It is all right now," said the Captain, cheerily. "We'll have no more misunderstandings, for you do love me, don't you, Helen?"

And Helen could only whisper:

"Yes."

"So I have won my wager, after all," observed Captain Langton, triumphantly, smiling down up her later on, when there had been mutual admissions and explanations. "And you are not sorry, are you, dear, that you came on the voyage in quest of a husband?"

Sympathy Uncalled For.

Maybe a man feels happy and proud and flattered and envied and blessed among men when he sees a pretty girl trying to raise a window of a railway car and jumps up and gets ahead of the other boys, and says, "allow me?" oh! so courteously, and she says, "Oh! if you please; I would be so glad," and the other male passengers turn green with envy, and he leans over on the back of the seat and tackles the window in a knowing way with one hand, if peradventure he may toss it airily with a simple turn of the wrist; but it kind of holds on, and he takes hold with both hands, but it sort of doesn't go to any alarming extent, and he pounds it with his fist, but it only seems to settle "a leetle closer into place," and then he comes around and she gets out of the seat to give him a fair chance, and he grapples that window and bows up his back and tugs and pulls, and sweats and grunts, and strains, and his hat falls off, and his suspender buttons fetch loose, and his vest-buckle parts, and his face gets red, and his feet slip, and people laugh, and an irreverent young man in a remote seat grunts and groans every time he lifts, and cries out: "Now then, altogether!" as if in mockery, and he bursts his collar-button, and the pretty young lady, vexed at being made so conspicuous, says in her iciest manner: "Oh! never mind, thank you, it doesn't make any difference," and calmly goes and sits down in another seat, and that wearied man gathers himself together and reads a book upside down—oh! doesn't he feel just good. Maybe, but don't be fool enough to extend any of your sympathy. He doesn't need it.—*Burlington Hawkeye*.

Perseverance.

The other day down in the country, after a marriage ceremony had been performed, the bridegroom and several friends walked down to the spring.

"Is he outen' hearin'?" asked the bride.

"Yes," some one replied.

"Wall, thank the Lord, it's over. I've been er trying to hem that feller up for more than ten years, an' have jest succeeded. I wanter say to you wimmen folks: Don't give up. Recollect whut the bible says: 'If you don't git whut you air aiter at fust, keep peggin' away till you git thar.'—*Arkansaw Traveler*.

The laws of Alabama are enacted to encourage agriculture and suppress the bearing of arms, exempting the implements of agriculture on one hand and taxing fire-arms heavily.—*Mobile Register*.