On the Forward Deck

BY DAVID A. PIATT

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They sat on the forward deck of a big Ohio river steamboat. He was a distinguished-looking man of the world. She was a pretty little thing in the full bloom of womanhood, with fluffy golden hair, deep blue eyes and a pearl-and-ruby combination of teeth and lips. The deck about them was deserted save for a tall, bronzed, bearded man, who sat several yards away, smoking absently and gazing thoughtfully out across the water. The man was watching her with his heart in his eyes. Presently he spoke.

"Millie," he said, wistfully, "are you going to keep me waiting much longer?"

The eyes she turned upon him were filled with compassion.

"I know you have been good and kind and patient with me, Ned," she said. "But I cannot say what you would like—just yet."

"I have everything that you could desire, and I could make you as happy as the day is long if only you would let me try, dear," he said, pleadingly. "Tell me, what is it—what mystery stands between us and happiness? I think you owe me that much."

She was silent for a time.

"I suppose I should tell you," she said at last, with a shadow of pain on her face. "It is right that you should know. It is a long story, but I could condense it into three words: There is another!"

The man's face went white, but when he answered his voice was firm.

"Go on," he said, simply.

"It was a long time ago," she began, reminiscently. "He was a college man, home on vacation. I was a school girl, and full of romance. We met at a lawn fete. Our meeting was quite conventional, but he was so big and strong and manly that I grew to —to care for him as much as he said he cared for me, and I promised to be his wife some day. We were together a great deal, and when he went away something seemed to have passed out of my life—you understand?"

The man nodded, silently.

"We corresponded regularly, and

"Go on," he said, simply.

built up a grand mansion of hope for a happy future together. But, you understand all that, too. We were to be married when he had graduated and been admitted into partnership with his father. Then, one day, there came a letter—the last I ever received from him. I have it yet." Her voice broke a little. "His father, he said, had met with disastrous financial reverses, and would have to begin all over again. It would be hard, too—he was so old. But he was brave. He said he would never give me up. He would win for himself a

She obeyed, and then——

name and a place in the world that I would be proud to share with him. He begged me to be true to him, and vowed to come for me some day, if not for years. I wrote to him at once —wrote just such a letter as only the heart of an impulsive, romantic girl of eighteen can dictate. In the course of time it came back unclaimed. I wrote again and again, but with the same result. No one can know the torture I endured. For a time I was hurt and grieved at his failure to write, when he must have known what I suffered. Then I learned, quite by accident, that his father, heartbroken and lacking courage to face the world a beggar, had taken his own life, and I understood. He was too proud, too sensitive to seek me out again until he had redeemed himself from the disgrace of his father's iguominious death. I learned, too, that he had gone West to win his fortune in the gold fields. There was little else for him to do. His father's death had left him dependent upon his own exertions, but, happily, with no one dependent upon him. Three years ago I met you, and—I tried to forget. But I could not. We can never be more to each other than the dearest of friends until I know that he is—is dead—or—false!"

When she turned her eyes to the water again the man saw that a tear gleamed upon her cheek.

A potent silence fell between them. The dusk fell softly and the peace of the Sabbath night descended like a benediction. They could hear, with softened distinctness, the merry voices and happy laughter of children enjoying the cool of the waterside, the air was so dry and clear—and hear the barking of faithful watchdogs in dooryards near and far. Bright lights started into twinkling life on either shore. The incense from fields of growing grain floated to them across the water. The chug, chug of the paddle wheels, the insistent tinkle of the pilot bell and the asthmatic wheeze from the exhaust pipes were about the only sounds on board that rose above the drowsy voice murmur as the boat throbbed on.

The woman was weeping softly now. The man leaned toward her.

"Millie," he said, pityingly, "give up this—this memory. If he is not dead, he is—he wishes to forget you." His voice caught some of the subtle spell of the night. "Come, little one, let me lead you into happiness?"

She controlled herself with an effort.

"I cannot—I cannot!" she sobbed. "Leave me, please. I cannot bear to listen to you—now!"

He regarded her compassionately for a moment, then walked away with bowed head.

The big, bearded man came to her out of the shadows near the port rail, and laid his hand tenderly upon her bowed head.

"Millie," he said, and his voice was vibrant with happiness, "look up."

Like a startled, wondering child she obeyed, and then——

The other man, returning, saw and heard, and turned away with the gray shadow of despair in his eyes.

An Infallible Timepiece.

When Joseph Jefferson was in New York last he devoted the most of his outdoor time to shopping for fishing tackle. One day he chanced to be in Herald square just as the Herald clock struck the hour.

"That's a pretty good timepiece," said Mr. Jefferson, "but I know a better. Age. It is a clock that never stops and never loses a second. The most skilled jeweler can make no watch that is so accurate as one's age.

"Nothing can exceed our early ambitions to escape from youth to manhood and appear older than we are except our subsequent anxiety to appear younger than we are. The first is natural, for Hope is before us, but the second is a weakness, for none can hope to reach that from which he is fleeing. If we could put back the great clock of time there would be an intelligent motive, but the timepiece of old Chronos never stops."—New York Herald.

The Century's Call.

Deep unto deep, it calleth,
  The century's dominant cry;
Over the desert and over the plain,
Over the peak and mountain chain,
  Under the thrilling sky.
The voice of mighty peoples,
  And the tocsin of war and woe,
From East to West 'tis sounding,
  And a man must rise and go.

He must leave the hearth of his mother,
  He must ride like the knights of old;
To tourney and tilt, with a good right hand,
That cleaves to the hilt for the love of the land,
  And here's to the soldier bold!
Who is pure of thought and action,
  Who is ready to serve his age,
Who cares for the thing he doeth,
  And not for the soldier's wage.

Deep unto deep, it calleth,
  The century's urgent cry,
Splendid and strong is the century's song
Valor and love to the battle throng,
  And it may not pass you by.
From East to West 'tis sounding,
  The call for the brave and true,
O lads with pulses bounding,
  That cry is meant for you.

Wherever the need is greatest,
  Wherever the ill is worst,
Over the city's thousands thick,
Over the deserts of stone and brick,
  Over the lands accurst.
The cry for help is pealing,
  Bitter with want and woe,
O brother, if you hear it,
  A man must arise and go.

—Margaret E. Sangster, in Youth's Companion.

An Incident of the Commune.

An old lady who was in Paris during the Commune related the following incident apropos of some talk about the siege of Port Arthur:

"One night there was a fight in front of the house in which I lived and a man was killed. The body was not removed and lay where it fell. At daybreak the next morning I looked out to see if the body was still there. Just then a man came down the street and stopped by the body. He carefully searched the pockets of the dead man, but did not find a single cent. This so angered him that he gave the dead man a vigorous kick. Then he walked away and had gone only a short distance when he found a paving stone, which he picked up, and returning to the dead body he raised the stone and with it smashed the head of the corpse. Oh, yes; war is hell."

THE REAL THING IN HORNETS.

Take Possession of an Ohio Saloon and Make Things Lively.

Hornets, real, live ones with stingers, took possession of the barroom in the Empire hotel to-day, says a dispatch from Akron, Ohio, although snow covered the ground on the outside.

A few days ago the proprietor purchased a hornet's nest from a farmer and hung it over the bar. The entrance hole in the nest was closed by a piece of paper being pasted over it. It was much admired, and everything went well until to-day.

The heat in the room brought the nest to life. The hornets thought it was summer again, and, being hungry, began to get busy. They burst the paper closing the exit and in a few minutes the room was full of hornets.

The bartender ran out, covered with the insects, and a number of other persons followed suit, yelling like Indians. The hornets held possession until a big policeman, covered with netting and heavily gloved, carried out the nest. The bartender was taken to the hospital with both eyes closed.

Cantiniere.

The French government has abolished the cantinieres, who were a feature of every regiment. They were women who supplied the soldiers with brandy. The cantiniere here shown is one of the second empire.

World's Largest Store.

The honor of possessing the greatest store in the world belongs to Russia.

It is situated in Moscow, covers twenty acres and embraces a thousand different establishments, each of which has its own proprietor. The place is, in fact, a sort of bazaar, consisting not only of shops on the ground floor, but also on three floors above it.

The merchandise offered for sale is described as of fabulous value—it amounts, in fact, to millions of dollars.

The prices of the wares are not marked. The Russians are much given to bargaining for and cheapening the goods they buy, and in buying at the bazaar most of them "negotiate" with the tradesman much in the Oriental fashion.

Pig a Wonder for Fatness.

J. Andrew Hanley of Damariscotta, Me., butchered a pig five months old that tipped the scales at 300 pounds strong. When two months old he was judged to weigh thirty pounds, and for the next ninety days he gained almost three pounds per day.