

IT ISN'T SAFE TO BE.

It isn't safe to walk the streets For autos, trucks, and cars. And in the country lanes one meets The bull outside the barn; There's earthquakes swallowing the land And tidal waves at sea, There's certain death on every hand— It isn't safe to be.

Not knowing what will happen next We ask ourselves again The question that of old perplexed The melancholy Dane. But if the fatal germ may wait Within a kiss, you see, We simply must asseverate It isn't safe to be.

So let us eat and let us drink In spite of quake and squall; It won't do any good to think How soon the blow may fall. This is a vastly better plan, Whether on land or sea, Get every bit of fun you can Until you cease to be.

—Clarice W. Riley, in the New York Press.

Elvira, and Her Love Letters.

By Claude Askew.

Elvira lived in a sleepy little New England village, and was its recognized beauty. Not that the quiet, staid New Englanders would ever have admitted openly their pride in Elvira—that would have been impossible to their grim tenets of faith; but they took the same pleasure in the girl as they did over the bright flowers in their gardens, glorious calla lilies, light wavy prince's feather, sweet-scented honeysuckle, flowering candytuft. Elvira was very pretty, so slight that by the side of more heavily built girls she looked like a wild flower and quite as ethereal; blue eyed and with a cloud of fair flaxen hair that would fall in soft drifts round the sweet oval face. She lived with an old unmarried aunt in a house close to the road, a thick hedge of evergreens surrounding it and fencing off the garden. The house belonged to the aunt, also a small sum in the bank, on the interest of which they lived in fair comfort.

Elvira wanted to earn her own living. Once she had persuaded Aunt Hardy, the village dressmaker, to take her as an apprentice, but old Clarissa Lane had descended with flaming cheeks on the busy little woman.

"I just guess, Mis' Hardy," she cried, "that we ain't so hard put to it that my own brother's child goes out to work. It was real kind of you to take her—but—Elvira, you just put on your bonnet and come home this minute."

So Elvira rose from the table where she was sitting sewing with another girl—and as she shook away the scraps and snips of silk from her gown she shook away her own freedom and independence. From henceforth she would belong utterly to this erect, gray-haired old woman—she would go back to the white house—and live there, an imprisoned princess.

Old Clarissa worked herself to the bone for Elvira. She hated to see the girl doing rough work and soiling her delicate pretty fingers. In the same way Elvira was debarred from working in the garden.

"Don't you go for to brown your face like them wild Mellor girls, Elvira," was Clarissa's constant cry if she saw her niece digging in the garden—"go right in at once; I guess the sun won't hurt me."

To see Clarissa at her happiest moment was to see her on Sundays walking up the aisle of the meeting house behind her niece, conscious of the admiration given involuntarily to pretty Elvira by even the strictest members present, watching every fold of the white dress and flutter of the ribbons, her eyes dwelling lovingly on the pale yellow hair and slender, graceful form. Clarissa was exalted by her great and passionate love out of a chill winter spinsterhood into warm and rich maturity.

She loved to dress Elvira in soft girlish muslins and to tie her straw hat with fine silk ribbons. For herself a rusty black alpaca and an old faded bonnet, but Elvira must always go fresh and dainty. The girl rebelled, with flushing, sensitive face and weak tears—she hated to go fine while old Clarissa wore her ugly cottons to rags, but her protest was unheeded by the strong, masterful old woman.

Elvira was allowed no sweetheart. Other girls could walk home from meeting with their beaux, and sit with them at winter time in a lamp lit parlor, but Clarissa trudged alongside Elvira like some old duenna, and the young men of the village could only gaze at the delicate flowerlike girl, who was not for them and their kind, gaze with a half reluctant admiration, also a dim perception that there was a material too fine.

But the lover came—came in the person of one Gilman Holmes, a young New York pressman, who was spending his brief holiday in search of "copy." Chance or fate took him to Elvira's village. He came to study types, he remained to study—love.

An alert, bright eyed man of thirty, precise in dress, slim in figure, Gilman spoke with a sharp crispness pleasant in contrast to the slow New England voices. Compared with the village young men he was as the racer to the willing carthorse, brimming over with nervous vitality, a creature of high pressure.

He had taken rooms with Deacon Elvin, but the good man saw little of his boarder, for Gilman took the village by storm, and every door was open to

him. He went about with his notebook, his keen eye ever ready to seize a likely picture, his fingers itching to transfer to paper the homely speech of his rustic entertainers, journalist first—Gilman Holmes afterward.

Clarissa, not to be outdone in hospitality, wrote a prim, formal note inviting the young man to tea, an invitation which he accepted with alacrity for rumor had already reached him of Elvira and her beauty.

It was with peculiar care that Clarissa laid out her tea on that occasion. Generally the meals were sparing, for her income was a very small one, but this time her tea was lavish. There was excellent cup cake for one thing, wafer slices of bread and butter, two glass dishes filled with preserves and a plate of red currants from the garden. Clarissa put out her mother's wedding china, pale, apple green teacups and plates, and then, to crown all, she picked a great bunch of flowers and placed them in a vase in the center of the table.

Elvira looked on with large, wide open eyes. Her lips framed a question.

"I'm not a-going to have a poor setout when a stranger's coming to tea," said Clarissa defiantly. "I'd just as lief as not have the fellow coming, though."

So Gilman came, and from the moment the white robed, blushing Elvira fluttered into the room he forgot New York, journalism and fame, lost his ready wit, and realized that he who knew so much was quite unlearned.

He walked up and down the warm sunlit garden with Elvira, bending his dark head caressingly over her, wondering dimly how so fair and sweet a creature chanced to live. Elvira lost her first awe of him, and laughed and talked slowly, pointing out the calla lilies, picking a great nosegay of pink and white sweet peas.

Time passed quickly in the garden. It was dusk before Gilman left.

Elvira smiled in her sleep that night, flushing rosy; but old Clarissa's pillow was wet with salt tears, for she saw what was coming—and it was what she desired, so it was really foolish of her to weep.

Elvira and Gilman got engaged. It was a brief, pretty courtship. Clarissa and the neighbors looked on, watching the delicate drama that was being played, marvelling a little how smooth was love's course.

Elvira neither wondered nor mused. To her it was only natural and right that Gilman Holmes should have come into her life; she knew now that she had all along been waiting for him, and keeping her pure heart like a fragrant shrine. As for Gilman, the mystery of it all was upon him still, the great marvel how this delicate, dreamy Elvira, this flowerlike maiden could care for a sharp, harsh voiced young man, from New York. This journalist, once over-confident, and full of fierce assurance, was now afraid of himself and ashamed to look into the dusty corners of his soul. He longed for spotlessly clean hands—because of Elvira's whiteness.

A day in early autumn was fixed for the wedding, but first Gilman must return to New York and gain a further leave of absence.

The lovers parted, and it was a bad hour for both.

Elvira lost all her timid maidenly diffidence. She clung to Gilman, with tender self-surrender, putting up her face for his kisses, praying him pathetically to return soon. As if Gilman needed such prayers! He who was longing—and half beside himself with the longing—to marry this pretty Puritan and take her to make home brighter in New York.

Clarissa came to the gate finally and unlatched it for the lover. She looked gaunt and gray; her hair was all blown out by the wind, her thin cotton dress showed the meagre lines of her old body. She was not prepossessing.

Gilman looked at her a little resentfully. He hated to surrender his weeping Elvira to this harsh looking old woman.

"Take care of her—be good to her," he said, breaking from the girl's soft clutch, and pressing her gently back against Clarissa. "Oh, Mis' Lane, be careful of Elvira for me."

Clarissa laughed low and grimly to herself. "Be careful of Elvira!" To the woman to whom the girl was all in all

the words were almost cruel and certainly a mockery.

That night Elvira had red eyes and ate no more at supper than would have tempted a little bird. She sat on the step at the back of the house when the moon came out, and Clarissa watched, saw her shoulders shaking—she was crying; she had been crying all the afternoon—but very softly and quietly.

The old woman sat down in the rocking chair and hung her head. She longed—God knows how bitterly!—to strain the delicate form to her and rest the fair head on her breast and kiss away the tears. Some sensitive, inborn delicacy constrained her not to approach Elvira. This was the girl's own trouble, and not to be shared with or understood by another. Clarissa realized that she knew nothing of love and its joys and sorrows; the faint prudery of the unmarried woman made her fearful of approaching too closely into what Fate had veiled from her.

Next morning she took Elvira to Anne Hardy to buy the wedding silk. As they walked down the village street the girl prattled gaily. Now that the first bitterness of the parting was over, she could wait with serenity for her lover's return and be happy in these preparations for her marriage, but the whole morning's work was a sharp, yet exquisite pain to Clarissa. She was going to lose her child, and yet she was decking her against the day.

She shopped lavishly, and with a certain fierce vehemence. Elvira should come out bride in the richest of pearl gray silks and her bonnet, with its costly white feather, should long be remembered. What did the price matter? When the child had gone to New York she could pinch and save. A lonely old woman needs little to support life.

Anne Hardy, her mouth full of pins, draped the silk around the graceful young figure.

"Sakes, Mis' Lane," she murmured in frank admiration, "I just guess there will never be such a bride or dress seen herea gain. It's a real pleasure to make for Elvira—that it is."

Elvira smiled and blushed at the warm flattery, but old Clarissa sat unmoved. Were not such words her child's due?

Time passed and Gilman never wrote. Twice a day Elvira made pilgrimages to the postoffice, and she came back after her last visit with such a white, strained face that Clarissa felt sick at heart.

"I guess there'll be a letter tomorrow," she said furtively, not daring to lose her own wrath and anxiety.

"Yes, tomorrow," answered Elvira, obediently, but Clarissa heard her weeping during the night, and her heart burned hot against Gilman.

Days slipped into weeks and it grew close to the wedding day, but still no letter from Gilman.

The wedding dress came home. Little Anne carried it herself, but Elvira turned a dead white as the dressmaker entered, and Clarissa harshly crushed the rustling silk into her wardrobe, and so with the dainty muslins and the wedding bonnet.

Elvira used to pause now and hesitate when friends brought her presents, the faintest and most pathetic pause, but Clarissa would bustle and admire in a way unusual to her, and bring out cake and ginger wine for the donor.

Then the wedding day came. Elvira rose up quietly in the morning, her little face very white and resolute. She even tried to make some poor show of eating breakfast—then she went up to her own room and stayed there.

A neighbor calls, entering cautiously, and as if it was a house of mourning. "You'll not keep Elvira," she pronounced in a slow dismal voice. "You'll see, Mis' Lane, she'll go off in a decline—just as her mother did—if she don't hear news of Gilman."

Clarissa had a cousin in New York who now, after the lapse of many years, heard from her relative. Clarissa wrote to ask her to do a seemingly simple commission—yet one over which the woman shook her head and wondered.

A few days later Clarissa marched up from the postoffice carrying a letter addressed to Elvira. It was written in a stiff, uneven hand.

"Seems as if this might be from Gilman, Elvira," announced the aunt as she entered the house. Elvira had been sitting listlessly on the rocking chair, but she sprang to her feet and ran to Clarissa with flaming cheeks.

She read the letter through, hurriedly, first of all, then with knit brows.

"It's all right, Aunt Clarissa," she exclaimed, after a moment's pause. "Gilman mailed all his letters wrong and they've just been returned to him. He wrote postponing our wedding; business kept him—but he'll be here soon," her voice was not very elated.

"Don't you like your letter? Ain't it all right?" asked Clarissa, after a moment's pause.

The girl flushed—then tears started into her eyes.

"Oh, it's not like Gilman a bit," she sighed, impatiently; it's a real, cold, horrid letter, Aunt Clarissa, but I

guess it's all right, though." She brushed tears away.

Clarissa's jaw fell hopelessly, and a look of pain flickered over her face. Then she colored a warm, burning red.

Next day brought Elvira another letter. The girl was looking better. Hope, the beautifier, had already done his work with her, and she was a mourning bride no longer. She read her letter with little gurgles of laughter and smiles coming and going.

"It's just as sweet a letter as ever could be," she declared, with emphasis. "But, my sakes, it's just like some one writing to a little, tiny girl! He says 'he's coming,' she added, with a sigh, 'but he gives no date and no time. Aunt Clarissa, when is he coming?'"

"Soon—I guess soon," answered the other in a low, nervous voice; then, as Elvira began reading her letter again, and breaking once more into low murmurs of happiness, the old woman's face relaxed somewhat, and her eyes grew less strained.

Weeks passed. Letters never failed to come, but they gave no definite promise of Gilman's return. Still, Elvira lived on those letters; they were meat and drink to her, and she slept with the last one under her pillow.

Clarissa grew very nervous and haggard. She avoided going to meeting, and lost her speech of rigid determination. Her eyes went down before her neighbors, and she had the mien of one oppressed by guilt. Her manner to Elvira became almost doting; it seemed as if she could not do enough for the girl, and her tenderness was wonderful.

Her niece did not take much heed of her. Aunt Clarissa was Aunt Clarissa, kind, devoted, self-sacrificing, but Elvira's whole heart centered round her love letters, those letters so formal and cold, which had now worked up into letters full of passion and fire, containing phrasings so tender that the girl's heart leaped under the words. She read and reread these burning sentences a hundred times a day, wondering more and more how her lover, miles away, seemed to understand so completely her daily round of life.

One day two letters came for Elvira, each bearing the New York postmark. Clarissa had fetched them from the postoffice, and her hands trembled piteously as she handed them up.

"Elvira," she gasped, "he's written, written at last!"

Elvira hardly heeded her aunt. She gently pushed aside the envelope held out to her, taking up instead the letter directed in the handwriting she now knew so well. She broke the seal and read the letter slowly, laughing and smiling as she did so—evidently well pleased with it. All this while the old woman watched her, her face looking livid and her lips twitching ominously. At last Elvira remembered the other letter. She took it up and opened it carelessly, but at the first line she turned pale and started.

Old Clarissa started, too; then her lips moved as if in prayer. What she had longed for and dreaded had come at last.

"Aunt Clarissa," Elvira's voice was the mere shadow of a voice, so weak and wonder filled it was; "this letter is from Gilman."

The other bowed her head; she could not speak.

"He was run over the day he arrived in New York and badly injured. He has only just recovered enough to understand things—but he is coming here next week."

Clarissa's dry lips framed the words "Thank God."

"Aunt Clarissa," there was a note in Elvira's voice that her aunt had never heard before, "who wrote these letters—that did not come from Gilman?" The girl rose like a young judge—or the spirit of justice.

Clarissa also rose to her feet. She stood up, her old face working, all her ugly curves showing, plain in her plain gown, a picture of withered womanhood.

"I wrote those letters," she said, firmly. "I—yes, Elvira, I, a godly woman, wrote those lies, sinning against God and man. But for your sake, my dear," the voice softened, "for your sake—and as God is my judge—I would do the same again."

Elvira gazed at her aunt, then with a great gasp of awe she saw for one supreme second into all the full glory of the other's loveliest soul. She gave a sudden cry and ran to old Clarissa, flinging her arms around her wildly—"Oh, Aunt Clarissa, Aunt Clarissa," she sobbed; "dear, dear, Aunt Clarissa."

The woman folded her into warm embrace, and for a few moments they clung together and kissed. So came the ripeness of Clarissa's harvest of love.—Lady's Pictorial.

Cookery Scholarships.

Next month the London County Council will award eighteen free scholarships in cookery for domestic servants to be held at the National Training School of Cookery. Candidates must not be less than 17 or more than 25 years of age on July 31, 1907. The course will extend over a period of 12 weeks and those who win scholarships will be provided with dinner and tea on the days on which they attend school. Each will also receive a grant of £5 toward travelling and other expenses.—Daily Graphic.

THE STONY-HEARTED SWISS.

(Swiss landlords object to having Russian guests in their hotels.)

icy rain was slowly falling On a lonely Alpine path Where a Nihilist was prowling Loudly for a room and bath By a hotel doorway pretty, Whence the landlord might be heard Sweetly caroling this ditty: With a yodel on each word:

"No, Petrovitch, you can't unpack your bombs at this hotel. Our bellboys don't bring dynamite each time guests ring a bell. We feel for Russia's woes Sincerely, goodness knows, But, Petrovitch, you can't unpack your bombs at this hotel."

icy rain was falling slowly On the bombs that Russian had, Tending thus to put them wholly And completely to the bad. But each time he cried: "They're soak' ing!" Let me wrap them in a towel." All the country was provoking Sang—with yodels on each vowel:

"No, Petrovitch, you can't unpack your bombs at that hotel. You might mistake a tourist for a howling Russian swell. Your country's mournful wreck Is awful, swan to heck, But, Petrovitch, you can't unpack your bombs at that hotel." —Thomas R. Ybarra, in the New York Times.



"Bridge, I am going out tonight." "And leave the house alone?"—Life.

Mrs. Homebody (engaging cook)—Very well, then; you may come tomorrow at ten! Cook: Oid sooner come at eight, mum. Thin it Oi don't loike the place Oi can have in time for the matinee.—Puck.

"Slowboy is about discouraged. He's been waiting ten years for a promotion and hasn't got it yet." "That's the trouble. If he'd worked more and waited less he'd have had it long ago." —Detroit Free Press.

Mother (who has been asked to suggest a game for a rainy afternoon)—Why don't you pretend you are me? And George can be daddy. Then you might play at housekeeping. Daughter—But, mother, we've quarrelled once already!—Punch.

Applicant—I see you advertised for a janitor, sir. I am a married man—no children; neat, honest, patient and tactful! Agent—I regret to say you would hardly do as a janitor, my friend, but wait. Couldn't I get you as a tenant?—Judge.

American Cousin—I reckon the souls of some of our millionaires have a pretty hard problem to solve when they can't decide whether to go into business and live up to their father's reputations, or go into society, and live them down.—Puck.

"When I leave you tonight," said Mr. Staylate, "I hope you—" "Gracious! are you coming again tonight?" exclaimed Miss Patience Gonne. Then for the first time the proximity of the dawn dawned on him and he lit out.—Philadelphia Press.

Lady—Do you clean houses? The Vacuum Cleaner Man—Yes, ma'am. We have a four cylinder machine, and well take away every atom of dirt. "All right; my husband has just been spending his vacation on a second-hand auto, and I wish you'd start on him at once."—Life.

"A great deal depends on the manner in which a man selects his friends," said the wise politician. "Yes," answered Senator Sorghum; "but the things you attack are what keep the public interested. The most important point is the selection of enemies."—Washington Star.

First Murderer (tearing his hair)—I shall go mad! Second Murderer—What's the matter, old man? "Matter! Matter enough. I've no show of being acquitted unless I'm proved insane, and here the prosecution has gone and retained all the alienists whose testimony will have any weight." "Well, if that's so, what's the use of going mad?"—Puck.

Darwin Was to Blame.

An elderly man in Shrewsbury, England, was showing a couple of friends about the town. They tarried before the place where the statue of Shrewsbury's great son, Darwin, sits and broods. "That," said the Shrewsbury man, pointing with a bulging umbrella, "is Darwin." "Yes," answered one of the visitors after a rather unfriendly scrutiny, "that was him as said we all come from monkeys." "He did," went on the Shrewsbury man, "and I'll tell you another thing. Not long ago the steeple of one of our churches fell down. There are many as says it is a judgment upon the town for putting up a statue to 'im."—Rochester Herald.

Face That Bored to Death.

"That new auto rides in an auto mobile." "Yes; he couldn't get to Oblique fast enough in any other vehicle." Atlanta Constitution.