DON'T MIND IT.

Don't mind trouble, for the world rolls on—
Rollin' an' rollin'!
The day dawns bright, but the light's soon gone—
Rollin' an' rollin'!

Don't mind trouble, for the time soon flies—
Flyin' an' flyin'!
The storms soon pass from round blue skies—
Flyin' an' flyin'!

Don't mind trouble, for a life ain't long—
Goin' an' goin'!
Just swap your sorrow for a glad, sweet song—
Goin' an' goin'!
—[Atlanta Constitution.

The Silver Siren.

(BY FRANCIS LEEDS.)

I was walking along Regent street, London, in the autumn of '92, with an eye indifferent to the charm of that gay precinct, when suddenly in spite of my preoccupation I noticed, in a brilliant shop window, a sign bearing this announcement, "Latest Novelty—Silver Sirens."

It was in direct consequence of the delusive glamor of a Silver Siren that my spirits were, at present, so depressed, that my luck seemed to be a traitor and my whole destiny thwarted. Hence as I read this sign I paused. Being an engineer by profession, I had gone to Nevada some months previously, to superintend a pumping process in some silver mines, and while there my interest in the science of hydraulics had been superseded, owing to the babblings of those sirens of the West who whispered their alluring deliriums into my ear. At their behest I laid aside my professional work and launched into the vortex of speculation, with disastrous results to myself, my family and my friends. The briefest mention of the fluctuating hope and annihilating despair of that undertaking must suffice. My telegrams to my "governor" were daily paradoxes, the buoyant optimism of one day defying the predestined pessimism of the next.

Defeated, disgusted, heavily in debt, my father seriously handicapped by mortgages and forced sales on his property, I had come to England to see what could be done, and it was on the morning of my first meeting with my creditors in the city, as I was returning from my club, that I noticed the sign of "silver sirens" in the shop windows. I glanced with grim curiosity upon that confused mass of burning gems and burnished gold in the jeweler's window, and as I did so a shopman advanced to the light of the door attending a young girl. He held in his hand a silver whistle which I soon found was the very object of my interest. I overheard the man say, with subservient blandness:

"These are whistles, my lady, made on the principle of our foghorn sirens or semaphores. They are the latest novelty and are much used by the yachting clubs this season at Cowes."

He placed the thing to his lips and breathed upon it. Although the act was quite gently done, a low, croning noise, which rose and fell with a plaintiff gradation filled the air with such a penetrative quality that several people on the sidewalk paused and glanced into the shop. I determined under one of those sudden impulses which seem, sometimes, to make of us irresponsible factors in our own destinies, to buy the bauble, and a few minutes later it was dangling from my watch chain. In a short time, however, under the pressure of grave cares, I had forgotten all about it.

I soon began to seek some means of modifying the distressing condition to which my absence of caution and reliance on chance had brought me. Fortunately for me a company in London whose confidence in my capacity as an engineer had not been shaken by my lack of judgment in the West engaged me to conduct a large engineering scheme in some salt mines in Russia in which much capital had been invested.

I need not say I was glad of the chance this offered me. I was glad also to get away from London, where I found a subtle condemnation of my acts in even the glances of my friends. I was very sore and sensitive, and when a man who had always been one of my favorite friends and relatives called out to me from the pier at Calais, in one of those attempts at pleasantry which so often contain a sting: "I say! Francis, don't go and buy a salt mine in Russia!" I felt that the time had come for me to cancel such speeches by some new line of action.

I was confident about my mission. Several engineers had failed, it is true, but the many fail, the one succeeds. These mines could not be worked owing to the percolation of water into them. To check this flow of water and redirect its channel was my task.

I hurried across the continent, and had made good time. Haste was imperative for winter was closing upon the heels of autumn and the deep snows would delay my progress. All went well with me as I crossed those lonely versts, over which there seems ever to dwell a brooding melancholy. My kibitka, or hooded sledge, was very comfortable. It was drawn by sturdy Finn ponies, which were exchanged at the different stations along the route.

When about two days from the end of my journey my yamschik, or driver, fell seriously ill. When these strong and intrepid sons of toil yield to the influence of disease the onslaught is usually sudden and violent, like a wind which fells, with crashing fury, the oak which has long swayed to the storm's rough lashing. I wrapped the poor fellow in my rugs and placed him in the easiest part of the kibitka. As the lights of Woleki twinkled in the distance, while I guided the Finn ponies as dexterously as I could over the roads, I knew from Varika's terrible delirium and fever that the poor yamschik was making his last life struggle.

My Russian vocabulary was put to the test, as I pulled the ponies up at the door of the station-house. I managed to explain, however, that the sick man was the yamschik and that I was the passenger. As the stable boys held the lights high, to enable them to draw poor Varika from the sledge I saw that all was nearly over.

"O' hi!" moaned the host, as he showed me into the contracted and smoky sitting-room, "O' hi, the little father's prayers are more necessary now for Varika than are the doctor's drugs. The poor lad is called to drive the white horse into the presence of St. Peter to-night and give him his reckoning." To my great annoyance, I found that I could not procure another yamschik at that station to drive me on that night. I made bold promises of a vedro of vodka, if one could be found, but no one seemed willing to take Varika's place. The mystery of death had for the moment checked the interests of life in those superstitious hearts.

While I was employing useless arguments with a knot of men in the room, there was a noise of horse's feet and the shrill cries which announced the arrival of a sleigh. A fat Russian maid was in the act of placing a steaming samorer before me when, with much stamping of feet outside, the door of the room opened and a man of very noble bearing came in. He saluted me with dignity and then withdrew, immediately returning with a young girl upon his arm. Her face seemed to make a sudden summer spring into the wintry place.

My experience had evidently been told them, for, as the girl glanced at me, I heard her say: "The poor yamschik! Dear father, how awful is sudden death!"

With a little hesitation the man advanced to me and said in good English: "I beg pardon. Can this be, by chance, Mr. Francis Adams, the engineer of the salt mines in ——?" Then promptly followed a pleasant solution of my problem. Count Bariatinski, the owner of these salt mines, was himself on the way thither, hoping to reach the place by the time of my arrival, and this crossing of our paths had hastened our meeting.

The count, of course, introduced me to his daughter, the Countess Stephanie, explaining that she had long wished for an experience of crossing Russia in a sleigh, and added that, as the cold had increased very much, he feared he had lent a too fond ear to her entreaties, in consenting to bring her. An hour later found me very much at my ease in the luxurious sleigh of the Count Bariatinski, the young Countess Stephanie's face glowing with loveliness just opposite me.

As I watched her,—watched that startled look, with which the unknown mysteries of a winter night on the plains of Russia spoke to her, I tried to analyze the quality of her beauty. The word "elusive" constantly came to me, as expressive of the character of her charm. Beauty seemed to animate the face from the depths of her blue-grey eyes, and then when I had fixed the home of her attraction there, some witching movement of the mouth—a smile which chased from their hiding in the soft contour of her cheeks and lips a rippling gambol of dimples, would change my mind, and then I would give to the mouth the definite note of beauty which struck the first harmony of the whole.

Thus I watched her, while the old count twaddled on about mints and mines, and the liveried yamschik and footmen of his excellency pierced the night, every now and then, with their strident Russian cries of endearment to the fleet horses that carried us swiftly over the snow. Presently the old count began to nod, but the young countess kept an alert eye upon the passing interests of the night.

The road grew more irregular now, and was broken up in great ukhabs or deep furrows, causing us to sway, every now and then, like a sloop at sea. It was during these tortuous movements that I began to watch for the radiating smile of the Countess Stephanie, while the Count, rudely jostled from his dozing dreams, would scold his yamschik in a volley of expressive Russian. When this attack became violent, the Countess Stephanie would slip her hand from her sable muff, and caress her father's arm, till the vituperative anger of the Count would cease, or merge into some qualifying correction. It was sweet to see the silent influence of the girl, and one felt that she took the part of that poor servant, whose cringing phrases showed how cruel his training had been, enabling him to accept with patience reprimands which he did not deserve.

The snow had ceased. It had only lasted long enough to veil the trees and decorate with a soft, cloud-like delicacy the panorama of the night. The intense stillness recalled to one dreams of a primeval age. The very heart-beats of Pan seemed suspended. The sounds which we associate with man's inheritance of the earth seemed a strange suggestion in that hour. So far have we become removed from the actual reserve of nature that the natural seemed supernatural, and the hush which pervaded all was like a palpable incantation breated upon the earth by some mighty spirit of the air, which held the night subservient to her will.

We had entered a thick pine forest. The trees, those voiceless children of the woods, were held in an icy calm. If architecture be indeed frozen music, the brush seemed put in abstract form before us. The branches and vertical lines made cathedral and vista aisles under their moulding of ice and snow. Sometimes whole processions of cowled monks seemed to be lining our route, or spectral arms, stretched outward from the gloom beckoned us to the murky mystery of the dark forest. Those soft thuds of snow which fell when the top of our kibitka touched the edge of some protruding pine branch, fell behind us like ghostly steps trying to escape their thraldom to the midnight by following our lead to life and light.

But no weird influences of the night seemed to approach the consciousness of the young countess. As I looked at her that song of Heine's seemed written for her, "Thou art like a lovely flower!" All but peace and purity seemed separated from her.

The count moved uneasily in his seat. The sledge made a sudden lunge, as it heaved through one of the deep transverse ruts, and our near horse (we were driving three abreast) gave an ugly tug at the traces, as he swayed outward from his place. The count, now fully awake, cried out: "Ivan Ivanovitch, are you forgetting whom you are driving?"

"No, gracious excellency," the man replied, "but his lordship's horse, Petrovitch, is restive."

Almost at the instant, the horse gave a second pull, which was so violent that the whole kibitka was jerked aslant.

"Something is out of gear with the harness!" called the count, "let one of the grooms see to it."

The two footmen were half asleep, and I could hear Ivan muttering to them, while he was bringing the sledge to a less rapid motion.

Suddenly there was a cry, piercing and petulent, like a peevish child's—a cry which made my blood curdle in my veins. I glanced at the Countess Stephanie and saw her face blanch, as she shrank into the corner of the sledge. The count sprang to his feet and the awful word was spoken: "Wolves!"

In an instant, the horses having heard that cry, felt some subtle sense of fright, which hastened their speed. The count unlocked his pistol case. I noticed that he was calm, and that he fitted the key into the lock with accuracy.

"Are you armed?" he asked me. I drew my pistol from my pocket, as he spoke.

"I have never heard of the brutes coming so far south at this season," he said. Then he turned to the countess. "Be very calm, my daughter," he said, "your father will defend you."

"I'm not afraid," was the proud reply, though her voice was thick and her lips trembled. The count turned quickly, and cut the straps which held the closed opening at the back of the sleigh.

"Crouch down, my child," he said to the Countess Stephanie; "crouch down in the bottom of the sledge and cover your head with this rug. May heaven shield thee!"

All the concentrated love of paternity was in his voice.

"Itsik, you—are your pistols ready?" he said next.

"Ready, excellency," was the reply.

The count and I peered into the darkness through the opening of the sleigh. Behind us there appeared a movement like a rolling cloud, resembling dust at night.

"They are upon us!" the count exclaimed, and fired. As I imitated him I heard the countess give a little stifled scream. On came that moving column, and the cries of angry, ravenous mouths filled the air with a deep and ominous rumble.

How they were gaining on us! Ivan Ivanovitch was yelling to his horses, and they, brave creatures, strained every nerve and muscle to obey his commands. A sudden awful thought passed through me. What if there were something really wrong with the harness! How long could any mal-adjustment stand the strain?

Somewhere from the recesses of memory came the recollection of a story I had once read, of hunting wolves in a battue in Russia, and that it was stated there that unaccustomed and peculiar sounds had a terrifying effect upon these beasts—even that a clattering of pans could accomplish what pistols failed to do. Again I fired into the approaching mass of yelping horror. As my hand resumed its position after doing so, it touched the cold surface of the little silver siren which hung upon my watch chain.

Instantly it flashed upon me to try its effect upon this pack of hungry wolves. I put it to my lips, and with all the strength of my lungs forced that weird crescendo note into the icy night. A writhing serpent of the air was that python of sound, which struck its piercing sting into the frightened hearts of those wild beasts.

The young countess fainted dead away. The horses gained electric fear from what they thought was some new terror in pursuit, but, best of all—miracle as it has ever seemed—that pack of angry wolves, with a bellowing howl of fear, tumbled pell-mell into the black depths of the forest and disappeared like a column of smoke whose force is spent!

As they did so, Ivan Ivanovitch cried out that the lights of Riga were in sight, and we were saved!

A year later I was again in Regent street, but not alone nor defeated nor depressed, for Stephanie was there!

I was showing her the shop where I had bought the silver siren!

"Now take me, dearest, to the place where you bought my wedding ring," she said. "Did you not say that that was near Bond street?"

"Yes, near Bond, Stephanie," I began, but this has nothing to do with the story of the silver siren, which has now been told.

Balloon and Bicycle.

There floated over the hamlet of Villeneuve-la-Garenne, France, the other afternoon, in mid-air, a balloon. Suddenly it appeared to burst and fall rapidly toward the earth. Fearing that a disaster had occurred, the terrified folk ran to the spot at which they expected the aerostat would reach the ground, when, to their amazement, they saw a parachute detach itself from the car and descend gently. Immediately the earth was touched one of the passengers jumped upon a small bicycle which he had brought with him from the aerial regions, and he disappeared in the direction of Levallois, in the neighborhood of Paris, as rapidly as the machine could carry him. The explanation of this singular occurrence is simple. The balloon was the Caliban, and the ascent was made from Levallois by Captain Capazza and M. Harvieu, the latter being the cyclist. Their object was to test the possibility of a balloon being used for carrying war dispatches, and they assumed that an enemy succeeded in destroying it. Yet they proved that by means of the parachute they would be able to make good their escape and to outdistance their pursuers with the aid of the portable bicycle.—[London Telegraph.

The first dictionary was printed in Gutenberg in 1460