

## HEART-HUNGRY.

Some hearts go hungering through the world

And never find the love they seek;  
Some lips with pride or scorn are curled  
To hide the pain they may not speak.  
The eyes may flash, the mouth may smile,  
The voice in giddiest mirth may thrill,  
And yet beneath them all the while  
The hungry heart is pining still.

They meet their doom and walk their way,  
With steady lips and steadfast eyes,  
Welcome their fate, nor weep nor pray—  
While others, not so sadly wise,  
Are chased with phantoms evermore,  
And fleeting seemings of delight,  
Fair to the view, but at the core  
Holding but bitter dust and blight.

I see them gaze from wistful eyes,  
I mark their sign on fading cheeks,  
I hear them breathe in smothered sighs,  
And note the grief that never speaks;  
For them no might redresses wrong,  
No eye with pity is impaled;  
Oh, mis-construed and suffering long,  
Oh, hearts that hunger through the world!

For you does life's dull desert hold  
No fountain shade, no date grove fair,  
Nor gush of waters clear and cold,  
But sandy reaches wide and bare,  
The foot may fail, the soul may faint,  
And weigh to earth the weary frame,  
Yet still ye make no weak complaint,  
And speak no word of grief or blame.

Oh, eager eyes which gaze afar!  
Oh, arms which clasp the empty air!  
Not all unmarked your sorrows are,  
Not all unpitied your despair.  
Smile, patient lips so proudly dumb—  
When life's frail tent at last is furled,  
Your glorious recompense shall come,  
Oh, hearts that hunger through the world.

## MY NIGHT IN A "BOX."

"And must you really go away, and remain all night in that nasty old box of yours, and leave your Little Rosebud, as you call her, all alone here, to imagine all sorts of horrid things happening to her poor old boy? Couldn't you stay at home just for this one night?"

"Couldn't possibly do it, my love," said I, struggling into my greatcoat, and possessing myself at the same time of my big driving gloves, which my little wife was absently trying to fit on her own little hands.

"Not if I very much wished it, Willie? Do you know I felt so strange and lonely last night, when you were away, that I could hardly make up my mind to go to bed at all; and to-night I can scarcely bear the thought that you should be so long absent. You know what a foolish little thing I am."

Her arm quietly stole round me, and she looked up to my face a wistful, anxious look, while a tear stood glistening in the corners of sweet blue eyes.

"Why, you wee goose," said I, kissing away the bright token of her earnestness, "what has put such absurd thoughts into that wise noddle of yours? Are you afraid that the fairies will waylay me, and spirit me away to their elfin-land? If they do, I shall tell them that I have left a fairy at home, and not even the blandishments of the queen herself shall tempt me into their uncanny country. But seriously, Maggie, there is nothing to be alarmed about, I shall be home by seven o'clock at the latest; but since you are so eerie, I will call at father's as I pass and send up my brother Bob to keep you company and stay in the house all night. Will that content you, little woman?"

"No, don't do that; it would look foolish, and Bob would only laugh at me when he came. He does not understand me. I think no one does understand me—except you, dear Wil."

"Thank you, Mag; I think I do understand you. But here comes the gig; so good-bye, and don't fret for the short time I am away. I shall be back long before you are done dreaming." So saying, I mounted the gig, and drove rapidly along the frozen road. But my wife lingered by the porch, following me with her eyes; and so long as the house was in sight, I could, on looking back, see her white dress shimmering ghost-like in the light which streamed through the open door.

At the time of which I write, I was telegraph superintendent on the Wilton and Longbank line of railway. One of the clerks, who was on night-duty, had been taken suddenly ill, and being unable to find a suitable substitute, I had taken his work myself until such time as he should recover. I had only been married a few months and was by no means reconciled to the necessity of leaving my wife and home to pass the night in that "nasty old box," as Mag called it—and she was perfectly correct in her

description. But I knew that it was a necessity, and I knew likewise that no grumbling of mine could mend the matter.

A drive of about eight miles brought me to my post. There was nothing very extraordinary in the duty to which I had been called away, nor was it any new experience to me; but on that night my mind was filled with indefinable fears, for which I tried in vain to account. The night was clear and windless, and away in the northwestern sky the aurora borealis was flitting to and fro in a thousand strange fantastic shapes. As I watched the shifting and quivering gleams, now shooting in rapid succession from one luminous center, and anon spreading and rolling wave after wave across the starry heavens, I began to think of the disastrous omens of war, plague, and famine, which in olden times men drew from such sights. Somewhat of the same emotion I felt in my own mind, and reason as I would, I felt it impossible to shake off the growing sense of uneasiness and gloom which had taken possession of me. On entering the telegraph station, the clerk whom I had come to relieve was ready to depart.

"You won't have much to do to-night, sir," said he. "The instruments are quite unworkable; no signals have been received for the last three hours. Good night."

When I was left alone, I found that it was as he had said. The electric currents, which are developed in the atmosphere during most meteorological changes, had rendered the wires quite useless; and although the needles swayed ceaselessly backwards and forwards, they made no sign which the wisdom of man could interpret. Seeing that my office was likely to be a sinecure, I drew my chair to the stove, and taking down a book which I saw on a shelf, I tried to interest myself in the story. The volume which I had discovered was "Jane Eyre;" and although, since that time I have read, with tears and laughter, it and the other works which came from the same true and loving pen, yet on that night the spell of her who is so powerful to awaken our interest and enlist our sympathy—who has given us Black Rochester and chronicled with no unkindly hand the vagaries of the three eccentric curates and won our hearts for Professor Emmanuel Carl Paul—had no power to quiet my wild wandering thoughts. While I was turning listlessly over the leaves, the stillness was startled by the sharp quick clanging of the electric bell, the usual signal to prepare to read off a message. With a shiver of a arm, I turned quickly to the instrument, but soon perceived that the bell had been rung by no earthly power, for the vibrating needles made no intelligible sign, and I knew that the sound had been produced by a current of atmospheric electricity acting upon the wires.

Smiling at the nervousness which caused me to start at so ordinary an occurrence, I turned from my desk, and sat down by the fire. But smile as I would, and reason as I might, I felt that I was fast succumbing to vague foundationless fears. Thinking that the atmosphere of the room, which I felt close and hot, might have something to do with my peculiar condition of mind, I flung open the door, and stepped outside, in the hope that the cool air might scare away the phantoms of my brain. As I crossed the threshold, the midnight express crashed past with a speed and force which shook every timber in the building, and uttering a loud shriek disappeared in the tunnel at the end of the steep gradient, on the summit of which my station was placed. When it was gone, there was stillness, stillness broken—if I can call it broken—only by the peculiar sighing of the air passing across the wires, which is heard even in the calmest of nights. I stood and listened to the strange, melancholy, Aeolian-harp-like sound, now so faint as to be almost inaudible, and anon swelling into a wild low wailing. I looked up and saw Orion and the Pleiades, and thought how often on nights, not long ago, when I had watched for Maggie in the wood, I had gazed up through the tall somber pines and watched their trembling fires. From that my mind reverted to the earnestness with which my wife had asked me to remain at home that night, and the unusual pensiveness of her manner when she bade me good-bye. What could be the meaning of it all? As a general rule, I had a most profound disbelief in omens, presentiments, and all sorts of superstition, but in spite of it, I felt that I would have given a good deal, at that time, to be transported just for one moment to my home, to see whether all was well there. I might have called up my assist-

ant, who lodged in a farm-house not far distant, and gone home; but as I could give no good reason for going away, I resolved to stay where I was, and get through the night as best I could. "If this goes on much longer," said I to myself as I turned inside again, and poked up the coals with rather more noise and vigor than was absolutely necessary—"if this goes on much longer, I shall have to consult a doctor, that's plain." For I knew that the causeless apprehensions which I experienced were often only the symptoms of an unsound state of bodily health. I filled my pipe and lit it, but the weed had lost its usual tranquilizing power. As the wreaths curled slowly upwards, I saw my wife's face looking at me tearfully as when I had left her. Again the bell rang sharply; but as before, no intelligible sign was made by the needles. I leaned my elbows on the desk, and, with my head between my hands, watched their unending motions. An hour might have passed thus, when once more I was startled by the clang of the bell. This time it was louder and more urgent, and it seemed to me, though perhaps I may err here, with a peculiar unearthly sound, such as I had never heard before. I am utterly unable to tell in what manner the impression was produced, but it seemed as if there mingled with the metallic ring the tone of a human voice—and it was the voice of one I knew. The needles, I now observed, began to make signs which I understood; and slowly, as if some novice were working the instrument, the letters "C-o-m-e" were signalled. No sooner had I read off the final "e" than, to my amazement and terror, I distinctly saw the handle of my instrument, although I was not touching it at the time, as if grasped by some invisible hand, move rapidly, and make the signal "Understood," which the receiver of a message transmits at the end of every word.

A cold thrill ran through me, and I felt as if every drop of blood were leaving my heart. Could I have been the subject of an optical delusion? I knew that such was not the case, for I had plainly heard the quick click of the handle as it turned, and now I could perceive that another word was being slowly spelt out, but so bewildered and terrified was I, that I failed to catch the signs. Again my handle moved, and this time the signal "Not understood." With an overwhelming feeling of awe, I watched the dials intently while the letters were again signalled, and this time I read "H-o-m-e." Then there was a cessation of all motion for a second or two, and once more the needles resumed their incoherent vibrations. I stood petrified with fear and amazement, half believing that I was in a dream, for reason refused to accept the evidence of sense. Could that be a message for me? If so, whence came it? What hand had sent it? Could it be that some power higher than that of nature thus warned me of impending danger? Should I obey the mysterious summons?

While I thus deliberated, the bell again sounded with a clangor still more loud, imperious and unearthly, and, after a few uncertain movements, the magnets repeated the words, "Come home—come home!"—the handles moving as before. I could remain at my post no longer. Come what might, I felt that I had no alternative but to obey. I ran to the house where the clerk lived, and on rousing the inmates and gaining admission, told him that he must take my place immediately, as I had suddenly been called away. The man seemed somewhat surprised at my excited and startled manner, but what he said or did I cannot recollect. On entering the stable where my horse was stalled, I perceived a saddle hanging on the wall; and knowing that I could get over the ground more swiftly riding than driving, I threw it on his back, and in a minute or two was dashing along the road in the direction of home. I shall never forget that ride. Although I urged my horse with whip and voice till he flew rather than galloped, the pace was far too slow for my excited mind. Woods, bridges, with the moonlit streams wimpling beneath them, farmhouses where the deep voiced watch dogs were awakened by the loud beat of hoofs, shot by me like things in a dream; and at last, breathless and panting, we clattered up the long causeway street of the village where I lived. All was dark and silent in the houses, and the windows seemed to stare blank and vacantly in the white moonlight. Suddenly a horse and rider appeared at the other end of the street, and a hoarse voice uttered a loud cry, "Fire!" At the same instant, the church bell was rung violently, and at once, as if by common impulse, the whole village started into life. Lights

appeared in the houses and a hundred windows were dashed quickly up. I saw white figures standing at them, and heard voices crying "Where?" Checking my horse with a jerk which threw him on his haunches, I listened for the reply, "Craigside House!"

Great Heaven! my worst fears were realized. It was my own home. I choked down the agony, which almost forced a cry, and pressing onward with redoubled speed, soon arrived at the scene of the fire. The house was a large one, and when I reached it, smoke was issuing in thick, murky volumes from the windows of the second flat, while fierce tongues of flame were already leaping along the roof. A crowd of men were hurrying confusedly with buckets and pails of water. In the center of a group of women I found our maid, Mary, stretched on the grass in a swoon. "My wife!" I exclaimed, and I rushed forward, "where is she?" "God knows, sir," said one of the men; "we have twice tried to reach the second flat, but were each time driven back by the smoke and fire." Without uttering a word I entered the house and ran along the lobby. The stair, fortunately, was built of stone, but the woodwork on each side was one mass of blazing and crackling flame. Before I had taken three steps I fell back, blinded, fainting and half suffocated with the smoke. Two men who had followed me caught me in their arms, and tried to restrain me by force from endeavoring to ascend again. "Don't attempt it," they said; "you will only lose your own life, and can't save hers." "Let go, you cowards!" I cried as soon as I could speak; and with the strength of madness dashed them aside. I rushed up the stairs, and this time succeeded in reaching the first landing in safety. The room which we used as our bed-chamber led off a small parlor which was situated on this flat. Groping my way through the smoke, I found the door, but to my horror it was locked! I dashed myself against it again and again, but it resisted all my efforts. To return as I had come was impossible, and I knew that the only hope of saving even my own life was to go forward. Despair gave me strength, and lifting my foot, I struck it violently against one of the lower panels of the door. It yielded a little. Another blow and it was driven in. I crept through the opening, but so thick was the smoke in the parlor that I could distinguish nothing. "Maggie, Maggie!" I shrieked, "where are you?" but no answer was returned. Crossing the room I gained our bed-room door. To my joy it was open, and stretched on the floor I found the apparent y lifeless form of my wife. I bent over her, and on placing my hand on her heart I found that it was still beating. I lifted her very tenderly and gently, and carried her in my arms to the window, which I broke open. Of what followed I am on y dimly conscious; I have a confused remembrance of men bringing a ladder, and strong arms helping us down, and the people cheering; but it is all very vague and indistinct. My next recollection is that of finding myself in my father's house all bruised and weak, but with my own wife bending over me, and tending me with loving hands. We had been burned out of house and home. Fortunately everything was insured; but even had it not been so, I had been content so long as she was spared to me.

On the evening of the next day, when the short Winter twilight was fast closing round, and the first snowflakes were falling, Maggie drew a little stool close to the couch on which I lay, thinking over the strange events which I have related. I had said nothing to anybody regarding the warning which I had so mysteriously received; and when questioned as to what caused me to return so opportunely, had always made some evasive answer for I feared that the reality would never have obtained belief.

"Willie," said the soft low voice of my wife, "if you had not come home—"

"Hush, my darling. Don't talk like that, for I can't bear to think of it."

"But it might have been. And do you know, Willie, I had a strange dream on that awful night?"

"A dream, Maggie? Tell me what it was."

"You remember," said she, drawing closer to me, "the evening you took Mary and me into the telegraph office, and told us all about the batteries, and magnets and electricity, and a great many things which we couldn't understand at all, though we pretended to do so, lest you should think us stupid?"

"Perfectly."

"And you remember, too, how when I said that I would like to send a message with my own hands, you made me