

# A Bride for an Hour.

## A Thrilling Story of the John's town Disaster.

BY DAVID LOWRY.

### CHAPTER IX. (Continued).

Somers by thinking. It would be well to let the reader know, and never again. He thought the next ten minutes than he had thought during his life.

He sank into slumber again, and again he dreamed.

He was journeying again. Now he was traveling by rail. He was carried over and over, and over again. There were as many visions as are usually encountered in the United States, but for some inexplicable reason the travelers passed through these depots one after the other. Never by any chance did two walls meet.

Somers was accompanied in these journeys by his wife. His wife always entered the cars first, always left them first, entered, passed through and out of the depots first. Somers had a premonition that he would lose her, spite of his order in which the last body of people

suddenly he missed her, and then he was in an agony of apprehension as he strove to find her.

He woke with a start. Tom Jerrard was standing over him.

"You were dreaming."

"Yes; I had the nightmare. I think."

"I am sorry to tell you that to real closing his eyes again he should experience equally horrible dreams, until Mr. Broadhurst, who was near at hand, came to him. Mr. Broadhurst talked of life in a way Somers had never heard any man talk before. There was a philosophy that he seemed to have, a something that did not seem to be the work of man or of a God. It canched the phial of opium, and placed his God upon a higher plane than most preachers placed the ruler of the universe. Listening to Mr. Broadhurst, Somers fell asleep at that time, and again he dreamed.

He was never again. Now he was in quest of his wife. The strange feature of his dream was the thought that he was continually passing her unsuspectingly. Sometimes she was encountered in the guise of a servant, another time to be of a band of gypsies, and again she was in boy's clothes, and again it was an old woman.

He despaired him. And he always ached the truth a fraction of time too late to turn back and find her.

When he woke up the third time, this dream was the most vivid, and the most dreams of about in the darkness, keeping poor Tom Jerrard company. Tom was thinking of his daughter and his grandchildren. If the old had taken one—let to less both were more than Tom Jerrard's philosophy was equal to.

"I am sorry, Tom. Tom Jerrard talking to me. I hope you are not too sorry to say all the religion and all the philosophy in the world cannot reconcile me to my loss, Mr. Somers. It doesn't lessen the pain to me. That baby claimed my heartstrings tighter than it did any other. She was never out of my sight twenty-four hours. She was a baby. They were all I had in the world. There is neither chick nor child left now. I have not a soul I can call a relative this side of the ocean."

Somers sympathized deeply with him, and thus it came about that long before day broke Jerrard was comforted by Somers.

Long before dawn the people who worked on the mountain side, dazed with grief, suffering cold (scarce one in a dozen had clothing sufficient to keep them warm), were astir.

Here and there first were only to hear a few minutes and then die out. The few who were able to find dry void.

As the light broadened, the scene revealed to them surpassed in its simplest features the greatest ruin human eye ever beheld. Where the city of Johnston had stood, there now lay helplessly vast wrecks of water, with a few houses standing here and there. Hundreds of buildings were swept away. The devastation wrought in an hour was indescribable. It appalled those who looked on; the stoutest hearts grew faint looking over the scene, where death overtook even the faintest.

Each Broadhurst was the first to provide for the living, to comfort the mourners, to recover the dead that they might have decent burial. In this work Somers was active. He was not himself, he observed, to be able to bear the load of his master, but he performed the work of his master, by obeying implicitly every command or request: Mr. Broadhurst relented.

There was enough work for an hundred hands where there was only one. By noon on Saturday Somers was faint, exhausted by his labors.

It was well on in the afternoon, however, before either he or Mr. Broadhurst found anything to appease their hunger, and even then the crackers they modestly ate with water almost choked them as they sought of the thousands up and down the valley for a meal.

But there was the need to strange destiny, so that they could be buried.

Among the first to whom friendly attention was paid was the remains of Alexander Rutledge, the lawyer. Numbers who saw him well looked on the remains because they were buried in a shallow grave, with a stone over it.

Each Broadhurst helped to dig the grave. Si Harkess and Tom Jerrard were the present. Before Broadhurst wrapped his body in the sheet, a man approached the group. He was not one man, he observed, to be able to bear the load of his master, but he performed the work of his master, by obeying implicitly every command or request: Mr. Broadhurst relented.

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"You are not aware his uncle is dying."

"Is Tom Peters dying? Then God help any of his tenants that have dealings with Giles Broome."

"I am inclined to agree with you," said Broadhurst. "There never was a man more unlike Tom Peters, as honest a man as ever lived, and Giles Broome."

"As big a sneak and rascal as ever lived, in my opinion," said Tom Peters' tenant.

By eight-fifths the mile survivors in Johnston knew that Tom Peters was on his deathbed, and that Giles Broome would inherit all his possessions. The physicians who were called in when he was seized were in demand everywhere. There was work for scores that lifelong life. Spots of their labor, they were to be sure, were reported that in all probability Tom Peters would never set foot in Johnston again.

It looked as though Giles would very soon have everything his own way. There was but one dissenting voice, and that was Tom Jerrard's. Something Jerrard had said to him had caused him to turn his back on his master.

"I am told he is a good man," he said. "He called him a hound dog, but just now it looked as though the joy had left the poor woman forever."

"You two never knew each other, I suspect. I told John like as not you'd never seen each other."

"Sorrows makes us one," said Rose, simply, as she held out a hand, and the other woman clasped fervently, saying:

"I don't care what becomes of me. I wish I was dead. I want to die."

It was pitiful to hear her. It was most trying to look at her bowed head. Rose felt it was impossible it was for her to say anything to comfort this poor woman. For the first time in her life she felt how weak words are—how puny.

"If I could only see my babe—if I did not touch it, even—but never to see it again—what have I done that I am punished for?" The breakfast was ready now, said Tom Jerrard. "I am told he is a good man," he said. "He called him a hound dog, but just now it looked as though the joy had left the poor woman forever."

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