

MY BALKY MUSE.

BY WM. HAUGHTON.

"Twas long ago, in summer time,
I caught my muse and sought to climb
Parnassus' hill.
She balked! and then, with careless ease
I said, "Good lass, go as you p'ease
And where you will."

"The higher heights I longed to try—
To reach the stars, to float and fly
O'er Helicon—
I found you and your aid I sought,
But here you are, you good-for-naught,
You won't go on!"

She laughed a merry laugh, and then
She lured me to a quiet glen
Amongst the trees.
"See yonder where the hawthorn blows,
The daisy and the mountain rose—
Let's sing of these."

"Let poets used to loiter flight
Sing of the realms beyond our sight,
In strains sublime,
We'll hymn the haunted leafy dell,
The vale where love delights to dwell,
In humbler rhyme."

The wild rose blushed a rosier red,
And sweater balm and bloom were shed
From thorn and tree.
The daisy turned its modest face,
And smiled with such enchanting grace
It vanquished me."

And ever since that summer day,
Whene'er by flowery vale I stray,
Or meadow sweet,
The throb of nature's heart I hear,
And fairy echoes soft and clear
Fall at my feet."

THE SPY.

BY CAPTAIN JAMES MONTFORD.

"I have been looking over an old diary to-day," said the Colonel, "which I commenced the day I joined the forces at Washington."

"It was my firm intention at that time to keep an exact and minute account of every event that occurred within my knowledge. If I had continued it, the book would be of considerable interest to-day; but, for a variety of reasons, the idea was not carried out."

"The last time I wrote in it was the evening on which quite a remarkable character appeared in camp."

"I was then in Missouri. Our duties had for some time lately consisted merely in guarding the loyal inhabitants and preventing the gathering of re-enforcements. This last was, of course, not possible in a strict sense. There were many bands of Confederates, who constantly harassed us, and skirmishes were the occurrence of every day."

"One day, just at sundown, a man rode into camp. He was a very short man; his legs strangely short and bowed. His face was red, with a short stub nose, glittering black eyes. Long, brown hair fell in a tangled mass upon his shoulders, and his clothes were greasy and worn."

"Notwithstanding his queer appearance he was a personage of considerable importance, and bore despatches from General Pope."

"After he had discharged his commands he seemed to have had liberty given him to mix with the troops, for he was soon making merry with men of his own cheerful disposition."

"Many knew him imperfectly or had heard stories concerning him and his exploits."

"He was a noted spy, said to be in the confidence of the commanders, and had received the name of Billy Black, no one seemed to know exactly why."

"I was a listener while he told a funny story or two, and was so pleased with his character that I wrote an account of it and him in my diary."

"The day following we had a skirmish in which my horse was killed under me, and so I lost the diary."

"But this was not the most important loss of that day."

"Billy Black had been trusted with an answer to the dispatches he had brought, and had left camp in the early morning."

"At night he returned on foot, with a quite serious wound in the hand. He had been waylaid by a party of marauders, captured, and his papers taken from him. He had managed to escape during the skirmish with our troops, his party having been our combatants, and had now returned to report his loss."

"The papers were of considerable importance, and the spy determined to recover them. He knew into whose possession they had fallen, and this made his task more possible."

"His wound having been cared for, he started out that same night, at about twelve o'clock, toward the encampment of the skirmishers."

"They had their headquarters in a little village called Cordon, distant about seven miles."

"Black made such good progress that he reached the outskirts of the town several hours before daylight."

"He had taken care to disguise himself as a countryman, and he walked boldly into the town."

"He had not gone far when the sentinel brought him to a halt. Black made such simple answers, and his manner was so in keeping with his appearance, that he passed the soldier without encountering even his suspicions."

"The spy's papers had fallen into the hands of the captain of the troop—a young fellow new to the arts of warfare, but who was a gallant soldier nevertheless, and had made us feel the effects of it that afternoon."

"This gentleman had quarters at the little inn, and when the spy approached the door he saw a light, although the curtains were drawn."

"Some persons were making merry in the house, for Black could hear the sounds of laughter and clink of glasses."

"The rest of the little village seemed fast asleep; not even a dog came out to bark at the nocturnal visitor."

"Black considered deeply within himself for a moment, and then endeavored to open the door."

"It was locked; but the party inside had evidently heard his attempt, for the noises ceased, as though they were listening."

"The spy rapped loudly for admittance, and an instant later the door was unbarred, and then opened a couple of inches, while a face pressed up to the opening."

"Let me in," said Black.

"The man refused; but our adventurer knew well how to plead, and, after considerable talk, and with more than one of the merry-makers, he was admitted."

"Walking inside, Black looked around upon the company and their situation as closely as he dared."

"There were four men in the room—the other attired in Confederate uniforms—the other was the proprietor of the house."

"Black saw with delight that the young Captain was one of the party, and immediately upon his entrance the officer began to question him as to his condition and business."

"The spy told a long, rambling story to account for his presence there that night, and used his powers of entertainment so well that he not only warded off suspicion, but the gentlemen, who had drank enough to make any merry comer agreeable to them, admitted him to their table and ordered more liquor."

"That afternoon had been the first time the young officer had distinguished himself, and he was in an excellent humor with himself and all the world."

"He bragged a little about his skirmish, and the find he had made, something valuable, and that must be kept a strict secret, he said, and vaunted how he would serve the Yankees if he ever had another opportunity to try conclusions with them."

"Black suspected that this 'find' referred to the papers, and he managed to elicit a confirmation of this idea by a few deftly put questions."

"After the spy had been over an hour in their company the officer proposed to break up."

"The most sober one of the party left the house, the other two retired up stairs, the inn-keeper and Black assisting them."

"He saw the Captain ushered into a room at the front of the building; the windows opened out upon the veranda, and Black seized the opportunity that offered to make a closer survey of the apartment and its connections."

"It was nearly bare of furniture, a poor bed, a table, and a couple of chairs being all it contained."

"There was no place to conceal the papers, had the Captain been in condition to think of preserving them."

"When Black returned to the bar-room with the innkeeper, the latter yawned and intimated that his uninvited guest would do well to leave."

"This suited the spy very well, and after finding that he could not be kept in the house he went out, and the door was fastened behind him."

"He did not go far from the house, however, but waiting about until the light was removed and the innkeeper retired, he approached the veranda."

"Moving silently to the window of the Captain's room, he listened. All was still. Black tried to raise the window; but it was fastened."

"Drawing a knife from his pocket, he began to cut the sash from about the pane nearest the catch."

"He soon broke out the light, and with considerable difficulty found and threw back the catch."

"Then he paused and looked about him. Nothing was stirring, the night was dark, and the sentinels seemed to be sleeping."

"Slowly and cautiously Black raised the window and slipped into the room. He could hear the labored breathing of the Captain, and moved toward the bed with the stillness of a cat."

"He searched around in the dark for several moments, trying in vain to find the clothing the Captain had thrown off."

"He was forced to light a match at last, and by its light searched the pockets of the clothes, which were thrown over the head of the bed."

"But his search met with no reward. What had become of the papers? As a last resort Black felt under the pillow. His hand touched some articles; he was certain the papers were within his grasp, although he could not see."

"But the spy was not to accomplish his hazardous work without trouble. The sleeping officer had been aroused by the presence near his bed. Several times he had changed positions uneasily, and as Black drew out the papers, he gave a gurgling cry and started up in bed."

"Black darted toward the window, at the instant the Captain leaped from the bed."

"Springing out upon the veranda, with the spoils clasped close to his heart, the spy ran down the street, followed by a bullet from the Captain's pistol, which cut wond'fully close to his head."

"Every one was awake in a moment and a search was instituted for the spy, who now lay close concealed in the stable at the back of the hotel."

"The search was given up before morning and much to the disgust of the Captain. He was a few days later informed of the spy's identity and in what manner he escaped."

"When Black reached the camp, which he did during the following day, having escaped past the pickets, he handed me the lost diary."

"It had been with the papers which he had lost, and the spy had brought away all."

"This Black was a strange man. I never learned where he was from or anything personally relating to him."

"He lost his life soon after the adventure I have been relating, but the story is too long to tell to-night."

Lips.

Lips were made for smiles and kisses.

Birds cannot smile, flowers cannot kiss, nothing on the earth can smile and kiss but man. A smile is the color love wears, a kiss is a demonstrative expression of affection. A smile is the light in the window of the face, a kiss is the snapping of love's fingers.

A smile has come to be in these degenerate days often a meaningless thing; a kiss, through the custom of its indiscriminate use, is frequently but little more.

This vulgarization of the kiss is a profanation. It should be one of the holiest demonstrations of the soul, but among some people—not all—and especially between bubbling over, demonstrative femininity, a kiss pops a good-morning, whizzes a good evening, sputters here and fizzles there, until a sensitive refinement causes us to set our teeth, brace our lips, and abide the shock as best we can.

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