

HOW IT HAPPENED.

BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

I got to thinkin' of her—both her parents dead and gone—
And all her sisters married off, and none but her and John
A-livin' all alone there in that lonesome sort o' way,
And him a blame old bachelor, confirmer every day!
I'd know 'em all from children, and their daddy from the time
He settled in the neighborhood, and hadn't ary a dime
Er dollar, when he married, fer to start house-keepin' on!
So I got to thinkin' of her—both her parents dead and gone!

I got to thinkin' of her, and a wunder what she done
That all her sisters kep' a gittin' married, one by one,
And her without no chances—and the best girl of the pack—
An old maid, with her hands, you might say, tied behind her back!
And mother, too, afore she died, she ust to jes' take on,
When none of 'em was left, you know, but Eva-lina and John.
And jes' declare to goodness 'at the young men must be blime
To see what a wife they'd git if they got Eva-lina!

I got to thinkin' of her; in my great affliction she
Was such a comfort to us, and so kind and neighborly—
She'd come and leave her housework, fer to help out little Jane,
And talk of her own mother, 'at she'd never see again—
Maybe sometimes cry together—though, fer the most part, she
Would have the child so reconciled and happy-like 'at we
Felt lonsomer'n ever she'd put her bonnet on
And say she'd rally haf to be a-gittin' back to John!

I got to thinkin' of her, as I say—and more and more
I'd think of her dependence, and the burdens 'at she bore—
Her parents both a-bein' dead, and all her sisters gone
And married off, and her a-livin' there alone with John—
You might say jes' a-toilin' and a-slavin' out her life
For a man 'at hadn't pride enough to git hisse'f a wife—
Less some one married Eva-lina, and packed her off some day!
So I got to thinkin' of her—and it happened that away.

WITHOUT THE SHADOW OF A DOUBT.

When I looked at Elizabeth as she stood there before me, I understood fully, and for the first time, why she refused to marry me just yet, and in my heart I could not blame her.

Picture to yourself a fresh and charming young girl in brave attire—that is, in a silken robe made ridiculously long and looped up ridiculously high, with a defiantly flaring affair of ribbon and lace and feathers towering above a most bewildering arrangement of puffs and frizzes, from which elaborate structure one poor little golden curl had escaped and run away over her shoulders; with silver bangles upon her perfect arms, and jewels in her bits of ears, and a delicate perfume floating like incense about her—and you have Elizabeth as she appeared that summer morning when we discussed the momentous question of our marriage and its possible consequences. She was speaking:

"I mean to say, my dear boy, that we could never live upon what you earn—never! It would barely give us bread. Don't frown, Julian; you know that I would only be a drag upon you. I am such a helpless, ignorant creature. I can dress and dance, and play the piano a little, and I don't believe that I know a girl who can do any more. It is a great mistake, I suppose, letting us crop up into such worthlessness; but there! the mischief is done, and we can't help it, can we? Of course not. Now see, dear, you must remember that father refuses to listen to us, and as I have not a penny of my own—"

"You do not need a penny!" I interrupted, angrily. "Will not my life, with all its years and possibilities, be yours, to reign over for ever?"

"Nonsense!" laughed Elizabeth. "Come now, get to work, like a brave fellow, and paint something grand—something that will make you famous. Can't you?"

I shook my head despondently.

"At least you will try?"

"Yes, and fail once more."

"I lose all patience with you!" exclaimed my companion, her blue eyes flashing, warningly. "You provoke me past endurance. What! Am I not worth trying for? Paint portraits, then, and leave off those fussy old historical things. Why, those men have become famous at portrait-painting—haven't they?"

"Oh, as for portraits, yes," I answered, nonchalantly. "I am quite willing to venture upon that field, for there is Miss Talbot—she has offered me a sitting more than once."

I glanced furtively at Elizabeth, and saw that my shot had told. Her eyes fell, a vivid flush stained her cheeks, and that pretty, pouting nether lip quivered piteously. Only for a second, however. Then she looked up fearlessly, and said, without a tremor in her voice:

"You speak of Miss Talbot because you think that I am jealous of her. You are wrong. I do not pretend to deny that I have been jealous—frightfully so, even—but that feeling is dead now, Julian, and you have just killed it. Ah, believe me, I may be very silly in many respects, but I have my own ideas about some things, and especially about lovers, and can tell you, sir, that the man I love is placed as far above other men as heaven is above the earth. He cannot do anything dishonorable; but if you—"

"Well, and if I should, what then?" I asked, mimicking her emphasis.

Elizabeth dismissed the subject with a wave of her little white hand.

"It is three o'clock!" she exclaimed, looking at her watch. "Goodness! Aunt Janet will be frantic. I am going, Julian."

"You will come again to-morrow to see this picture?"

"I think not; I may be busy. Wait, I must leave you these—some fresh, sweet violets; I gathered them expressly for you."

I received the little cluster of flowers indifferently enough. That Elizabeth had worn them on her bosom and blushing detached them was to me a matter of small import then.

"Tell me good-by, please," she murmured.

"Shall it be good-by or farewell?"

She did not answer, so I kissed the tempting lips that were raised to mine, said something—I don't remember what—something cold and cruel, no doubt, and presently stood alone upon the threshold of my studio, listening to the rustle of a silken robe, the tinkling of bangles, and

the clinking of little bottines as she sped swiftly down the stairway. Then I returned to my work, grimly resolute.

"That chapter in my life is ended," I said, to myself. "It was very sweet, but very silly. To-morrow I will write to the poor child and release her from all her promises. Little simpleton! She has her ideas of what a lover should be, has she? By Jove! she was sensible in refusing to marry me. And I not only imagined that I was in love, but fancied that she—bah! I am an idiot! A girl like that, and so mercenary—and, by heavens! not ashamed to tell it, either! Well, I suppose she will marry some rich fool. I hope so."

I have said that I went to work; it was not so—I could not work. Somehow the sunlight seemed no longer to freshen and brighten up the room. It was a gloomy place at the best, but now it seemed horribly lonely and cheerless.

Then, too, thoughts of Elizabeth and of my miserable position were half-crazing me, for, despite my pretended indifference, I was madly in love, and knew it.

"By all the gods of pagan Rome she shall be my wife, if she cares enough about it to wait for me!" I mentally exclaimed, for, like an inspiration, a plan of action had suddenly suggested itself, and I resolved to lose no time in putting it into execution.

I had a friend—an old college chum—Fred Denbigh, a royal good fellow—free-hearted, open-handed, and as loyal as a Scot. Putting aside my brushes, I sought Denbigh; then we dined together, and soon afterward I returned to my room alone.

Late that evening, when I went out again, I could have met my principal creditor and safely defied the danger of recognition. I had sacrificed my beard—that profusely flowing beard which, if somewhat untidy, was also of that picturesque kind mostly affected by artists. I had sacrificed it without a pang, and by so doing had completely destroyed my own identity.

In point of fact, I was now a tall, well-built, and clean-shaven young fellow, not altogether bad-looking, and certainly attired with the most scrupulous regard to neatness and refinement.

Nor was I Julian Vancourt—I was plain John Warner, and I was to start at midnight for the West, commissioned by Denbigh to look after certain claims in which he had an interest.

Two weeks later I read in a New York paper a long account of the mysterious disappearance and supposed suicide of Julian Vancourt, an artist of recognized ability, who, after years of honorable endeavor, had attained an envied position in his profession, and bade fair to become one of the greatest historical painters of the age.

I laid aside the paper with a curious sort of shiver; I felt like a man might feel who has just seen his own tombstone. But, then, I was dead, you know—legally so, at least. A letter from Denbigh followed close upon the paper. Here is an extract: "The pictures went off like wildfire. Each brought a fabulous price. Everything is sold, and Colonel Shinstone bought your 'Jephtha's Daughter' because it resembles his daughter, I suppose. At any rate, he has it. He was at the sale, looking grimmer and sterner than ever. I have heard that—is ill. No one seems to see much of her, and her friends say some spiteful things about her and the dead man, poor girl!"

I was a wretch; but there, it was too late now to undo what had been done, so I went about my work with a will, and in that way sought to lessen any regret that might arise at the loss of so close a friend as that poor beggar of a painter. Maybe, after all, there was a deeper regret for someone else, but if there was, I never acknowledged it, even to myself. Yet, as the months wore on, and the anniversary of the day upon which I had last seen Elizabeth drew nigh, I became restless and unhappy, and finally I did a very silly thing. I took from their hiding place a little cluster of dried violets, about which a faint perfume still lingered, and I am not ashamed to say that at first I could not see them very clearly for the tears that rushed to my eyes. One of these I detached, and holding it carefully in a sheet of blank paper, addressed it in a disguised hand to the woman who was dearer to me than the life of my heart.

And that was the only bit of sentiment which I permitted to creep into the dreary black years of my self-imposed banishment, although there were times when I felt as if I must go mad, so unutterable was the sense of loneliness and desolation that would overcome me. Yet, despite all this, despite the dread of what might happen, I deliberately and determinedly turned my face away and walked in the path I had chosen.

And at the end of five years I was a rich man! I could scarcely realize it. That poor beggar, Vancourt! Here was a lesson for him, to be sure. A clear case of energy, industry, and simple business tact against genius and fancy and a painter's palette—and the painter's palette was distanced.

Well, no matter; I had money and I was going home. Through all these years a vague, shadowy phantom had walked by my side, mocking, consoling, luring me ever; but that spirit was exorcised now, and in its place came ecstatic visions of a sweet girl—woman, Elizabeth! I was going to her, and in the blue sea of her laughing, loving eyes I would drown every care and regret.

Five years! And five times, upon each anniversary of our last meeting, I had sent her a faded violet—only that, a faded violet! But the poor little flower had gone to her freighted with such a wreath of hope and fate that surely in some dumb way it must have told its story. Five years! And Denbigh had given me but scant information concerning Elizabeth in all that time. True, I had never made any inquiries about her, nor had I seen my old friend since we parted so long ago, yet he might have known how I yearned for a word—a single word that would tell me ever so little of her. It was a day in midwinter when I reached New York. The cold was biting and the air was whitened with the falling snow. Yet for me it might have been a day in midsummer, so light was my heart, so warm and glowing all my dreams.

'Twas Denbigh whom I first sought out. My old friend was in his studio, hard at work. He met and welcomed me warmly enough, but great heaven, how the fellow had changed! No longer frank, free and jovial, he had become reserved and quiet, even taciturn. I confess that the alteration shocked me inexpressibly.

"And Elizabeth?" I had questioned, as our hands met.

"She is well," he returned, briefly. "And not married yet," he added, answering the eager inquiry in my eyes.

"Well, I shall see her presently; but first we will dine together, my boy, you and I."

For a moment Denbigh was silent, then he suddenly exclaimed:

"Julian, we can never break bread together again. I have been false to my trust. God help me, I love Elizabeth Shinstone!"

"You love Elizabeth Shinstone?" I repeated. "You?"

"Could I help it? Was I to blame? Am I more than man? And the wrong-doing was yours—yours alone! An angel stood in your path, and blind fool that you were, you turned aside from it. An angel, I say! Oh, Vancourt, old friend, kill me if you will, but don't look at me like that. Before Heaven I swear that I have fought against this thing, but—"

"And she—Elizabeth?" I interrupted.

"I have never breathed a syllable to her that you might not have heard. You see, there are still greater depths of treachery that I have not reached. No, I have not told it to her."

"Then you must tell it to her!"

Denbigh's haggard eyes met mine questioningly.

"Go to her," I continued. "Tell her and hear her answer."

"Are you serious?"

"As if I stood upon the threshold of eternity. If she is what I believe her to be, I need not fear; if she is not—well, even then I shall know it at once. Go!"

"Julian, surely you love her still?"

"Yes, I love her; but the woman I marry must come to me without the shadow of a doubt to cross our lives. Go! But remember this: Say nothing of my return, not even if—if all is as you wish it!"

So I waited there in Denbigh's studio while he went to win the one for whom I, in earnest faith and true loyalty, had worked so long and patiently. How those three weary hours of my solitude dragged on I cannot tell; but ah! what tender memories, what frightful forebodings, what glimpses of heaven, what tortures of the nether world, were mine! Had I but known her better, known her as she was—a weak, vain, frivolous creature! Ah, had I been less of a fool! A fool? Ay, thrice-sodden, for who but a fool would have exposed the woman he loved to such a temptation? Yet here the old thought would steal back upon me, and I would cry aloud:

"No! I have done right to send him. If she comes to me at all, she must come without the shadow of a doubt to cross our lives."

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At last there came a step upon the stair, a hand upon the door-latch. I arose. It was Denbigh's servant, and he gave me a sealed envelope. I tore it open and read:

"Go to her. She does not know you are here. Do not wait for me. Go at once!"

Ah, my friends, my friends—I had battled bravely, and, thank heaven, the victory was mine.

And so at once I went that way I had so often dreamed of going. It was almost night, and the gray ghosts of houses loomed up like spectral shapes in the long white streets.

Looking back at it all now, it seems like a dream, just as it seemed then when at last I stood in Colonel Shinstone's drawing-room, and some one was coming toward me with a wondering look in her beautiful eyes.

Not a pale, unhappy, simply attired creature. That I detected at the first keen glance. Not a nun, a recluse, a sweet, sad saint, but a woman in all the flush and glory of early womanhood, whose rich attire seemed but the fitting frame for such radiant beauty. My heart gave a great bound, but I took courage to call to her:

"Elizabeth!"

She sprang to me with a glad little cry. Ah, yes, my beloved was in my arms. I felt her warm breath upon my cheek, and her eager hands were clasped about my neck, whilst away behind us—far, far behind us—fell all the ugly shadows of our lives.

"I have come for you," I said.

"And I have waited for you," she answered. "My violets came back to me with tenderest words of hope and comfort, Julian. Ah, my dear, my own, own dear! I do not know what you have been doing all this while, away from me, but I am sure that it is something great and noble!"

Well, she is mine at last. My sudden disappearance and long absence were plausibly explained to the public, and I am bound to acknowledge that the critics were quite kind; they retracted nothing of all they had written in my favor. Still I cherish a firm conviction that they are only awaiting their opportunity to fall upon and demolish me; hence am I exceedingly wary. Let me add that my wife came to me without a penny. It was my will and hers as well. And our home is like heaven. I suppose that is the reason why, whenever the old fever seizes me, I paint angels only—angels that look like Elizabeth, every one of them.

Denbigh is in Europe, making himself famous, I hear. Well, he has genius, poor fellow.

Now, my friends, if you fancy that the years had worked any change in the little woman of whom I write, you err. Nor would I have her changed. I want her just as she is, my type of truth, of womanliness and of perfection—my wife, Elizabeth!

The Elevation of the Stage.

A Scene-Painter's Outfit and a Carpenter's Tool Chest were hurrying down street when they met a Toiling Dramatist.

"Out of the way," they said, haughtily, as the Toiling Dramatist bared his head and bowed low. "We are going down to the Lumber Yard to get a New American Play."

"But," pleaded the Toiling Dramatist, "here is one I have just written. The Heroine is a pure young girl—"

"That settles it," they said harshly. "What we want is an American Play that is Purely English, and hasn't a throb of any other sort of Purity in the whole Five Acts, and we can make it Ourselves. Away, Slight Manager!"

And tramping over his Prostrate Form they got their Lumber and Canvas in twenty-four hours, and sawed out a play which they filled with Circus Posters and ran every night for Two Years.

MORAL—The Race is not Always to the Swift, but sometimes to the Fellow who Cuts across the Course and Gets There.—Burdette.

WITH every exertion, the best of men can do but a moderate amount of good; but it seems in the power of the most contemptible individual to do incalculable mischief.—Washington Irving.

BOULANGER STEPS OUT.

The French Deputies Votes Down His Motion to Dissolve—A Duel in Prospect.

In the French Chamber of Deputies Gen. Boulanger proposed the dissolution of the Chamber. His proposition was rejected. Gen. Boulanger thereupon resigned his seat.

Gen. Boulanger, in his speech proposing the dissolution, said that such a course was imperative, and that elections ought to be held before the celebration of the centenary of the revolution of 1789. The country demanded the institution of new safeguards to secure the Republic from the attacks of its adversaries, against which it was powerless. The Chamber of Deputies was falling into ruin and decay and the country was trembling with emotion. The Monarchists were watching the Republic, expectant of its death agony.



The country felt that its safety demanded a revision of the Constitution. He did not doubt that the patriotism of the Deputies was on a level with their sense of duty. He would do his duty by demanding the passage of a resolution that the Chamber, being convinced of the necessity for fresh elections, ask President Carnot for a dissolution.

Premier Floquet reproached Gen. Boulanger for relying for support upon the Right. He said it was not for a man like Gen. Boulanger, who was always absent from the Chamber, to judge of its legislative labors or criticize hard-working members. What had Gen. Boulanger done?

Gen. Boulanger made an appeal to the country.

M. Floquet—The country answered you in the Charente election.

Mr. Spain (Bonapartist Deputy for Charente)—The country unanimously pronounced through me for revision.

Gen. Boulanger protested against a regime which did not respect the liberty of the tribune. He said that in view of the President's decision he would resign his seat. The General thereupon left the Chamber, followed by his partisans. A vote of censure on Gen. Boulanger was adopted.

It is reported that in consequence of the occurrences in the Chamber of Deputies Gen. Boulanger and M. Floquet will fight a duel.

When Gen. Boulanger left the Chamber of Deputies the crowd outside shouted: "A bas Boulanger." "Down with the dictator," "Duck him," and groaned and hissed the General vigorously. Only a few faint cheers were raised. Gen. Boulanger intends to contest successively the Departments of Bordeaux, Loiret, Ardèche, and the Nord.

SHERIDAN'S ILLNESS.

Life Was Seemingly Restored by the Use of the Galvanic Battery.

A Washington dispatch rehearses for the first time in print the details of Gen. Sheridan's apparent death when science itself could not have told that he had not passed away. There had been several sinking spells and hemorrhages of the bowels, which so exhausted the patient that he passed into unconsciousness, and during this period was the supreme moment when physicians, wife, brother, and friends all believed that the brave soldier's struggles were at last ended—that death had indeed come as a perhaps happy release. There was absolute no pulse or respiration. The firm jaw had dropped and the eyes had opened and were glazed, the nose was pinched with that awful

pressure which seemingly can only come from death's cold fingers. Father Chapelle had administered the last rites of the church. He stood beside the bedside, and his experienced eye, familiar with death in all its forms, noted the sure signs of dissolution. At last he turned away, after making the sign of the cross over the placid forehead, and went down to the ante-room, where Cols. Kellogg and Blount and Gen. McFeely were waiting. Holding up his hands he said: "All is over. Meanwhile the watchers by the bedside were preparing to arrange the body in death, except that Dr. O'Reilly was still applying every device that science, and even desperate chance, could suggest. He had opened the nightgown, and applying his ear to the heart, could detect no flutter of pulsation. He had noted all the marks of death, but persevered. Mrs. Sheridan was kneeling in prayer for the departed soul. The physician seized the galvanic battery. One electrode he placed at the base of the neck, the other upon the inner side of the left thigh. The current generated, he has since said, was sufficient to have instantly killed a man in stalwart health. There was yet no sign of life. The physician then resorted to hypodermic injections of brandy. The minutes passed slowly, and five were counted. The watchful ear was again at the heart. There was a feeble throb; then hardly perceptible respiration. Then the eyes opened and Mrs. Sheridan arose from her knees and bent over her husband. There was a complete intelligence in the look he gave her, and it seemed as if the miracle of 1,800 years before had been repeated and the dead had come back to life. Perhaps it had been. Science still uncertain of its capabilities and possibilities, does not venture to say.

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