

WHAT HAS COME OVER THE SUNSHINE?

What has come over the sunshine?
It is like a dream of bliss.
What has come over the pine-woods?
Was ever a day like this?
O white throat swallow, flitting
The loch with long wing-tips.
Hear you the low sweet laughter
Comes rippling from its lip?

UNCLE JERRY'S STORY

BY G. P. GREELEY.

"Tell me about it, Uncle Jerry," I said, lying full length in the warm sand, letting my eyes alternately rest on the sunning water at my feet, or follow the motion of the brush in Uncle Jerry's horny hand as it splashed a vigorous coat of green over the worn sides of his old boat.

He was a character in his quiet way—the skipper par excellence of the little seaport of L——; an autocar whose word was law in his native town, and who had been, since the days of our childhood, the epitome of all that was worth knowing in sea-lore.

We were great friends, he and I, and many a long summer day had I spent beside the bent old frame, watching his rough fingers mend nets or sails with the deftness grown from long practice, and listening to his tales with keen enjoyment; but there was one incident of his life on which he had never talked, nor could any amount of coaxing induce him to approach it. It had happened while I was in Europe. The horror of it roused the neighborhood, and they said, those who knew, that Uncle Jerry was never the same again. Whether that was so or not I found him greatly changed on my return after six years' absence. This afternoon, for the first time, he betrayed a willingness to confide in me, and I settled him in the shade, by the bow of the boat, and waited. Presently Uncle Jerry began:

"I were nigh five years ago. The year before the hotel was built. The cove was crowded. It seemed like we all had mor'n we could make comfortable, and the boarders was crowded inter old Miss Holt's in a way that did seem wonderful when we heard how they lived in their big city homes—reg'lar palaces, the gals that come with 'em to take care of the cove's said.

"I hed just bought a new sail-boat, a fifty-footer, an' a reg'lar goer; I calculated ter make a head out o' pleasure parties en' sech—an' I did. In the mornin' I went lobsterin', 'cause Miss Holt's folks hed to her sea things, an' every afternoon I 'red' up in my blue coat with brass buttons an' a sail'd skipper of the sloop yacht Foen.

"I tuk the same crowd pretty reg'lar, an' in time I got to know 'em well. They was as nice a lot of young things as ever came in my path; but they was careless-like, an' they didn't always think.

"The girls was healthy an' hearty, an' my! but they did go lively. There wasn't nothin' they didn't try. Tennis, an' ridin', an' rowin', an' shootin' at targets made o' white paper. An' sailin'. The sailin' bothered them. They was all over the boat at once, an' nothing would do but I must earn em to sail. I hed to tell 'em I wouldn't take 'em if they wasn't quiet, an' after that they kinder settled down.

"I grew powerful fond of 'em all, but there was one little girl I tuk a special shine to. She wasn't very strong—I heard tell she was jest gettin' over a fever. She had a sickly look, but you could see she'd been bonny.

"Her eyes was blazin' round, an' her teeth was little an' white—like Miss Holt's Sunday china. They'd cut off her hair when she was sick, an' it was all over her head in little shortcurls, like my 'Lize when she was a babe.

"I remember a trick she had of takin' off her cap an' lettin' the wind blow her hair, an' if the day was damp it would curl up tight, an' she'd run her fingers thro' it an' pull it out straight to see how it was grown."

"As I said, she warn't very strong, an' when they all got to larkin' it seemed like she couldn't stand it, for she'd leave the rest, an' with her little polite bow she'd come an' say, so gentle like: 'Uncle Jerry, do you mind if I stay here with you? I was mighty glad to have her, an' she seemed to know it, for she'd settle herself in a pile of cushions an' sit them quiet as a mouse.'

"Gradually the rest of 'em kinder forgot her, and by-an'-by she'd come right away from the start, an' I got so used to havin' her there at my right hand that when she stayed home I felt real lone-some."

"She begged me to larn her how to steer, an' when I saw she meant it I showed her one thing and another; an' somehow she never forgot what I told her. An' one day she says to me: 'Uncle Jerry, I believe I could sail a boat as well as any one if I were only stronger.' Bless her heart! I'd have trusted her sooner a'ny young feller in the party if she'd had a little more muscle in her arm."

"When August come I began to see she warn't happy. She grew paler an' thinner, an' her eyes was so wistful-like it made my heart ache to see them."

"There was a young feller in the party named Grey. He was a likely chap, about twenty, I reckon. He had lots of money, an' I heard from some of the ladies' galas that he used to be a great friend o' Miss May's before she was sick."

"When I come to, there was Miss May and Mr. Hugh holdin' the tiller with all the might. The derned rope I had used to lash the handle had broke. They told me afterward that when it happened Mr. Hugh an' Miss May sprang to it, an' then they managed to keep her head before the wind.

"My arm was painin' me jest awful, but I managed so put my well shoulder to the wheel, so to speak, an' found I could help considerable. The rope had got pushed about the painter of the fore, an' was trailin' in the water behind."

"The girls had kinder waked up, all but Miss Julie. She couldn't seem to get over her fear, but sat there as white as a ghost with her teeth chattering. Miss May looked at her a minute, then she got up and went over to her. I never knew, but thinkin' of it afterward, it seemed to me she must have felt somethin' what was comin'."

"Miss Julie was mighty pretty, with frowsty light hair, a mouth big enough to swaller a doughnut hull, an' rows of teeth like pearls," I heard Mr. Grey say.

"They looked strong enough to bite nits, an' she showed 'em all the time. When she was talkin' she was laughin'."

"She had a voice like a steamin' whistle. There warn't nothin' she couldn't do except keep still, an' bein' Mr. Hugh was always doin' himself, they spent most of their time together."

"Miss Julie used to watch 'em with that heart-breakin' look on her dear face, an' finally Miss Julie took to jokin' her, sayin': 'May, don't you want to play tennis?' or 'Till run you a race, or 'Why don't you wake up, May?' What are you dreamin' about?" But Miss May never answered Miss Julie a word, an' finally they stopped even that, an' left her altogether alone."

"I'm gettin' to my story now. I hasn't never told it before. It hurts even now, after all these years."

"I've given you an idea pretty much how things went on till the afternoon they ended for me, anyway—for I never sailed that boat again."

"It was the 10th of August. The month had been very hot, and we hadn't had any sailin' breeze for four days, but that mornin' a nice stiff breeze began to come in from the sea. It was a squally breeze, an' I didn't jest like it, but after a time it settled down, an' I concluded it would stay clear till next mornin'."

"Well, I was settin' in my door mending a sail for my cat-boat, when I heard the crowd a-coming. I always knew 'em by Miss Julie's voice. I most generally could hear that by the time they left Miss Holt's door.

"They had a couple of city fellers down from the city for the day, an' nothin' would do but I must take 'em sailin'. I wouldn't have gone, but jest at the last minute little Miss May come up an' tuk my old brown fist in her two little white paws, an' sez she: 'Oh, Uncle Jerry, do go! I'm going home tomorrow, an' I want one more sail, an' this is my last chance.' An' so is it, not poor lass! but not in the way she meant. Well, I couldn't say no. She made me think of the little one I lost twenty years ago, an' so—we started."

"The tide was runnin' out, an' the wind was due east, which made the white caps fly; but I put in a tack and started for the mouth of the bay. Jest about the time we got out from under the cliffs the squall struck us, an' I saw my mis-

"The foam heeled over till her storm-deck was two feet under water. I threw her head up into the wind, but as she came around a cross sea struck her bow, an' when I looked for Tom to take in sail, Tom was gone."

"Uncle Jerry laid down his paint-brush just here and gazed with dim eyes over the smiling bay, living over again the great tragedy of his simple life. And I sat upright, and drying my hand-sweat, tried to absorb all my faculties in the act of listening, following Uncle Jerry's knotty forefinger as it pointed to the distant horizon hill, and gave meaning to his words.

"Good-bye, Uncle Jerry," she says, her soft voice all hoarse and strained with the agony she was in—then she looked at Mr. Hugh, an' that look has haunted me ever since. It was so full of love! I could see all she cared for him, an' all she'd suffered, kinder, in her eyes. "Good-bye, Hugh, my dear, dear Hugh," she said, an' his name, as it left her lips, was the last sound she made; then the water closed over her an' she never rose again."

"Uncle Jerry didn't care to conceal the honest tears that rolled down his cheeks, and something in my own eyes blurred the sea from my vision. Neither spoke for a minute, then I said: 'Did you say they found her?'

"Uncle Jerry replied gruffly: 'I found her myself, after the storm, lyin' on a bed of sea-weed, that same lovin' look on her face. I didn't tell no one, for I couldn't bear no one to tetch her. I got my wagon an' lined it with clover ferns that I cut on purpose to 'tuk her up, an' I thought I could save her, but she knew better. As I started to pull her in her dear face came above the foam about it. She tried to shake the water from her eyes in the old way."

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