

The Destiny of Horace Greeley Jenkins

By Leander Richardson.

HORACE GREELEY JENKINS was under a handicap from birth. Having emerged upon the world in New England a few years before the moment when the Civil War was engaged in making its egress elsewhere, he was made involuntarily the recipient of a name at the sound of which the nation tingled—the uppermost end in exultation, the nethermost end in the mute resentment that goes with a cause that is lost but not forgotten.

Horace Greeley Jenkins's father and mother, immediately after the surrender at Appomattox, removed with their offspring to Indiana. Their action at that period was an exceedingly drastic piece of enterprise, in many of the more conservative quarters of East Medford, indeed, the proceeding was considered an exhibition little short of that spirit of unwholesome adventure which turns the son of a substantial and sedate citizen into an irresponsible adventurer—a tramp, maybe.

I might pause to my own satisfaction as



"I regret to say that your good wife is beyond my skill."

a veracious chronicler of incident to tell in detail the history of Horace Greeley Jenkins's forefathers and mothers—how they burst away from the ties of mother England with fine spirit, and came to daughter New England and sat down.

But that would be mere dry and unilluminative history.

The fact is that Horace Greeley Jenkins, at a very early age, was bundled out of New England and bundled into the then trackless wilderness of Indiana by his parents, in whom some spirit of ancestry had suddenly and sufficiently awakened the tendency to get up and move.

Indiana was a hot spot, neither North nor South, but betwixt and between, as the saying goes, so that Horace Greeley Jenkins, as he grew up, found himself receiving the bristly of the North and entertaining the cobwebs of the South.

He met the situation unmoved.

While he was still a youth, not knowing so very much what it was all about, his parents one after the other were claimed and duly acquired by malaria, the omnipresent Indiana life-lust, and Horace Greeley Jenkins was alone, in the possession of a quarter-section ranch, fairly well equipped for profit.

He had liked most of the other young men in the surrounding country. That was by reason of the invading spirit of his ancestry. Many New England young men try to lick their new-found fellows. Some succeed.

Horace Greeley Jenkins ultimately married a young girl from one of the Carolinas, whose parents had proceeded from the destination of the South at about the time his own people had isolated themselves and him from the triumphant affluence of the North.

She was a sweet girl. She loved her husband gently, if not blindly. She bore the end of the burdens of life in a rather frontier country with fortitude and without complaint. The young wife had been reared in a luxury that was snatched from her by the ill fortune of war, but she did not give herself up to futile repinings. In truth, when Therese Rittenhouse became Mrs. Horace Greeley Jenkins, she put resolutely behind her all the life and traditions of her people and made herself an active and helpful part of his career.

There were no troubles in the Jenkins

household. It was indeed an ideal family existence, excepting that no child came to bless the union. Even that regret was mute on both sides. Neither of the twins ever found fault with anything or anybody. They went their mutual way peacefully and pleasantly, full of love and trust and abiding faith in the final adjustment of "everything."

"What is to be, will be," was a thought that came to them often, as their crops ripened, their live stock fattened, the placid stream at the bottom of the garden eddied past, and the clouds and sunshine alternated all in season.

But one day Therese met with an accident when the pair of colts ran away and threw her out of the carriage against a tree, injuring her spine so that she became bedridden, as it turned out, for the rest of her uncomplaining and ill-requited life.

This was Horace Greeley Jenkins's first grief. He bore it with New England stolidity when his invalid wife was near, or when neighbors came to sympathize. Perhaps he had no great and glowing regard for neighborly sympathy. But when he was alone at any of the tasks that are many for those who wrest livelihood from the earth there were deep lines about his mouth and his eyes frequently softened with the moisture of tenderness.

The best physicians and most renowned surgeons came and went one after another, but Therese, with a patience that never grew less, found no relief. If she suffered physical pain no one knew it by word or sigh from her lips. When her husband in his goodness picked up the frail body and piloted it in the window seat so she could look out upon the birds and flowers and watch the farmers' wagons drag past, she murmured that he was very good to her, and pressed his strong hand.

A great surgeon from St. Louis came one day and made a very careful examination. He was one of those individuals whose observation sweeps everything and leaves not the smallest matter unobserved. When this man of wide knowledge and large experience of the world was on his way to the station, he said to Horace Greeley Jenkins, who was driving in silence:

"I regret to say that your good wife is beyond my skill. An operation would almost surely kill her."

"Yes," responded the surgeon, decisively. "Your wife is a lady born and reared. Find one of her own kind to attend upon her. Such women understand and help one another. No man, I don't care who or what he is, can take the place of one good woman to another who is helpless. Good night, sir."

The doctor was gone, and Horace Greeley Jenkins, sorely perplexed, turned his horses homeward. What should he do? Where was the woman? He knew instinctively she must not be merely a woman. She must be the woman.

For several days he said nothing of what the doctor had told him, until one afternoon Therese, whose intuition had already informed her that some unusual condition had arisen, said to him quite bright and smiling:

"Horace, dear. Come sit by me for a moment."

He obeyed, with an abashed look upon his countenance that betrayed his secret perplexity.

"Tell me, sweetheart," the invalid went on, coaxingly. "What was it the good doctor told you to do for me that you don't understand how to begin?"

With some difficulty Horace Greeley Jenkins repeated the substance of the conversation that had occurred on the road to the railway station.

"Why," said Therese, as if the idea were filled with the keenest delight to her, "that will be splendid. I am sure you won't mind having someone in the house who is dear to me—you are so kind and unselfish. May I write for my cousin Henrietta?—you remember, she was at our wedding. I know she will be glad to come, poor girl. The world hasn't been as sweet to her as to me."

So it was arranged, and Henrietta came to Indiana and took charge not alone of Therese but of the entire household. Although Horace Greeley Jenkins didn't know it, she took charge of him along with the rest. She did it all so deftly, and graciously, and with such genuineness of purpose that the Jenkins establishment went along right smoothly and serenely, excepting for the ever-present, always-haunting fact that Therese was fading, slowly fading into the great illimitable shadow.

Cousin Henrietta knew it, and nursed her very, very gently. Horace Greeley Jenkins

Noting a startled look upon the husband's face, he hastened to say a reassuring word.

"There is no immediate danger," he explained. "The patient may live for years. I rather incline to the belief that she will do so. I presume the tissues will gradually waste away until her vitality can no longer resist."

Horace Greeley Jenkins was gazing intently before him over the heads of the horses into space. But that he tried to maintain his dry lips the quick eye of the man of medicine would not have detected that he was under emotional pressure.

"Can't I do anything for her?" queried the driver, in a low voice. "Not anything."

"Let me call Henrietta," he said, hoarsely, feeling a vague sense of helplessness in the presence all had so long known was approaching inexorably.

"No, dear," responded Therese, in faint but even tones. "I am going. Let me be alone with you at the end."

"Don't say that, sweetheart," murmured the man, hoarsely. "I can't bear to think it is the end—my love, my love."

She pressed his hand in both her own. "Listen, Horace," she went on with a fever that was reflected in the deep and wondrous lustre of her eyes. "You have been so good and true that you have never refused me anything I have asked. Promise me still one thing more when I am gone."

The suffering man at the bedside, whose heart was torn with the pending loss of his loved and loving companion, groaned in the anguish of parting.

"Promise me," pursued Therese, with the momentary strength of those who die, "that when the pain of this is over, you will marry Cousin Henrietta."

"O my dear," moaned Horace, holding his wife convulsively to his bosom, "I love you—you only. I want to be alone forever."

She smiled up sweetly into his face. "Dear heart," she whispered, "that is not human. Henrietta will love you. I can see. Kiss me—and remember."

When it was all over, Horace Greeley Jenkins, whose Puritan fortitude came back to him, devoted all his property to Cousin Henrietta, who stoutly refused it until he threatened to turn the place over to the State unless she accepted.

"You were her best and truest friend," he said, "and she would have had it so. I can't stay around here now she's gone. It isn't the same to me. I've got to go somewhere and begin again. There isn't a picture, a stick of furniture, a blade of grass that doesn't talk to me about Therese. I can't stay. It's no use."

"I know it," rejoined Henrietta, with simple earnestness. "Of course, it's no use."

Something in her voice struck strangely upon his ear. The two looked at one another.

"You heard it all?" He asked in an embarrassed way.

"Then after a moment she added quite decisively: 'You couldn't do such a thing. And I couldn't let you. Yes, you are right to go somewhere else—and forget.'"

"I shall never forget," replied Horace Greeley Jenkins, with frank sincerity, as he waved an adieu from down the road.

Cousin Henrietta looked after him long and earnestly. When he was quite out of sight she went into the house, weeping a little in silence. Then she pulled herself together with a strong womanly effort, and went about her business of running the Jenkins estate—a pursuit in which she succeeded admirably.

If at first the neighbors were inclined to scoff at a woman rancher, they ultimately learned to respect Cousin Henrietta. She had a genius for doing the right thing at the right time in the right way. She won the hearts of the women, which was an

amazing thing for a woman to accomplish. She named the county ticket and helped elect it for all the wives and sisters in the community made the lives of the men a burden until they listened to reason.

Cousin Henrietta's crops were the largest, for her subordinates worked harder for a word of commendation from her than double wages from the farmers. Her cattle were the fattest, her horses were the sleekest—everything about the place was just a little ahead of everything about any other place in the community.

And out in the cemetery at the top of the hill there was a little knoll that was always a bank of lilies of the valley, where under loving watchfulness rested Cousin Therese, the dead cousin of Cousin Henrietta.

Once in a while there came to Indiana a vague rumor from the mining camps of the still mysterious West, in which the personality of Horace Greeley Jenkins figured with growing prominence. It was known in a general way that he prospered. It occurred once or twice that he suppressed lawlessness by sheer force of nerve and courage.

Had any one been possessed of an analytical mind when watching Cousin Henrietta as these occasional details came to her notice, it must inevitably have been perceived that her glance brightened, her cheek reddened, and her manner became animated immediately.

Suddenly the mistress of Horace Greeley Jenkins Ranch disappeared one morning without a word of explanation to any living being beyond the mere statement that she would return in a few weeks. The superintendent of the place reported in confidence to the Road Commissioner some days later that his employer, after receiving the Chicago morning newspaper for which she was a regular subscriber, had been very much agitated in her demeanor, had ordered the carriage and departed after giving a few hasty directions about ranch matters of immediate moment.

It subsequently transpired that she had travelled as fast as railway trains could bear her to a Western mining camp where a disastrous explosion of dynamite had killed several men and maimed a number of others. As soon as she set foot upon the station platform Cousin Henrietta was rushed away to the hospital, and almost in a moment was bending over a cot where a man lay so swathed in bandages that his features could not be distinguished.

But, although he could not see, the men upon the cot had heard the rustle of skirts, and he said:

"Got me a professional nurse, eh? That's

very kind, but I'll come along all right. Let her take care of some of the others who need her more than I."

The visitor caught herself. "I will attend to the others later," she concluded, after the effort at self-control.

Horace Greeley Jenkins lifted a bandaged hand and groped about with it aimlessly.

"You!" he exclaimed, feebly trying to raise himself. "It's you! Cousin Henrietta! All the way out here for me—and I can't see you. I'm blind, child, blind for life!"

Cousin Henrietta did not weaken. The orderly commented later that she was "dead game."

She tenderly laid the injured man back upon the pillow.

"As soon as you are well," she promised soothingly, "we will go back to Horace Greeley Jenkins's ranch, and I will be the eyes for both of us."

"I can't see you! I am blind, child, blind for life!"

When I had made an end of these labors, it was 4 o'clock—still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart—for what had I now to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbor during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled—for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search—search well. I led them, at length, to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence I brought chairs into the room and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears; but still they sat, and still I chatted. The ringing became more distinct—it continued and became more distinct. I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling, but it continued and gained definiteness—until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.

No doubt I now grew very pale; but I talked more fluently and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased—and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I gasped for breath—and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly—more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men—but the noise steadily increased. Oh, God! what could I do? I foamed—I raved—I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder—louder—louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they knew!—they were making a mockery of my horror!—this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die!—and now—again!—hark! louder! louder! louder! louder!

"Villains!" I shrieked, "dissemble no more! I admit the deed! tear up the planks!—here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!"



"I tried how steadily I could maintain the lantern ray on the eye."

be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence.

I took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye—not even his—could have detected anything wrong. There was nothing to wash out—no stain of any kind—no blood spot whatever. I had been too wary for that.

THE TELL-TALE HEART

By Edgar Allan Poe

TRUE! nervous, very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses, not destroyed, not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How then am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily, how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain, but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! Yes, it was that! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture—a pale blue eye with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me my blood ran cold, and so by degrees, very gradually, I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded; with what caution, with what foresight, with what dissimulation, I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night about midnight I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh, so gently! And then when I had made an opening sufficient for my head I put in a dark lantern all closed, closed so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head.

Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly, very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha! would a madman have been so wise as this? And then when my head was well in the room I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked), I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights, every night just at midnight, but I found the eye always closed, and so it was impossible to do the work, for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night. So you see he would have been a very troublesome old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at 12, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I felt the extent of my own powers, of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was opening the door little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea, and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly as if startled. Now you may think I drew back—but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness (for the shutters were close-fastened through fear of robbers), and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern when my

thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out, "Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed, listening; just as I have done night after night hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no! it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself, "It is nothing but the wind in the chimney, it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "It is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp."

Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions; but he had found all in vain. All in vain, because Death in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel—although he neither saw nor heard—to feel the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time very patiently without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little—a very, very little—crevice in the lantern. So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily—until at length a single dim ray like the thread of the spider shot out from the crevice and fell upon the vulture eye.

It was open wide, wide open, and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones, but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person, for I had directed the ray as if by instinct precisely upon the damned spot.

And now have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the senses? Now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder, every instant. The old man's terror must have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment!—do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous; so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer, I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst.

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