

his arms around the wretched man, who clutched convulsively at any object within his grasp.

"Save me!" he screamed; "save me, for dear God's sake!"

But I was paralysed. With one superhuman effort Westhorpe tore the wretch from his crouching position, and with limbs which appeared to work and swell with iron muscles, tossed the strong man like a child in his arms, and shouted a maniac yelling laugh.

"Help! help!" screamed Jeffries; "oh! oh! my wife at home!"

These were his last words.

"Then go home to her!" shrieked Westhorpe, and with another demoniac laugh, he heaved the struggling victim high into the air, and I heard the dull, dead, plashy dint with which he was dashed to pieces on the stony ground.

Westhorpe turned suddenly round. "Mad!" he shouted, at the full pitch of his voice,—"mad!—I believe you!—I am!—I am!—mad! mad! mad!" He clenched my collar, and drew me to him—I was a mere child in his arms.

"Mad!" he repeated—"yes!—I tried long to keep it down!—oh, I fought with it!—wrestled with it! And I said to myself, No, I am not mad, when I knew I was! Mad! I believe you!—I am mad!—I feel it now!—I know the pleasure of it! God! who would be sane—ha! ha! ha!—if he knew what a life a madman's is?"

He unloosened his grasp of me, and I shrunk into a corner of the space before the boiler, almost unable to articulate. The paroxysm appeared to pass away for the moment, and he stood muttering. Then catching up the spade, he set himself to trim the fires anew. A thrill of horror again passed through me; we were going at a pace to which all others that I had ever travelled were child's play. I tried to compose myself to my fate. If the engine did not leap off the rails, it was evident that, sooner or later, we must arrive at the obstruction which would, as with one mighty blow, smite us into dust for ever.

Again he turned round to me, and, drawing me towards him, looked into my face. The madman had the mastery. Supporting himself by a side-rail, he gazed at me. O that lustrous, bloodshot eye!—that ghastly, working, twitching visage! At length he spoke, slowly, nay, calmly,—

"We are now going faster than ever mortal man travelled, since the world was a world."

He paused, and the frightful swaying of the engine, and the lightning-like play of the rattling mechanism, fearfully attested his words.

"How fast do you think we are going?" inquired the maniac, still speaking with the greatest apparent calmness.

"Not much under a hundred miles an hour," I gasped.

"Full that," he replied. "Now tell me, do you think spirits can fly as fast?"

Never shall I forget the sepulchral tone in which the question was put. He paused, but without, however, appearing to wait for an answer, and looked wistfully at the furnace door, its dimensions marked by four lines of red light.

I imagined that in his present mood I could soothe him down, and regain that moral mastery over him which the sane, by coolness and self-possession, so frequently acquire over the victims of mental disease. Cheered by this gleam of hope, I looked him steadily in the face, and began to speak in mild, coaxing accents—

"Do you think we need trouble ourselves to keep the engine at such speed?"

"I fear we must," he said, sadly; "there would be danger in a mile an hour less."

I paused, completely puzzled. What were the train of ideas passing in the madman's brain?

"You have been ill?" I continued, in the same coaxing, fondling tone.

"No—yes, yes—oh, very, very ill," Westhorpe spoke with apparent languor and difficulty.

"Particularly within the last three days?" I resumed.

He started back, and exclaimed fiercely, "Ill—no, not ill—drunk!"

"Drunk!" I echoed, mechanically: a flash of light crossed me—the man was suffering under *delirium tremens*.

"Yes, drunk!" he shouted, with all his former wildness. "Drunk! yes!—I've been drunk since her death: I shall be till my own! Drunk or mad—there's little difference! I tell you I must drink—it lays her—it keeps her off from me! She haunts me—she persecutes me, and I must have drink!—drink!"

He darted back, struck his forehead with his clenched fists, and then suddenly producing a small, empty phial, he turned away his head, and in a half smothered voice said, "Read the label."

I did.

"Prussic Acid—Poison."

He sprung round as though he had been shot.

"I didn't give it to her!—I didn't—she took it of her own accord! Before God she did!—but she took it because I said she should never be my wife. I am her murderer!—her murderer, though I didn't give the poison! I murdered the only woman I ever loved—I did! God help me! Oh, Mary—Mary Slane!—but you're revenged! You have never left me since! you hung over my bed at night—you walked at my side in God's sunlight in the streets—you sat with your clammy hand in mine in the theatre—you looked in my face over the glass as I drank burning spirits—you rode with me on

the engine! I have seen you everywhere—everywhere! Ah! ah! I see you now!—you are following us!—following us through the night!—but you shan't catch us!—you shan't—you shan't!"

And the maniac started up, and with a howl like a wild beast urged on the levers, and, actually screaming with terror, tugged and strained at any portion of the rattling machinery he could reach, as though to increase the speed.

I shrunk down—why should I not confess it?—perfectly cowed. At that moment we flew into a tunnel. The glare of the lantern and the half opened furnace flickered on the vaulted roof as we traversed the dismal passage, amid what appeared a squall of hot damp air, and shewed Westhorpe, his limbs twitching and every feature convulsed with terror, clinging to and struggling on the engine.

A moment, and we were again beneath the open night.

The paroxysm appeared to have passed away for the moment, and the maniac again turned to me.

"You saw her face, eh? wasn't it ghastly? It was just so she looked out of her coffin—just!"

I said a couple of words. I know not what.

"I'll shew her something," muttered the madman, after a pause. "I think she'll like to see it."

Another pause.

"Open this," he said at length, and I received a carefully tied brown paper parcel from his hand. He turned away when he had given it, as though unable to watch the opening. "Untie it," he said with his back to me.

I did so. The first envelope was one of brown paper; under it was another of somewhat more delicate texture, then came wrapper after wrapper, until I thought as I undid them with a trembling hand, that the whole packet would prove a mere bundle of waste paper. I was deceived, however. I came at length to a carefully folded envelope of silk paper. I tore it open, sheltering it from the rush of air, and, to my utter amazement, found its contents to be—a half dozen withered blades of grass! An involuntary exclamation escaped me.

"Have—you—done it?" muttered Westhorpe, gnashing the very words between his teeth.

"Grass!" I exclaimed; "here's nothing but grass!"

He bounded round, clutched the withered herbage in his hand, and, holding it aloft in the air, shouted,—

"See, Mary Slane, see! Grass from your grave. Mary! Grass pulled by your murderer, Mary! O God! night after night have I passed upon the sod that covered you, and whenever I left it I carried the grass against my heart! O Mary, Mary! mercy—pity! Oh, I loved you! indeed—indeed, Mary, I did! I would have been a good husband, Mary; indeed, indeed, I would! but it was not to be—my lost, lost Mary!"

He paused; the moon at the moment burst from behind a silvery cloud, and shone gloriously down upon us, upon the dusky country side, the speeding, gleaming, roaring machine, and the distorted face and foaming lips of the engine-driver.

As he paused he appeared to listen. I watched him narrowly. The expression of his face changed, he clasped his hands, raised them; and the countenance which a moment ago was harrowed and convulsed by mad terror, its every muscle racked and riven, gradually relaxed; a smile stole round the mouth—you could see it beneath the froth which still oozed from the lips; and then every feature became instinct and dilated with a yearning, grateful joy.

"I forgive you! Oh—oh, Mary, Mary, say those words again! God bless you, Mary! your face is like an angel's now! Do, do say them again,—I forgive you?"

He listened, and, Heaven help me! I listened too, for the spirit's voice. I heard but the roaring of our iron race. Not so Westhorpe; his face gleamed and his eye again sparkled.

"God's thanks, Mary! God's thanks, I am pardoned!" and then covering his face with his hands, he burst into a loud fit of weeping; and in a moment sunk down, a sobbing, quivering mass, upon the engine mat.

Now was my time—now or never. I looked forth. Ahead of us sparkled the lights of D——. They were miles—many miles away; but minutes at our present pace, would shoot us in splinters through the walls of the station. Westhorpe lay sobbing hysterically; I had enough of acquaintance with the locomotive to know the mechanical process of shutting off the steam, and grasping the handle of the lever, I turned the tide of the fierce vapour from the mechanism.

The wheels had not spun round a single turn, when Westhorpe, as if by instinct, sprung up, and, with a roar of hoarse fury, dragged me from the machinery. One of his huge hands was clutched round my throat—I writhed under the workings of his iron muscles—while with the other he wrenched the lever, and I felt the steam set on again. I groaned faintly. He relaxed his hold of my neck, and grasping me by both shoulders, drew me to him. I made one effort, one struggle. Twining my leg round his, by a sudden wrench I succeeded in flinging him backwards with a heavy crash, partly upon the engine floor, partly upon a box destined to contain grease, tools, and other useful implements in case of accidents. The advantage was but for a moment: I felt his strength rising beneath my weight like a Titan's. With one bound he was on his feet, grasping me, a struggling mass, in his arms.

"There, go after Jeffries!" he roared.

My muscles involuntarily contracted, I seemed to shrink into a ball, as I felt by the winding up, as it were, of the muscular power of his arms, that he was almost in the act of flinging me down the high embankment we were then shooting across. All at once he screamed out,—

"D——! D——! there's the lights—the green signal to stop! Stop!—ha—ha—ha—stop! D—— the station, we'll go through it! Through—through walls, houses, streets! Stop!—ha—ha—ha!"

I held my breath, I was still grasped in his arms. My head spun round and round, blue and yellow flashes appeared to illumine my brain; the quarter mile stones seemed tumbling past, one on the top of the other; the sway of the engine increased; it rocked, and bounded, and roared down the incline leading to the station. I saw gleaming past the lights in the baggage and engine sheds. I heard the exulting scream of the maniac, mingled with shouts, and whistles, and the ringing of bells, which seemed to rise on every side. I saw the dusky lines of standing carriages: I saw the glitter of the brilliantly lighted station: I saw the flying groups upon the platform; I saw pillars, lamps, engines; one mass—one confused, gleaming, shooting mass! I gasped; then with a yell which seemed to transform all nature into that wild, ghastly, death shriek, we—we dashed—on—

On nothing!

"Now, then, tickets, please! Gentlemen, get your tickets ready! D—— station, gentlemen! Ten minutes allowed for refreshment, gentlemen!"

I started up with a stammering cry.

"Holla! holla! what's the matter with you? You've been groaning and moaning in your sleep for the last half hour."

"Westhorpe! Westhorpe!" I gasped.

"The man's asleep still! What the deuce do you mean by Westhorpe? Rouse up, man, and let us have some stout and sandwiches!"

I sank back.

"It was a dream, then!" I muttered.

"Ay, a railway nightmare, my boy! Did not I warn you of that beefsteak pie at Leeds? But what was it all about? You were thinking of some of your expressing work, were you not?"

"I was. Thank God it was but a dream: as you say, a Railway Nightmare!"

## JOHNNY BEEDLE'S COURTSHIP.

[COMPANION TO "THE SLEIGH RIDE," IN LAST SATURDAY'S EXAMINER.]

BY JOHN NEAL.

We sat and sigh'd,  
And look'd upon each other, and conceiv'd  
Not what we ail'd; yet something we did ail;  
And yet were well; and yet we were not well;  
And what was our disease we could not tell;  
Then would we kiss, then sigh, then look.

[DANIEL HYMEN'S TRIUMPH.]

After my sleigh ride last winter, and the slippery trick I was served by Patty Bean, nobody would suspect me of hankering after the women again in a hurry. To hear me curse and swear and rail against the whole feminine gender, you would have taken it for granted that I should never so much as look at one again to all eternity. O, but I was wicked—Darn and blast their eyes!" says I; "blame their skins, torment their hearts, and darn them to darnation." Finally, I took an oath and swore that if I ever meddled or had any dealings with them again, (in the sparking line, I mean,) I wish I might be hung and choked.

But swearing off from women and then going into a meeting house chock full of gals, all shining and glistening in their Sunday clothes and clean faces, is like swearing off from liquor and going into a grog shop. It's all smoke.

I held out and kept firm to my oath for three whole Sundays, forenoons, afternoons and intermissions complete. On the fourth there were strong symptoms of a change in the weather. A chap about my size was seen on the way to the meeting house, with a new patent hat on; his head hung by the ears on a shirt collar; his cravat had a pudding in it, and branched out in front in a double bow-knot. He carried a straight back and a stiff neck, as a man ought to when he has all his best clothes on; and every time he spat he sprang his body forward like a jack knife, in order to shoot clear of the ruffles.

Squire Jones's pew is next but two to mine, and when I stand up to prayers and take my coat tail under my arm, and turn my back to the minister, I naturally look right straight at Sally Jones. Now Sally has got a face not to be grinned at in a fog. Indeed, as regards beauty, some folks think she can pull an equal yoke with Patty Bean. For my part, I think there is not much boot between the two. Any how they are so nigh matched that they have hated and despised each other like rank poison ever since they were school gals.

Squire Jones had got his evening fire on, and sat himself down to reading the great Bible, when he heard a tap at the door.

"Walk in. Well, John, how der do? Git out, Pompey."

"Pretty well I thank you, Squire, how do you do?"  
"Why so as to be crawling;—ye ugly beast will ye hold yer yop;—haul up a chair and sit ye down, John."