

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers*, Dec 20, 1890 to May 30, 1891)

A Gift to the Sister Republic of America A Painful Tale

What with sliding down precipitous patches of frozen snow, scrambling over jagged rocks, and crawling along ledges of tilting slabs, Griggs was thoroughly exhausted when he reached the broad though steep alpine meadow, stretching out like an inviting green velvet carpet, far down to the valley below.

He threw himself down by a clump of Alpine roses, planting his stick firmly in the sod, to keep from sliding down the sleek grass. He basked blissfully in the warm afternoon sun, enjoying the rest, as only one tired with violent physical exercise in a pure atmosphere does.

He reached out lazily with one hand jerking now and then a blossom or sprig of moss, of the rich and varied flowers in the midst of which he lay, examined it and carelessly tossed it from him, and when his languor was no longer fed by his interest, he roamed the mountainside, and planned how long he might procrastinate in this delicious spot and yet reach the little scattered hamlets which was in view fire down the valley, by sundown.

The mountain meadow was broad and very steep, the houses in the valley looked very tiny, but it could not take but an hour or two to reach them, as there could be no doubt about the way, the whole journey lay clearly exposed before him a vast plain, tilled it is true at an angle of 45 degrees, but his survey of it, all the more distinct for that, and as he thought the march all the easier for the slope of the track, at his elbow was a good path and ten feet below him another and below that many more. They were paths trodden by cattle, upon which they stood as they browsed in the sweet herbs on the steep incline above them. To follow these paths would make the journey comfortable, for the grassy incline was too precipitous and sleek for direct descent.

As the sun neared the tops of the mountains opposite, he started on his way and followed the path by which he had lain, with a swinging gait. It led on and on, in the same level, without descending or turning on itself; it had seemed poor progress in the direction he wished to go, he selected a place which seemed less steep and was plentifully sprinkled with clumps of Alpine rose, to serve for hand and foot hold and attempted a dissent to a lower level in the hope that one of the paths he saw there would have a downward direction. He cautiously stepped off the path and tried the descent, but his feet slipped from under him, and it required every effort as he shot down the slope to prevent rolling. He plowed the side with his stick and when his progress was some what slacked caught at a clump of scrubs and at an expense of a violent wrench of his right arm, checked his motion. Fortunately two feet below him was a path, he slipped gently to it and rose to his feet; his knees weak and atremble from fright at his narrow escape. For had he once began to roll, nothing could have stopped his career until he had landed in the valley

below, a lifeless bag of broken bones.

The prospect of reaching the Valley in the time he had planned was a little discouraging after this episode, on what had seemed to him an easy field of descent. The new path extended indefinitely, as far as he could see in both directions, so he retraced his steps, in hopes that it would turn or descend at a point below the one from which she had started out. On he went, it seemed endless; no change in level, no turn, but finally it became slippery and uncertain, and soon he was aware that it had disappeared completely and he on an uncertain footing of the steep slope. Nearly an hour's walk, the sun already behind the ridge opposite, and nothing accomplished but a descent of twenty feet in the direction he wanted to go. His heart sank, but there was no time for discouragement. He sat down carefully, slightly relieved the pressure from his stick, which he had planted in the ground, and whizzed down the incline, controlling and steering himself with his iron shod Alpine stick. The friction had gathered his pantaloons up to his knees, pebbles over which he shot left parallel streaks of pain, and his [] parts grew fiery with the rush, until it seemed his garments must be ablaze. Another path appeared below. He plowed the meadow with his stick and pulled up on the pebbly path, rising from it with the extreme caution of one, who jumping from a bath sits accidentally down upon a nutmeg-grater, and fears return hooks in the broken tin, on getting up Griggs stroked his marrow bones feelingly and sighed to think of possible consequences, if he were compelled to travel a mile in this primitive way.

But here was a path, running parallel it is true to the ones above, so he must to find some outcome, and poor Griggs limps along and meditates how difficult a thing may prove to be that seemed so plain and simple. What a seductive siren, that smiling alpine meadow! What a Great-God! A man? A ghost? A devil? Horrid yes, but only a stray cow that monopolized the pass, and into which Griggs, absorbed with his afflictions had almost run into in the gloaming. The cow had no mind to turn back, and left our friend no alternative but to slip below the path, lying at full length in the grass and hanging by the shrubbery until she slowly passed him, browsing the grass comfortably above as he hung there in worry and discomfort, he hoped and prayed, there might be an omniscient Provenance who kept a watchful eye on all his creatures, and would remember to suspend a possible function of that animal, while he lay there with his nose on a level with her past. Selu! This bitterness too passed from him. He groped on for it had grown dark, until he heard the rush of a small stream. He thanked Heaven for this, as in its bed he could at least make the descent, no matter if he be attended with discomfort, and he made for the sound.

Down this slough of despond poor Griggs crept, clambering over wet and slimy rocks, after wading knee-deep in water, and at last when the evening was far advanced reached the dusty road in the valley.

Oh welcome dust, welcome product of human feet, of wagons built by men and animals driven by him; so different from the mocking grandness of nature, that had buffeted and tossed him after deceiving him with so smiling a face. He tramped in it and kicked it up as much as his poor tired limbs would let him and so made his way to a little tumbled

down shanty.

There was a light burning but very dimly. He stepped to the door, paused a moment, heard a female voice giggling, squeal a little and then chatter laughingly, while a deep bass growl in response. He knocked, there was sudden silence and no reply. He knocked again. The light was turned up and lamp in hand a finely developed girl of eighteen, rather poorly clad, bare armed and bare footed.

He asked the way to a tavern where he might spend the night, and was informed there was none in the hamlet but that he would find one in the village two miles on. He must have looked so hopelessly dejected, that when he asked if it would not be possible to take him in for the night, she cheerily told him, he could have a bed of clean straw and a blanket if that would satisfy him, which of course he gladly accepted, following his hostess into the room. It was low and poorly furnished, he looked about for the possessor of the male voice, but he was not to be seen though a suspicious shadow fell from behind the stove. The girl opened a door to a small bare room or shed, turned the straw that was in a corner on the floor, brought a blanket and a stump of candle, asked if he wanted anything to eat, which he refused as he had munched the rest of the lunch in his bag, on the road and was now very tired. He took off his wet and bedraggled clothes, threw himself on the straw and pulled the blanket over his ears.

Too tired to fall asleep at once he caught snatches of the conversation in the next room. The man was evidently displeased at her having admitted him, and growled incessantly. The noise waxed louder but Griggs felt too heavy to follow the meaning of what was said, though it seemed to him that finally the girl shrieked out a threat of calling the stranger, but the sound seemed now to come from a great distance. Then there came a bang or a loud report the walls about him crumbled away and a great fierce giant stood before him, and uttering some awful incantation of which he did not understand a word, seized him and scurried over the mountains to a glacier which he straddled, planting a foot in each side and held our unfortunate down on the ice in a sitting posture. The frozen river moved under him most expeditiously, the sharp ice and the pebbles frozen into its surface rasping his flesh till he howled with pain, and old Lewis Aggasy perched upon a Rocky Mountain hurled proofs of his discovery at him and defied him to prove that glaciers do not move.

The Giant gloated over him in his misery, and then hissed at him that he was making a glacier grooved specimen of him for a geological cabinet; and presto, he lay upon a shelf, a stony specimen, surrounded by a dozen interested geological spinsters, who turned him over with their umbrellas and admired his [*space left blank*] and were shocked at their position; so that he felt very badly. But his strong hands refused to draw his stony garments over them and his stony face was covered with mud, so that they could not see the blush of shame on his stony features. He was very unhappy! “Oh; horrors” shrieked one of his examiners “look he is a man specimen” and she punched him off the shelf with her umbrella and he fell and fell and fell —

It was a delicious breakfast, rye bread, butter and honey and milk and Else prattled about

herself, a foundling brought up by an old woman who had died a year ago, she lived here alone, and minded the village geese. Oh; she knew she was wicked and the village girls did not like her, but then they were jealous, for the boys all came to see her.

The rain pattered outside, in the dismal gray dawn, and Griggs was loth to leave his chatty companion, especially as there was no danger of the tête-à-tête's being disturbed for the owner of the bass voice was evidently of the boys that came to see her, and not a permanent resident. But this he merely surmised, for he asked no indiscreet questions, and resisting the temptation of a longer stay, gave a substantial form to his obligation for hospitality and admiration for his hostess and went.

He had nearly reached this summit of the paths leading from the Valley, soaked with the drizzling rain and not in altogether a pleasant mood, thinking that his haste in leaving shelter and a pleasant companion, was not altogether called for in such weather, when he was hailed by a strange figure. A little bent old man in a tattered cloak and broad rimmed hat, with a staff in his hand, which he waved at him as if importuning him to stay back, shouted some unintelligible jargon; as he came nearer the little man became very excited, waving his stick and his other hand, and in the broken fragments of his speech French and Teutonic sounds were strangely blended. From isolated words in either time, which Griggs finally caught, he concluded that this was the cowherd of the hamlet, stationed to quarantine a herd on the pass in which foot and mouth disease had broken out, and that he was to take a branch passed further down. He tried to draw the old fellow into conversation and get particulars of the troubles but he would not let him get near him and seemed at any rate incapable of uttering a connected sentence or speaking connective words in the same tongue.

As the drizzle was not inviting to a protracted effort in this direction, Griggs followed the direction of the old man's gestures, rather than his attempted verbal information and sought the other way.

How strangely the two characters he had met impressed him. The old cowherd, probably a Frenchman who had wandered into this community and growing old at his solitary occupation had forgotten his own language and not learned much of the new. The goose-girl, a little outcast of this secluded community, who had been put to the only public occupation it afforded a girl, and who punished the neglect of the village by scandalizing its daughters with her freedom. Perhaps there were other characters here, as novel as these to an American; the swineherd who fattened the village stock on the acorns and hazelnuts of the public woods; the shepherd who drove their flocks over the stubble of the harvest fields or tended them on the public meadow.

Novel institutions these, once common in all the smaller German communities. The right to send so many cows, and sheep and swine and geese to the public woods or Meadows in charge of the public official appointed for this care, was a precious right and gave dignity and standing to a man. But freedom of trade and freedom of citizenship the right to join and leave the community at will, made this common ownership impracticable and in all but out of the way corners of the various German states, this practical communism

is disappearing, and strange to say, at a time when there never was so much theorizing and writing on communistic social schemes as this.

The public lands were everywhere parceled out as sold, and the proceeds used for public improvements or institutions or divided among the citizens according to their rights, and in this division, the results were beneficial or otherwise, the dealings were fair or dishonest, generous or mean, according to the character of those who stood at the head of affairs in each community and according as the community itself was narrow or enlightened.

Two years had passed and we find Griggs homeward bound on a small vessel carrying but one cabin and steerage. The cabin community is small, composed of a number of young ladies to whom our friend has been very attentive, and has earned in consequence a little malice from two or three more awkward youths whom he has thrown in the shade. Other amusement having grown tiresome he accepted the captain's invitation to inspect the steerage and taste the steerage food.

On the round, his eye falls on a very old man seated in an out-of-the-way corner, a picture of hopeless misery. He fancied he saw a resemblance to the old cowherd of his Swiss tour, and asked the Captain about him. But he knew nothing except that he was attended by a young girl who claimed not to be a connection of his, though from the same village, and who, womanlike, showed him much devotion and simplicity. The captain expressed a fear that he would have difficulty in landing them, on account of the new emigration laws of the United States; as neither seemed to have money, friends or means of support.

In the evening as he stood near the steerage line, he saw a young girl standing by the rail looking musingly into the water. It was already dark, but her profile and form made him feel, it must be his little hostess of the Swiss Valley, about whom he had been thinking all day since seeing the old man below. He was not mistaken, and on recalling the circumstances of his visit, she too remembered him. He invited her to a seat on the cabin deck, and soon drew out the story of her emigration.

As in the other villages of which she had heard the wealthier buyers had pressed for a sale of the public lands. The poor people said, that a sale was forced to enable those who had ready money to get valuable property at a bargain, and those who had many children, and large village rights, hoped for enough means to satisfy their young sons without dividing their own estates. But in spite of grumbling, a prospect of ready money gradually tempted all, and a sale of the land went through without opposition. – Through the old woman who had adopted her, Else, had a small claim on the public fund, as did also the cowherd from a rates of office, but the amounts were small and the sale of the land deprived them of their occupations, for each buyer must henceforth look after his own stock on his own grounds. The cowherd had become unfit, through extreme old age, for other than the routine service of his life, in the place where familiarity with every rock and tree and half made it acceptable, even though his senses were almost gone. Nobody could use him now, his small stipend could not keep him and there was no alms-house for the village's only pauper. As for herself, well the women had always hated her, and now

their chance had come. They urged the men to what under similar circumstances had been done in other Swiss communities, to invest the small portion of their unfortunates, in passage for America and turned them into the world to die!

A sigh escaped the poor creature, as she told of this cruelty and looked into her own black future. Griggs was but human, what was more natural than to try and comfort the unhappy child and seal his interest with a kiss? The warm token of sympathy, melted all her pent up misery and with an irresistible impulse to cry out her heart ache on the bosom of her newfound friend, she threw her arms about his neck and hung on his lips with sobs and tears. We hardly expect our momentary impulses to be met with more than or similar response, and a cold shudder passed down poor Griggs back when he felt rather than heard the tread of two of his cabin friends, and realized that the evening was not dark enough to prevent his recognition.

The next day he determined to plead the cause of his new charge, trusting that his own caper might not have been seen or if it had to confess his own guilt and free her from censure. He pled with ardour, in spite of coldness and smiles which told him that his interesting situation of last night had been noticed and gossiped about, but he would have failed to awaken interest had not the poor old cowherd appeared on deck, a heart rendering object lesson. Against his dumb despair feminine sympathy could not hold out, and Else to came in for her share of attention, though tempered with a certain reserve, that made poor Griggs feel that his impetuosity had more than half spoiled, what his sympathy had gained for her.

But Else did not seem to feel this, she brightened up like a wilted flower in a summer rain, under even this reserved attention; her good humor knew no bounds, and carried her with passengers and sailors alike as far as ship discipline would allow. This naturally strained her relations with the young ladies, who came daily to look after the comfort of the poor old man, and when finally she innocently tried a sample of the English the sailors had primed her with on some of them, the rupture was complete.

But she did not suffer under feminine unreasonableness and injustice. Oh; dear no! Her axiom had always been, that the women were against her. But poor Griggs, who felt himself her temporary guardian and sponsor, who felt that he had started her wrongly in this little ten or twelve days life of an ocean voyage he suffered under it, and begged the young ladies not to shame him by holding her responsible for a mistake that he freely confessed and regretted, and not to censure the poor ignorant thing for a speech that rude men had taught her and that she did not herself understand.

But Griggs was compelled to hold his peace for Else scandalized the cabin by appearing with ribbons, that had been worn by one of the young ladies. She flaunted them in the eyes of all in malice of course, but she did not tell how she had gotten them, and the indignant feminine world branded her with theft. Thus poor Griggs fell from grace for too warmly befriending a losing cause and in the bitterness of his heart thumbed the dreary collection of English and German classics in the saloon when the others were on deck and paced the boards above on dismal evenings, when they were collected about the

wheezin piano below.

One day after an evening he had spent on deck alone, there was much chatter and mystery in the cabin. The captain looked savage, the men exchanged knowing winks and grins and the stewardess had knots of females collected about her, who all looked very abstracted and innocent when a man appeared in the saloon. Griggs felt himself the center of remark; the knowing glances of the men, the far away looks of the women, became intolerably accusing. He could stand it no longer and asked the first officer, what had happened on shipboard, everybody looked as if they were loaded with a secret, that each was under oath not to tell.

The officer gave him a searching stare and said briefly, that in making the rounds at eleven last night he had found the young Swiss emigrant girl who attended the old imbecile in a rather compromising position with some man, who immediately had scurried down the gangway to the cabin. The girl was now in the locker, for the rest of the voyage.

Now, what the world is a man to say against when no audible accusation has been made? Is he to go about and assure every one that he was in bed at nine o'clock? Is he to tell them that he did not know it was prudent to always pass through the saloon on retiring and shake hands with all, so that his motives are clearly defined?

Griggs saw no hope for his trying situation and retired to the steward's pantry to seek the comfort that the Lord has sent the down trodden, when Earth offers no redress. And when, that evening the last smoker had sought the deck, and the last musical female relinquished the piano for her couch, Briggs swayed out of his retreat. The sea was a little high and he spread his legs in walking, as he started through the passage between the staterooms, as the bulk of his weight was now rather above his middle. But with a full heart and a fuller head nothing could save him, when the ship lurched and he flew headlong against a door insecurely fastened by catches warped from their original position, a vision of scantily clad female loveliness, a shriek, and a pitiful appeal to be protected from being made a victim of that wretch; a feeling of being collared by a strong hand undressed and pushed into bed and a five days effort to sleep and forget, and after all the cabin had left the ship, Griggs slunk ashore.

But the steerage? Let us hope that the wretched old man died on the return voyage and was dropped in to the sea, for Else was not returned with him. The barge office officials must have believed with her fellow villagers in Switzerland that this country needed a goose girl.

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