JOHN BRETTON'S LOVE MAKING.

"I am sorry, Mr. Bretton, but I can never be your wife," said Mrs. Dallinger.

The speaker was the schoolmistress of Broken Ridge Schools, and even now at thirty-two she was considered by far the prettiest woman in that rough mining town.

"Is it—is it because—you like somebody better ?" asked John Bretton, awkwardly.

"No, it is not that," said the woman, rather sadly. "I—I like you very much. I loved you from the first day I saw you. Do you remember ? When you took my photograph."

John Bretton flushed with professional pride. He was the local photographer, the only one in the district, and he was fast making a comfortable fortune by taking portraits of the miners of Broken Ridge on all and every occasion, for a miner, when he is earning good wages, spends his money freely, and with all his rough ways he has a considerable amount of personal vanity.

"It was the prettiest picture I ever took," burst out John, enthusiastically. "But there, you couldn't help making a pretty picture," he added, as his eyes rested on her fine figure and pretty face, slightly flushed with the compliment he had just paid her.

"Is it because you don't like giving up the school ?" he asked presently, as his eyes travelled round the dainty sitting-room of the school house.

"No, no. That is not the reason," she said, with a little shake in her voice. "It is not that, because I have received notice to leave in a month. I am dismissed from the school."

"Dismissed from the school !" cried John Bretton, in surprise. "Dismissed after being mistress here since we first started a school. After eight years."

"Yes, I am dismissed," replied Mrs. Dallinger, sadly. "They—they have heard something—something detrimental to me; and they do not think I am a fit person now to teach their children."

"You mean they have heard that your husband——"

"They have heard that my husband committed murder !" cried Mrs. Dallinger, bitterly. "And for his crime the woman whom he deserted ten years ago is to be punished. She is to be branded as unfit to meet her fellow-creatures, and she is to be thrown in the gutter to starve."

"The cowardly curs !" said John Bretton, angrily. "I should like to give them a bit of my mind—and I will too. You have always earned your living honestly and done your duty. Not fit to teach their children indeed. Why, you're miles too good. You're an angel from Heaven to them, and there is not one of the little mites that would not lay down her tiny life for love of you. Ah, I know who has done this. I know who has raked up this miserable story. This is a piece of Harold Venner's work. He always hated you."

"I don t think Mr. Venner hates me," said Mrs. Dallinger, smiling sadly at John's impetuous wrath. "Why, once he even honored me by asking me to become his wife."

"Coroner Venner asked you to become his wife ?" cried John, in amazement.

"Coroner Venner and Mr. John Bretton have both done me that honor," said Mrs. Dallinger, demurely. "But why are you so surced ?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," answered Bretton, hurriedly. "I will tell you to-morrow."

For a few moments he stood thinking. Then he rose and crossed the room and stood by the schoolmistress' side.

"Mrs. Dallinger," he said, quietly, "I want you to do something. I know it will be painful to you, but I want you to tell me what you know of the murder your husband committed."

"I can tell you very little," said the woman, slowly. "At the time I was very ill in Adelaide, and I was not told anything about it till months had passed. I married Mark Dallinger thirteen years ago—when I was nineteen—and in those days I was considered pretty. But Mark's love was not nearly so true as mine, and he soon tired of me and began to treat me with cruelty. Once he went a little too far and the neighbors began to talk, and the story reached the ears of my poor old dad—he was alive then—and, old man as he was, he publicly horsewhipped my husband and took me away. The next thing we heard of Mark was that he was at Belfast, where he was known as Alfred York. About a year after he wrote a penitent letter saying he had made money at the mines and sent me $250. He said he was then going with his mate to some other newer mines, and if things went well he was going to settle down and turn over a new leaf, and he hoped I should then come back to him. He said he had gold dust with him worth nearly $25,000, so we should be quite well-to-do people. Soon after this my father was taken ill and after months of suffering passed away, and it was then that grief and nursing broke me down, and I was ailing for months.

"Later, they told me that Mark had gone north, and that he had quarrelled with his mate, and murdered him, it was supposed, for his share of the gold. This was at a lonely place called Merton's Drive, and the body was not discovered for some days ; but although the head had been completely cut off, it was identified as the mate who had passed through some town with Alfred York. From that time, ten years ago, I have never heard of him or from him. When I recovered I took to teaching, and eight years ago I obtained the appointment to Broken Ridge. I retained my married name, but let it be inferred that my husband was dead. Sometimes I wish he was."

"If you knew that he was dead, Mrs. Dallinger, would you marry me ?" asked John Bretton, earnestly.

"Yes, John Bretton—if I knew," said Mrs. Dallinger, kindly; "but it is that 'if' which makes what you ask impossible."

"One question more, Mrs. Dallinger," said John. "Did you know when you came to Broken Ridge that it was only a few miles from Merton's Drive ?"

"I did not know that till a year ago."

"And did you know that the murdered man's head was never discovered ?"

"Not until the skull was found a week ago," said the woman, with a shiver. "It was some silly words of mine spoken then which told the world I was a murderer's wife."

"Would you be brave enough to attend the inquiry—it cannot be called an inquest—which will be held upon the skull to-morrow, Mrs. Dallinger ?" asked Bretton, earnestly.

"Oh, I cannot," cried the woman, with a shudder. "Is it necessary ? Is it wise ?"

"It is not necessary," said Bretton "for you will be asked nothing. But I wish you to come for your own sake and for mine."

"I do not understand you," said Mrs. Dallinger.

"Never mind," said Bretton. "Will you come because I ask you ?"

"Yes, if you wish it, John Bretton, I will come."

* * * * * *

The Court House at Broken Ridge was crammed to its utmost capacity. Rumor had spread that the inquiry on the finding of the skull at Merton's Drive was going to be even better than an inquest, and an inquest was always considered at Broken Ridge to be nearly as good as a circus.

Certainly the Court House itself seemed to promise something unusual, for above each of the windows was hung a roll of thick black cloth. What they were for was being eagerly speculated upon when the magistrate entered, and a sudden stillness fell upon the room.

"Gentlemen," said the magistrate, "I am rather doubtful how to describe the inquiry which we are about to make. It can be hardly considered an inquest, as we have already held one ten years ago upon the body of the man to whom the skull which has recently been found is supposed to have belonged. Inspector Short has laid before me certain facts, and he now proposes to lay before this—er—this assembly of townsmen some interesting evidence which he thinks will identify the skull as belonging to Richard Somers, who was foully murdered at Merton's Drive ten years ago—— I beg your pardon, inspector ?"

"I said I would identify it as belonging to the murdered man," said the inspector.

"Quite so ; quite so," continued the magistrate. "Inspector Short is anxious that I should not mistake the case. Of course we must bear in mind that it is within the reason of possibility that the skull may have belonged to some other individual and not to the man who was murdered.

"I do not look, gentlemen, upon this in the nature of an inquest, but I have asked the coroner, Mr. Venner, to attend, as if he considers it necessary he can later hold a formal inquest on the body—I should say, of course, the skull.

"As Mr. Venner has only been in the district during the last six years, during which time he has risen to the position of being our respected town councillor and coroner, I am sure he would like to hear a resume of the former inquest, and I have no doubt that many in this room will hear it also for the first time.

"Gentlemen, on March the 17th, ten years ago, two men came to Broken Ridge, who gave the names of Alfred York and Richard Somers. Who they were or from whence they came never transpired, but it was known that they were miners, and each possessed a large amount of gold dust. They stayed for one night at the Grand Hotel. Both men were finely-built fellows, but in character they were very different. One was rough and ready, and wore a red shirt and no collar. The other was more of a dandy; and dressed with great care. It was the latter man who met his death so untimely.

"On the following morning they paid their bill and left the hotel together, and they were seen on the track to Merton's Drive by a man—Jack Rowley—who has since died. Nothing more was heard of them until the body of the better dressed man, Richard Somers, was found dead in Merton's Drive some days after. The body was found with the head completely severed, and it was never traced, but the skull now discovered is believed to be that of the murdered man. Ten years ago a verdict of murder was returned against Alfred York, but he was never apprehended. Gentlemen, I now ask Inspector Short to lay before you his evidence."

Inspector Short was a dapper little man who quickly got to business. Witness were called to prove the finding of the skull. Then with a quiet smile the genial little inspector turned to the presiding magistrate.

"I propose now, your worship," he said, "to offer you some evidence which may assist you in identifying the skull which you see upon the table before you. I call John Bretton."

"You are a photographer ?" he asked.

"I am."

"On the 17th of March, ten years ago, you took the portraits of two men newly arrived who gave their names as Alfred York and Richard Somers."

"That is so."

"It was by the aid of this photo. that the body of Richard Somers was identified a few days after the murder ?"

"It was."

"Do you believe the skull on the table here to be the skull of Richard Somers ?"

"I do not," replied Bretton, amidst much excitement.

"Illustrate your reasons," said the inspector.

In a few moments the thick black curtains were drawn over the windows and the court was in darkness, except for a few gas-burners. A white screen was raised at the end, and a stand in the centre of the court was found to contain a lime-light lantern. In a few moments a disc of white light was shining on the screen, the other lights were lowered.

With startling rapidity an enlarged photo. of the skull was thrown upon the sheet, and John Bretton's voice came clearly over the hushed court.

"This, gentlemen, is a photo. I have recently taken of the skull which is alleged to belong to Richard Somers."

Then the skull disappeared, and in a few moments in its place sprang the face of a handsome man.

"This, gentlemen, is the portrait I took of Richard Somers on March 17th."

For some moments every eye was on the screen, and many seemed to recall the handsome face, and strangely enough this was not confined to the older inhabitants.

"Gentlemen," continued John Bretton's clear voice, "the position in which I photographed the skull was identical with the position in which Richard Somers' head was held. I shall now project both the photos. on the screen together, one superimposed over the other and both visible at the same time, and I want you to notice that the features—especially the teeth and eyes—do not fit or seem to be rightly placed in the skull."

Amidst a breathless hush the face on the screen began to sink away about the eyes and mouth, and to assume a ghastly appearance. Presently the skull could be distinctly seen beneath the smiling face, but, as John had said, the eyes were not truly in the sunken sockets of the skull ; neither did the teeth and jaw truly fit the chin and mouth.

"Gentlemen," said John, "I shall now change the face for another, and I beg of you to mark the change."

Gradually the face changed and the features became so startlingly correct that the effect was horribly ghastly. It looked like a death's head surrounded by the ghostly image of a living face.

"Gentleman," said John, "this is the face of the man to whom I claim the skull belongs. Let me remove the latter and show you the features of Alfred York, or, to give him his correct name, Mark Dallinger, the husband of our schoolmistress, who has lately been branded as the wife of a murderer, when she should have been pitied as the wife if a murdered man."

A thunderous burst of applause and cheering greeted this statement, and had it not been that John had a slide with "There is more yet" written upon it, the meeting would have broken up in its anxiety to apologize to the pretty schoolmistress of Broken Ridge.

Silence was quickly restored, and John's voice again rang out over the crowded room.

"There is one thing more, gentlemen," he said. "I should like to show you again the portrait if Richard Somers, whom we can now call the murderer. Perhaps you will recognize him."

Back came the image of the first handsome face, and all strained their eyes.

"See," said Bretton, "I will superimpose another portrait of the same man taken at a later date. Watch how the hair and beard alter the face, but how little the features changed."

Slowly the hair and chin and upper lip began to darken, and in a few moments wild voices rang out from the watching crowd. "I know him now. I know him. It's Venner, the coroner !" they yelled.

In a moment the black curtains were torn down, but the coroner had gone. His seat was vacant.

Among the first to step forward was the magistrate and the chairman of the school committee, who grasped Mrs. Dallinger's hand.

"Accept my apologies, my dear Mrs. Dallinger," they cried. "You will, of course, not dream of leaving the school now ?"

"I am afraid she must," said John Bretton, quietly ; "because she is accepting a life engagement with John Bretton."—London Tit-Bits.

RELIGIOUS FANATICS.

Horrible Ways in Which Some Indians Express Belief.

Different people have different ways of showing their religion. There have been those who sought salvation by torturing others, and there are still those who think to attain it by torturing themselves.

When the Indian gentleman indulges in his favorite religious exercise he lies upon a bed of nails and takes care that his zeal shall be seen and appreciated by the multitude. To lie for hours, as this man will, on the sharp points of nails causes extreme agony, and when he is finally lifted from his bed his flesh is lacerated in a shocking manner. But alms pour in on him afterwards from those who have observed his devotion and believe in his consequent sanctity. This bed-of-nails devotional exercise is not uncommon among the Indian fakirs. A traveller in India tells of an aged blind fakir whom he came across who had for years spent most of his time sitting on a bed of nails. This old fellow, however, had got beyond the point where it hurt him much, for his skin had become so tightened by constant application of the nail points that he was merely uncomfortable.

The East Indians are ingenious in inventing forms of religious torture for themselves. One exercise which finds favor among the fakirs is to hold up the arms until they become withered and stiff, and cannot be put down again into their natural position. These people let their finger nails grow until they become so long that they curl around the fingers like snakes. A devotee of this kind has to be fed by others who are not so extreme in their religious views as he is. With the natives of India self-inflicted torture seems to always be carried out as a

RELIGIOUS PRACTICE.

The American Indians, like the East Indians, were prolific in the invention of modes of torture. But, unlike them, they seem never to have tortured themselves as a religious exercise. With them it was a method of proving their endurance and disregard of physical pain. Among the Indians of the Northwest a certain amount of physical torture had to be undergone by every candidate for admission to the ranks of warriors. The self-torture of the fakirs of India is a phase of a feeling which has been common to many divers peoples in regard to the saving of their souls. It is the outcome of the same morbidness that caused the late rising of the Doukhobors, and which made the New England Puritan "frown upon bear baiting, not because of its cruelty, but because of the pleasure it gave," and which still produces processions of Flagellantes in some towns of Southern Europe and in the southwestern part of Mexico. While in many cases this physical self-torture is the actual outward expression of "the broken and contrite heart," it has among the Indian fakirs come to be almost entirely an ostentatious display, the pains of which are borne for the sake of the reputation for sanctity which the self-tortured one attains and the consequent alms which come to him. Still, some of these fakirs are imbued with a high degree of fanaticism and honestly believe that by lying on a bed of sharp nails in this world they have a better chance of reaching Nirvana in the next.

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.

In Switzerland the bride, on her wedding-day, will permit no one—not even her parents—to kiss her upon the lips. In many of the provinces the cook pours hot water over the threshold after the bridal couple have gone, in order to keep it warm for another bride. A favorite wedding day in Scotland is December 31st, so that the young couple can leave their old life with the old year, and begin their married life with the new one—surely a pretty idea. The Italians permit no wedding-gifts that are sharp or pointed, from which practice emanates our superstition that the gift of a knife severs friendship. One of the most beautiful of all marriage customs is that of the bride immediately after the ceremony flinging her bouquet among her maiden friends. The one who catches it is supposed to be the next bride.

Angry Landlord—"Look here, are you going to pay the rent or move?" Tenant—"I have always heard it was cheaper to move." Angry Landlord (sneeringly)—"Well, you ought to know something about it by this time." Tenant — "I am not so sure about that. You see, I have never paid any rent."

INTO THE FORBIDDEN CITY

ACHIEVEMENT OF THREE DARING YOUNG JAPANESE.

It Is Regarded by Their Countrymen as Being Most Significant.

The Sacred City of Lassa, the capital city of Tibet, hitherto a forbidden city to all foreigners, has been entered recently by three daring Japanese explorers, says Japan and America. They are Capt. Yoshiteru Narita, Hiroshi Nomi and Keikai Kawaguchi, a Buddhist priest of Honganji, Kyoto.

Capt. Y. Narita is a promising young soldier and a son of Samurai of the Satsuma clan. He went to China several years ago, staying in that country for several months while he was preparing for his arduous expedition. After many dangers and hardships he succeeded in reaching Lassa, having taken several years to accomplish his self-appointed task. He stayed in the Holy City for eighteen days, and then returned to Japan about two months ago. About the same time that Capt. Narita visited Lassa Mr. Hiroshi Nomi reached the interior of Tibet. There has been no news from him for some time, and he is supposed to be on his way home. He is a very young man, but brave and cool and quiet in his ways. Mr. Keikai Kawaguchi, the third of the Japanese explorers, had the hardest experience. He went by way of the Himalaya Mountains, and suffered a severe attack of snow blindness. He was totally blind for some time, but has entirely recovered from his mountain disease. Once he was mistaken for a robber by the Tibetans, who came very near making him pay the penalty, which is in Tibet to put the robber on a horse

AND THEN SHOOT HIM.

Mr. Kawaguchi, who is a Buddhist priest, at last succeeded in reaching Lassa, and is still residing in that city.

These achievements, remarkable in themselves, are significant in another way. In the first place they show the tremendous energy and indomitable daring of the Japanese. It will be found in the case of others who have tried to reach Lassa, that they were men who had fitted themselves by long study and experience for the attempt, and who made the final effort under the most favorable conditions possible. All of them, with one or two rare exceptions, failed lamentably. Missionaries, who have won the confidence of the Tibetans, and who had learned their language failed to penetrate even to the vicinity of the sacred city. Some succeeded in getting within a day's march, and were tortured or turned back or killed. Even the most accomplished explorer of modern times, Sven Hedin, the incomparable Swede, who had fitted himself for his work by years of study and travel could not pass the Tibetan guards that protected the sacred precincts of Lassa. Yet these Japanese, young and untried adventurers, with the exception of Capt. Narita, who prepared for his expedition by living in China for several months, succeeded in attaining a goal that has been denied to the most daring and experienced travelers in the world.

But the chief significance of these remarkable achievements is the relation of a new force and energy in the world of action. It reveals an awakening in Japan such as occurred in Spain when there dawned upon her early greatness, and when she was preparing to send forth into the world her explorers and conquerors—Columbus, Cortez, Pizarro, De Soto, or in England when Drake and Howard and Hawke led the way to the glories of England on sea and land and transformed her into a world-explorer and

WORLD CONQUEROR.

It reveals the birth of tremendous national energy and an indomitable national spirit. Japan is no longer a group of islands, a collection of people, but a nation, possessed by a fiery national spirit. These things reveal it, just as it was revealed by the greater things of the war with China, and by the splendid heroism of her soldiers in the advance on Pekin, and by their more than splendid chivalry and courtesy toward the conquered Chinese.

We must now look to Japan for the Spekes, Burtons, Magellans, Livingstones, Cooks, Marco Polos. We find some of these hardy and daring explorers penetrating into portions of China forbidden to foreigners for centuries; we find more of them passing the cordons of Tibetan guards around Lassa and calmly residing within the holy limits of the capital of Lamaism, unshaken and unfraid, while the English explorers still find the Himalaya the bounds of their explorations from their neighboring possessions in India; and we may soon find them penetrating to the North Pole with the same nonchalance with which they advanced to the walls of Tientsin and Pekin under fire, scaled the walls of Ping Yang, or sank the Chinese warships in the harbor of Wei-hai-wei. A new nation has been born into the world.

They had a dispute, and agreed to leave it to the military expert. "What bullet," they asked, "do you consider the deadliest ?" For several minutes he remained in a brown study. Then he looked up with the air of one who had settled the matter finally and definitely. "The one that hits," he said.