

Appletons' journal.

New York : [D. Appleton and Co.], 1872-1881.

<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101064472341>



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"ONLY THE BRAKESMAN."

BY CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON.

I.

"ONLY the brakesman killed"—say, was that what they said?
The brakesman was our Joe; so, then—our Joe is dead!
Dead? Dead? Dead?—But I cannot think it's so;
It was some other brakesman, it cannot be our Joe.

II.

Why, only this last evening I saw him riding past;
The trains don't stop here often—go rushing by as fast
As lightning—but Joe saw me, and waved his hand; he sat
On the very last old coal-car; how do you 'count for that—

III.

That he was killed alone and the others saved, when he
Was last inside the tunnel? Come, now, it couldn't be.
It's some mistake, of course; 'twas the fireman, you'll find:
The engine struck the rock, and he was just behind—

IV.

And the roof fell down on *him*, not on Joe, our Joe—I saw
That train myself, the engine had work enough to draw
The coal-cars full of coal that rattled square and black
By tens and twenties past our door along that narrow track

V.

On into the dark mountains. I never see those peaks
'Thout hating them. For much *they* care whether the water leaks
Down their big sides to wet the stones that arch the tunnels there
So long—so black—they *all* may go, and much the mountains care!

VI.

I'm sorry for that fireman— What's that? I don't pretend
To more than this: I saw that train, and Joe was at the end,
The very end, I tell you! Come, don't stand here and mock—
What! it was *there*, right at his end, the tunnel caved, the rock

VII.

Fell on him? But I don't believe a word— Yes, that's his chain,
And that's his poor old silver watch; he bought it— What's this stain
All over it? Why, it is red!—O Joe, my boy, O Joe,
Then it *was* you, and you are dead down in that tunnel!—Go

VIII.

And bring my boy back! He was all the son I had; the girls
Are very well, but not like Joe.—Such pretty golden curls
Joe had until I cut them off at four years old; he ran
To meet me always at the gate, my bonny little man.

IX.

You don't remember him? But then you've only seen him when
He rides by on the coal-trains among the other men,
All of them black and grimed with coal, and circles round their eyes,
Whizzing along by day and night.—But you would feel surprise

X.

To see how fair he is when clean on Sundays, and I know
You'd think him handsome then; I'll have— God! I forgot—O Joe,
My boy! my boy! and are you dead? So young—but twenty.—Dead
Down in that awful tunnel, with the mountain overhead!

XI.

They're bringing him? Oh, yes, I know; they'll bring him, and, what's more,
They'll do it free, the company! They'll leave him at my door
Just as he is, all grimed and black.—Jane, put the irons on,
And wash his shirt, his Sunday-shirt; it's white; he *did* have one

XII.

White shirt for best, and proud he wore it Sunday with a tie
Of blue—a new one. O my boy, how could they let you die
Crushed by those rocks! If I'd been there I'd heaved them off—I know
They could have done it if they'd tried. They *let* you die—for, oh,

XIII.

"Only the brakesman!" and his wage was small. The engineer
Must first be seen to there in front.—My God! it stands as clear
Before my eyes as though I'd seen it all—the dark—the crash—
The hissing steam—the wet stone sides—the arch above—the flash

XIV.

Of lanterns coming—and my boy, my poor boy lying there,
Dying alone under the rocks—only his golden hair
To tell that it was Joe—a mass all grimed, that doesn't stir—
But mother'll know you, dear, 'twill make no difference to her

XV.

How black with coal-dust you may be, your poor, hard-working hands
All torn and crushed, perhaps; yes, yes—but no one understands
That even though he's better off, poor lad, where he has gone,
I and the girls are left behind to stand it and live on

XVI.

As best we can without him!—What? A wreath? A lady sent
Some flowers? Was passing through and heard—felt sorry—well, 'twas meant
Kindly, no doubt; but poor Joe'd been the very first to laugh
At white flowers round his blackened face.—You'll write his epitaph—

XVII.

What's that? His name and age? Poor boy!—poor Joe!—his name has done
Its work in this life; for his age—he was not twenty-one,
Well-grown but slender—far too young for such a place, but then
He wanted to "help mother," and to be among the men.

XVIII.

For he was always trying to be old—he carried wood
And built the fires for me before he hardly understood
What a fire was—my little boy—my darling baby Joe—
There's something snapped within my breast, I think; it hurts me so,

XIX.

It must be something broken. What is that? I felt the floor
Shake; there's some one on the step.—Go, Jennie, set the door
Wide open, for your brother Joe is coming home. They said,
"Only the brakesman"—but it is my only son that's dead!

SANTA BARBARA.

BY ALBERT F. WEBSTER.

IT is probable that no health-resort in America is regarded with more interest by the invalid class than Santa Barbara, California. It has acquired, by means of the newspapers and by real-estate agents' pamphlets, a reputation which is likely, from its over-glorious character, to do it harm for a time, and to work incalculable mischief among those travelers who trust without reflection.

Much of the fault lies at the door of careless writers, but an equal amount lies at the door of careless readers. It generally becomes very clear, upon speaking with one who professes himself disappointed, that he has only himself to blame; that he had read of the drawbacks, but that he had permitted his own imagination to so over-estimate the

value of the charms that the opposite qualities had disappeared from his mind. To take a familiar instance: With the exception of Mr. Murray, no one has received so much blame for over-praising a land as Mr. Nordhoff has. He wrote warmly in praise of most that came under his notice in Santa Barbara, and he wrote with the honesty and vigor of a healthy man, to whom the fogs and winds of the place were anything but annoyances. Yet at the same time he spoke of both of these things. The greater number of his readers, naturally glad to hear a pleasant story, took cognizance of all the rest, and gave these important items no weight at all, for the reason that the writer gave them but little. Mr. Nordhoff did not write from an invalid's standpoint,