

The Fireman

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IN one of the old-fashioned mansions which stand, or stood, on Broadway, lived Alderman Edgerton. Nothing could have induced Miss May Edgerton to reside six months in the old brick house had it not been inhabited by her grandmother before her, and been built by her great-grandfather. As it was, she had a real affection for the antiquated place, with its curiously-carved door-knocker, its oaken staircase, and broad chimneys with their heavy franklins. She was a sweet, wild, restless little butterfly, with beauty enough to make her the heroine of the most extravagant romance, and good as she was beautiful.

Little May had never known a sorrow, and in fact existence had but one bugbear for her—that was, the fates in the shape of her parents, had decreed that she should not marry, nor engage herself positively, until she had met a certain young gentleman, upon whom like commands had been imposed by his equally solicitous parents. The name, it must be confessed, impressed May favorably—Walter Cunningham; there was something manly about it, and she spent more time than she would like to acknowledge, in speculations regarding its owner, for to May, notwithstanding what Will Shakspeare has said to the contrary, there was a very great deal in a name. By some chance she had never

met him. She had passed most of her life, for what crimes she could not tell, in a sort of prison, ycleped a fashionable boarding-school, and the greater part of the vacations had been spent with a rich maiden aunt and an old bachelor uncle in the city of Brotherly Love. A few days previous to her liberation from this „durance vile,“ Walter Cunningham had set out for Paris, where he was to remain as long as suited his convenience.

May had just returned home, and having learned this little piece of news, which she very properly deemed not at all complimentary to herself, was in as vexable a mood as her amiability ever allowed. Her cousin Hal suddenly entered the room in a rather boisterous manner, with the exclamation:

„Hurrah! May, I am going to be a fireman!“

„So I should suspect,“ returned May, a little pettishly.

„Suspect?“ said Hal, sobering down in a moment.

May laughed.

„Why will you join such a set of rowdies, Hal? I should think it quite beneath me!“

„Rowdies! Those loafers who hang about the companies, attracted by the excitement and the noise, do not belong to the department.“

„You know the old adage, Hal—‘People are known by the company they keep,’ that is, ‘birds of a feather flock together.’“

„Why, May, this is too bad! They are the noblest fellows in the world.“

„Noble! I have lived too long in Philadelphia not to know something about firemen. They used to frighten me almost out of my senses. Once we thought they would set fire to the whole city, murder the people and drink their blood! O, such a savage set you never saw!“

Hal laughed outright.

„Shoot the men, strangle the women, and swallow the children alive!“ he echoed, mockingly.

„It is no subject for jesting, Mr. Hal Delancey. Philadelphia is not the only place. Take up the papers any morning, and what will you find under the Williamsburgh head? Accounts of riots, street-battles, and plunderings, in all of which the firemen have had a conspicuous part, and New York is not much better.“

„Well, May, you do make out the firemen to be a miserable set, most assuredly. Now, if I had not already committed myself,“ continued Hal, jestingly, „almost you would persuade me to denounce this gang of rowdies, murderers and robbers; but the Rubicon is passed!“

„I do detest a fireman above all men!“ ejaculated May, emphatically, as Hal left the house to go down town and procure his equipment. Little did either of them dream what was to be the scene of his first fire.

May’s too sound slumbers were disturbed about twelve o’clock that night by a confused rush of sounds, cries, shrieks, crackling beams and falling timbers. She wrapped her dressing-gown around her, and rushed to the door. Unclasping the bolts, she threw it open, but hastily closed it again, for smoke and flame rushed in, almost suffocating her.

„O, God, save me!“ she murmured, huskily, flying to the window, only to gaze upon a scene which sent dismay to her heart. Clouds of flame and smoke enveloped everything. For a moment the bursting mass of fire was stayed by a huge stream of water, and she caught a glimpse of the crowd below.

There were men, boys, engines, ladders, furniture, all heaped together in confusion; but the smoke and flame rolled forth with renewed anger after their momentary check, and all was blank again. She cried for help, but her voice was lost in the universal din. The heat became intense, the flame knocked at her very door to demand admittance; she heard its fiery tongue flap against the panels, a few moments more and its scorching arms would clasp her in their embrace of death. She knelt one moment, her soul was in that prayer; she rushed again with almost hopeless agony to the window. O, joy! and yet how terrible! That moment when the flame relaxed to gain new energy, a fireman had discovered her frail form in the glare of the light. He did not hesitate an instant; his soul was made of such stern stuff as common minds cannot appreciate. He raised the first ladder within his reach against the wall—a miserable thing, already half-burned,—and springing on it, ascended amid the flames.

He had scarcely reached the top of the third story, when he felt it bend beneath him; he heard the shriek above, the cries below, and turning, sprang to the ground unharmed, as his treacherous support fell crackling in the blaze. A shout of joy arose at his wonderful escape, and now they poured a constant, steady stream beneath the window at which May's face was discovered by all. A moment, and another ladder, much stouter than the first, was raised. The undismayed fireman ran up its trembling rounds, amid the stifling smoke, the eager flames wrapping themselves around him as he passed; a moment more, and he had reached the terrified May, caught her hand and lifted her to his side. She gazed a second on his speaking face—there was a world of meaning in it; she asked no question—he uttered not a word, but by his eye and hand guided her down that fiery, dizzy path, so full of danger and of death. A fresh burst of flame defied the stream of water; it flashed around them while all below was as silent as the grave, naught heard but the hissing of the blaze and the crackling of the timbers. May would have fallen, shrinking from the embrace of the relentless flame; but the fireman caught her in his arms and leaped to the ground just as the second ladder fell. O, then there were cries of wild delight, and with renewed vigor the dauntless men worked against the fire. May's friends came crowding around her; her father clasped her in his trembling arms, with a whispered „O, May! May! you are safe!—the old house may burn now!“ and the mother shied such tears as only thankful mothers weep.

But the noble fireman was gone; in vain Hal endeavored to gain some particulars concerning him, from the members of the company to which he belonged. They told him that not a single black ball had been cast against him, although he was a stranger to them all, save the foreman for he carried his claim to confidence in his honest face. He always pays his dues, never shrank from duty, was kind and gentlemanly—what more could they desire. The foreman himself was obstinately silent concerning the history of his friend, muttering his name in such an undertone that Hal could not understand it. On the morrow, all New York was echoing with his praises. So brave, so rashly brave a thing had not been done in years, though every week the noble firemen hazarded their lives for the safety of the city.

Hal met May with a pale, a haggard face. He had thought her safe until he saw the stranger fireman on the ladder and learned his errand. He loved his cousin, and had suffered almost the agonies of death. May burst into tears.

„O, Hal, what do I not owe to a fireman!“

Hal then recalled for the first time her words of the previous day.

„Do you despise the firemen now, May?“

„Despise them? God forbid! How devoted!—how self sacrificing!—how humane!—how noble to risk one’s life for an entire stranger! O, Harry, I wish we could learn his name, that we might at least thank him. I shall never forget the first moment when he grasped my hand; it was the first that I had hoped to live. It seemed to me there was something of a divinity in his eyes as I met their gaze, and I did not fear to descend into the very flames. But I know now what it was—the noble, self-forgetting, heaven-trusting soul shining through those eyes, which spoke to mine and bade me fear not, but trust in God.“

Hal was silent for a moment; then he said, slowly and sorrowfully:

„Every fireman could not have acted thus. O, May, will you forgive me? I felt that I could not. He impressed me with a kind of awe when after the first ladder had fallen he raised a second, as determined as before. He would have died rather than have given you up!“

It was a long while before the thought of Walter Cunningham crossed the mind of May Edgerton, and then she dwelt upon it but for a moment. A fireman had become an object of intense interest to her. Blue coats, brass buttons and epaulets sank into shameful insignificance beside the negligent costume of a fireman, and let Hal call, „Here, May, comes a glazed cap and a red shirt!“ and she was at the window in an instant. One day Hal returned home with a face glowing with excitement.

„I have seen him, uncle! May, I have seen the stranger fireman!“

„Where? where?“ was the quick response.

„There was a tremendous fire down town to-day, burning through from street to street.—’s book establishment, which has so long enlightened all the country, now illumined a good part of the city in quite another manner. The paper flew in every direction. All New York was there, and the stranger among the rest. Every one saw him, the firemen recognized him, and he worked like a brave fellow. There was more than one noble deed done to-day, for many a life was in peril.“ Hal’s eyes glistened now, for he had saved a life himself. „The poor girls who stitched the books had to be taken down by ladders from the upper stories; no one can tell how many were rescued by our hero! The flames leaped from story to story, resistless, swallowing up everything; the giant work of years, the productions of great minds, all fading, as man must himself, into ashes, ashes!“

„But, Hal, our fireman—did you not follow him?“

„Indeed I did!—up through Fulton into Broadway; up, up, up, until he hurried down Waverley Street, I after him, and suddenly disappeared among the old gray walls of the university. I went in, walked all through the halls, made a dozen inquiries, but in vain. I reckon he is a will-o’the-wisp.“

Scarce a week, had flown by before another terrific fire excited all the city. People began to think that every important building on the island was destined to the flames. The hall where Jenny Lind had sung, where little Jullien with his magic bow had won laurels, and the larger Jullien enchanted the multitude; the hall which had echoed to the voice of Daniel Webster, which was redolent with memories of greatness, goodness and delight, was wrapped in the devouring element. Hal Delancey was quickly on the ground, but the strange fireman already had the pipe of his company. He walked amid the flames with a fearless, yet far from defiant air, reminding Hal only of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace. He was everywhere, where work was to be done,

gliding over sinking beams, the example for all, giving prompt orders, as promptly obeyed, every fireman rallying around him with hearty good will, all jealousy cast aside, their watchword „Duty.“

Towards morning, when the danger to other buildings was past, Harry closely watched the stranger, who seemed to mark him too, and with two members of his company determined to follow him and find out who he was, not only that his cousin and her father might have the poor felicity of thanking him, but because he was himself entranced by the manner of the man, and like May, saw something mysteriously beautiful shining through his eyes. The three—a young lawyer, a Wall Street merchant, and Hal—now tracked the fireman's steps with a „zeal worthy of a better cause.“ Hal did not think he was showing any very good manners in thus pursuing a person who quite evidently did not wish to be known; still he had once accosted the stranger in a gentlemanly manner, and received no satisfactory reply, so now he had decided, cost what it might, to make what discoveries he was able to, with or without leave.

This time it was down, down Broadway, through Fulton to Peck Slip. The stranger's light, almost boyish form moved swiftly, but evenly onward, while behind him fell the measured tread of Hal and his companions. Arrived at the pier, instead of crossing over by the ferry, the stranger unloosed a small boat, and springing into it, seized the oars, turning back a half scornful, half merry glance at his pursuers. Hal was not to be outwitted thus. He quickly procured a boat, and the three soon overtook the stranger. They rowed silently along, not a word spoken from either boat, the oars falling musically upon the waves, darkness still brooding over the waters. The stranger made no attempt to land, but held on his course up the East River until they approached Hurl Gate.

„I do believe we are following the devil!“ exclaimed the lawyer, suddenly, recalling some of his questionable deeds, as he heard the roar of the whirlpools, and saw the foam glistening in the dim light.

„He never came in such a shape as that!“ laughed Hal, whose admiration of the stranger momentarily increased as he watched his skilful pilotage.

„Indeed, Delancey, I am not at all ready to make an intimate acquaintance with the *Pot*, or *Frying Pan*,“ again exclaimed the lawyer fireman.

Still, Hal insisted upon following, in hopes the stranger would tack about.

„You have no fears?“ said Hal, to his brother fireman, the merchant.

„Why no,“ he returned, calculatingly; „that is, if the risk is not too great.“

Now the waters became wilder, lashing against the rocks, leaping and foaming; it was a dangerous thing to venture much farther, they must turn back now or not at all; a few strokes more and they must keep on steadily through the gate—one false movement would be their destruction. The stranger's bark gradually distanced them—they saw it enter among the whirling eddies—he missed the sound of their measured strokes, glanced back, lost the balance of his oars, his boat upset, and Hal saw neither no more. There, on that moonless, starless night, when the darkness was blackest, just before the dawn, the brave fireman had gone down in that whistling, groaning, shrieking, moaning, Tartarean whirlpool! Mute horror stood on every face. Hal's grasp slackened; the lawyer quickly seized the oars, and turned the boat's prow towards the city.

„Do you not think we could save him?“ gasped Hal, his face like the face of the dead.

„Save him!“ ejaculated the lawyer; „that’s worse than mad! Malafert alone can raise his bones along with *Pot Rock*.“

Hal groaned aloud. Perhaps the stranger had no intention of going up the river, until driven by them. It was a miserable thought, and hung with a leaden weight upon Hal’s spirit. He remained at home all the next day, worn out and dejected. May rallied him.

„How I pity you, poor firemen! You get up at all times of the night, work like soldiers on a campaign, and sometimes do not even get a ‘thank you’ for your pay. You know I told you never to be a fireman!“

„I wish I had followed your advice,“ answered Hal, with something very like a groan.

May started. She noticed how very pale he was, and bade him lie down on the sofa. She brought a cushion, and sat down by his side.

„Now, Hal, you must tell me what troubles you. Has any one been slandering the firemen? I will not permit that now, since I have so kind a cousin in their ranks,“ said May, with a wicked little smile.

In vain she racked her brain for something to amuse him; Hal would not be amused. She bade him come to the window and watch the fountain in Union Park, but he strolled back immediately to the luxurious sofa, and buried his face in his hands. At last he could endure his horrid secret no longer; it scorched his brain and withered his very heart.

„May, you have not asked me if I saw the mysterious fireman last night?“

May could not trust her voice to reply.

„He was at the fire.“

„Was he?“

„I tell you he was,“ returned Hal, pettishly. „When I say he was, I do not mean that he was not. I followed him after the fire.“

„Did you?“

„Good heavens, you will drive me mad!“ Hal sprang to his feet. „I followed him I say—ay, to the death!“

Then ensued a rapid recital of all that had passed, Hal was excited beyond endurance, every nerve was stretched to its utmost, and the purple veins stood out boldly on his white forehead. He did not wait for May to say a word, but abruptly ended his narrative with:

„Was not this a pretty way to reward him for saving the life of my cousin—my sister. O, God, must the roar of that terrible whirlpool ring in my ears forever?“ He gazed a moment on May’s countenance of speechless sorrow, and rushed from the room.

For a long time Hal and May scarcely spoke to each other. He felt as though he had wronged her, and was always restless in her society. He would not bear to receive the thousand cousinly attentions which May had always lavished on him, and which she now performed mechanically; he hated to see the suppers by the corner of the grate, and after a few evenings would not notice them; but above all he could not endure that very, very sad expression in May’s eyes—for worlds he would have wished not to be able to translate it. The time for his wedding was fast drawing nigh, and he knew he should be miserable if May did not smile upon his bridal.

Weeks passed, and Delancey did not go to a fire; he paid his fines and remained at home. But he could not sleep while the bells were ringing—somehow they reminded him of that still night at Hurl Gate. By degrees the

coldness wore off between May and himself, and she consented to be Emily's, his Emily's bridesmaid.

One night, however, the bell had a solemn summons in it, which Hal could not resist. It tolled as though for a funeral, and spoke to his very heart. He threw on his fire-clothes and hastened down town. Delancey soon reached the scene of destruction. The flames were carousing in all their mad mirth, as though they were to be the cause of no sorrow, no pain, no death. Hal's courage was soon excited; he leaped upon the burning rafters, rescuing goods from destruction, telling where a stream was needed; but suddenly he became paralyzed—he heard a voice which had often rung in his ear amid like scenes, a greater genius than his own was at work. He learned that he was innocent, even indirectly, of the stranger's death. Joy thrilled through every vein, he could have faced any peril, however great. Regardless of the angry blaze, he made his way through fire and smoke to the stranger's side. The fireman paused in his labor a moment, grasped Hal's hand, and with a smile, in which mingled a dash of triumph, said:

„You see I am safe.“

„Do you forgive my rudeness?“ asked Hal.

„Entirely!“ was the ready response, and they went to work again.

In a few minutes Hal was separated from his friend—for he felt that he was his friend, and could have worked at his side until his last strength was expended. Retiring from the burning building to gather new vigor for the conflict, a sight glared before his eyes as he gazed backward for a moment, which froze his blood and made him groan with horror. The rear wall of the building, at a moment when no one expected it, with a crash, an eloquent yell of terror, fell, How many brave men were buried beneath the ruins, none could say. Hal saw the stranger falling with the timbers and the mass of brick he strained his gaze to mark where he should rest, but lost sight of him beneath the piled-up beams and stones.

„A brave heart has perished!“ cried Hal, thinking of but one of the many who had fallen sacrifices to their noble heroism. All night long the saddened, horrified firemen worked in subduing the flames and extricating the bruised bodies of the victims. Some still breathed, others were but slightly injured, but many more were drawn forth whose lips were still in death, their brave arms nerveless, and their hearts pulseless forever. O, it was a night of agony, of terror and dismay! The fireman's risk of life is not poetry, nor a romance of zeal, or picture wrought by the imagination. It is an earnest, solemn, terrible thing, as they could witness who stood around those blackened corpses on that midnight of woe.

Hal searched with undiminished care for the noble stranger, until his worn energies required repose. In vain did he gaze upon the recovered bodies to find that of the fireman it was not there, Towards morning they found his cap; they knew it by the strange device—the anchor and the cross emblazoned on its front, above the number of his company.

„A fitting death for him to die!“ said clergymen, as they recalled his bravery, the majesty of his mien, the benevolence of every action.

The news of the disaster spread through the city with the speed of lightning. Friends hastened to the spot, and O, what joy for some to find the loved one safe!—what worse than agony for others to gaze upon the features of their search all locked in ghastly death! With conflicting emotions, Delancey told May

Edgerton of his last meeting with the strange fireman. A gush of thankfulness shot through her heart that he had not perished that dark night in Hurl Gate, that he had met an honorable doom. Hal preserved his cap as an incentive to goodness and greatness, and longed to be worthy to place on his own the mysterious device of the stranger.

The funeral obsequies of the deceased firemen were celebrated by all the pomp esteem could propose, or grief bestow. Mary Edgerton stood by the window as the long ranks of firemen filed round the park, all wearing the badge of mourning, the trumpets wreathed in crape, the banners lowered, the muffled drums beating the sad march to the grave. All the flags of the city were at half-mast, the fire bells tolled mournfully, and when, wearied with their sorrowful duty, their cadences for a while died away in gloomy silence, the bells of Trinity took up the wail in chiming the requiem to the dead. Everywhere reigned breathless silence, broken only by these sounds of woe.

As May gazed on the slow procession, her eye was attracted by the emblem on a fireman's cap—it was the same—an anchor and a cross! That form, it could be no other, the face was turned towards her, it was the stranger fireman! His very step bespoke the man, as with folded arms and solemn tread he followed in the funeral cortege.

That evening Hal Delancey returned home, his countenance beaming with joy, in strange contrast with the gloom of the day. „May, he is safe again!“ was his first exclamation, „He is a perfect Neptune, Vulcan, master of fire and flood. Neither the surging eddies of Hurl Gate, nor ghastly flames and crashing beams have been able to overcome him. How he escaped he scarcely knows, and yet he does not bear a scar. So skilful, so agile, so brave, so dominant over all dangers, we easily might fancy him one of the old heathen deities!“

The next day there was to be some public literary exercise at the university, to which the alderman's family had been invited. May remembered Hal's once saying that he saw the fireman disappear somewhere around that venerable building, so an early hour found her seated at her father's side in the solemn-looking chapel, watching the arrival of the spectators, but more particularly the entrance of the students. The exercises commenced, still May had discovered no face resembling the fireman of her dreams. Several essays were pronounced with ease and grace, and the alderman took a fitting occasion to make a complimentary remark to one of the officers of the institution who was seated near him. „Exactly, exactly,“ echoed the professor, „but wait until young Sherwood speaks!“

Marion Sherwood was called, and there arose from among the heavy folds of the curtain that had almost entirely concealed him, a student who advanced with the dignity of a Jupiter and the grace of an Apollo. Duty was his theme. The words flowed in a resistless torrent from his lips. Every thought breathed beauty and sublimity, every gesture was the „poetry of motion.“ More than once did the entranced May Edgerton catch the dark eyes of the orator fixed with an almost scrutinizing gaze upon her face. The walls rang with applause as he resumed his seat; bouquets were showered at his feet by beauty's hand, the excited students called out „Sherwood, Sherwood!“ he had surpassed himself. May scarcely heard a word that followed. She was delighted to find that she had not deceived herself, that in intellectual strength he equalled the promise of his daring.

At the close of the exercises Marion Sherwood would have hastened away, but the chancellor detained him. „Alderman Edgerton desires an introduction to you, sir,“ deliberately remarked the chancellor. Marion bowed. The alderman, after the first greeting, caught his hand. „I cannot be deceived, sir; you are the gallant youth who so nobly rescued my daughter from a terrible death.“ Again Marion bowed, hesitatingly, striving to withdraw his hand from the alderman’s grasp. „Will you not permit me at least to thank you?“ said Mr. Edgerton, in a wounded tone. Young Sherwood had not the slightest intention of offending him, and wished to hasten away only to escape observation. Now, however, with his usual generosity, he forgot his own inclinations, and permitted himself to be overwhelmed with expressions of heartfelt gratitude. He suddenly checked the alderman’s torrent of eloquence by requesting an introduction to his daughter, who stood in the shadow of a pillar awaiting her father. May Edgerton’s one little sentence of earnest thanks, speaking through every feature, was more grateful to the young student than all her father’s words. One mutual glance made them friends in more than name. Now many an evening found Marion Sherwood whiling away a student’s idle hours in the luxuriant drawing-room of Mr. Edgerton. May and he together read their favorite poets and the old classic writers, his daring mind stored with philosophy, guiding her wild imagination, her gentle goodness beguiling his holder thoughts into the paths of virtue. O, it was blissful thus to mingle their day-dreams, encircling themselves in rainbows of hope and stars lit by each other’s eyes, all breathing upon them beauty and blessings. May had already wreathed the unknown fireman in all the attributes of virtue and of manliness; happy was she to find them realized in Marion. And he, when sitting in the shadows of the old marble pile, gazing up at the brilliant sky, had pictured a being beautiful and good, whose soul could comprehend the yearnings of his own, and this he found in May. Thus their two souls grew together, until their thoughts, their hopes, their very lives seemed one.

When Marion Sherwood requested of Mr. Edgerton the hand of his daughter, and learned that she was not free, at least until she had met a certain gentleman who was every day expected, his soul recoiled with a sudden sting; he had so leaned upon this staff of happiness, and now it bent like a fragile reed. May laughed in scorn that she should prefer any one to Marion, but he learned that the stranger was talented, handsome, wealthy, everything that a lady would desire in her favored suitor. If he did not release her, she was not free, and could he be adamant to the captivating charms of guileless, spiritual, beautiful May!

Scarcely had a day passed after Marion—whom May and her father knew only as one of Nature’s noblemen—had learned this wretched news which sank into his heart like a poisoned dagger, when the vessel arrived which bore Walter Cunningham, his mother and step-father from France. A few miserable days passed—miserable they were to May and Marion, and the evening was appointed when Cunningham and his parents should call at the alderman’s and May’s fate, in part, at least, be decided. Marion also was to be there. He arrived early, unknowing even the name of his rival. He concealed himself among the flowers in the conservatory, pacing up and down the fragrant, embowered walks with hasty step and anxious heart. How fondly memory roved back over the jewelled past, glistening with departed joys; how fearfully imagination strove to penetrate the gloomy future; how tremblingly did he await the bursting storm of the blackened present.

The guests had arrived, and Marion was summoned to the drawing-room. With jealous care he had dressed himself in a fireman's costume made of rich materials, which wonderfully became him, that it might remind May what he had dared for her, and what had rendered them so dear unto each other. He stood with folded arms, his eyes fixed upon May Edgerton, scarcely daring to glance at the stranger. Suddenly he lifted his eyes to the pale face of his rival, which was bowed towards the floor.

„Walter!“ he cried.

„Marion!“ was the startled response.

„Choose, May! choose between us!“ exclaimed Marion, with glistening eyes and extended hand.

„With your leave, Mr. Cunningham,“ she said joyfully, speaking to Walter, but placing her hand in that of Sherwood.

„Man proposes, God disposes.“ A weight was lifted from Cunningham's heart. While abroad, negligent of his promise to his parents, he had wooed and won a lovely girl to whom he had been privately married a few weeks before setting sail for home, with the promise of a speedy return. So desirous did he find his parents that May Edgerton should be his wife, that he did not dare confess his recreancy, but relied upon the hope that May's affections were already engaged, and thus she would save him in part from the anger of his parents. Why did not Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood frown and scold at May's poor taste! Why! Because they loved their son Marion quite as well his half-brother, Walter Cunningham, and were easily reconciled to the change of suitors, especially when they learned Walter had already secured a most estimable wife.

Marion had heard that his brother was engaged conditionally to some „proud, beauty heiress“ of New York, and was not at all displeased to have him renounce all claim to his promised bride, when he found to his astonishment that it was his own May Edgerton, whom Cunningham confessed it would have been no difficult thing to love.

„Only to think of May Edgerton marrying a fireman!“ exclaimed Hal Delancey, in great glee, as the wedding, which passed off as all weddings should, without a cloud upon heart, face, or sky.

May blushed and whispered to Marion that if ever there was a benevolent, noble, trustworthy man upon the earth, it was a true-hearted fireman.

If my recital has enlarged one contracted soul, has persuaded one mind to throw aside false prejudices, has taught one child of luxury to look with sympathetic admiration on those who devote themselves so nobly to the public good, has encouraged one bold heart to labor with more exalted zeal in the cause of humanity, this „ower true tale“ has not been written in vain.

