

## Whistling in Heaven

You're surprised that I ever should say so?  
Just wait till the reason I've given  
Why I say I sha'n't care for the music,  
Unless there is whistling in heaven.  
Then you'll think it no very great wonder,  
Nor so strange, nor so bold a conceit,  
That unless there's a boy there a-whistling,  
Its music will not be complete.

It was late in the autumn of '40;  
We had come from our far Eastern home  
Just in season to build us a cabin,  
Ere the cold of the winter should come;  
And we lived all the while in our wagon  
That husband was clearing the place  
Where the house was to stand; and the clearing  
And building it took many days.

So that our heads were scarce sheltered  
In under its roof when our store  
Of provisions was almost exhausted,  
And husband must journey for more;  
And the nearest place where he could get them  
Was yet such a distance away,  
That it forced him from home to be absent  
At least a whole night and a day.

You see, we'd but two or three neighbors,  
And the nearest was more than a mile;  
And we hadn't found time yet to know them,  
For we had been busy the while.  
And the man who had helped at the raising  
Just staid till the job was well done;  
And as soon as his money was paid him  
Had shouldered his axe and had gone.

Well, husband just kissed me and started--  
I could scarcely suppress a deep groan  
At the thought of remaining with baby  
So long in the house alone;  
For, my dear, I was childish and timid,  
And braver ones might well have feared,  
For the wild wolf was often heard howling.  
And savages sometimes appeared.

2

But I smothered my grief and my terror  
Till husband was off on his ride,  
And then in my arms I took Josey,  
And all the day long sat and cried,  
As I thought of the long, dreary hours  
When the darkness of night should fall,  
And I was so utterly helpless,  
With no one in reach of my call.

And when the night came with its terrors,  
To hide ev'ry ray of light,  
I hung up a quilt by the window,  
And, almost dead with affright,  
I kneeled by the side of the cradle,  
Scarce daring to draw a full breath,  
Lest the baby should wake, and its crying  
Should bring us a horrible death.

There I knelt until late in the evening  
And scarcely an inch had I stirred,  
When suddenly, far in the distance,  
A sound as of whistling I heard.  
I started up dreadfully frightened,  
For fear 'twas an Indian's call;  
And then very soon I remembered  
The red man ne'er whistles at all.

And when I was sure 'twas a white man,  
I thought, were he coming for ill,  
He'd surely approach with more caution--  
Would come without warning, and still.  
Then the sound, coming nearer and nearer,  
Took the form of a tune light and gay,  
And I knew I needn't fear evil  
From one who could whistle that way.

Very soon I heard footsteps approaching,  
Then came a peculiar dull thump,  
As if some one was heavily striking  
An ax in the top of a stump;  
And then, in another brief moment,  
There came a light tap on the door,  
When quickly I undid the fast'ning,  
And in stepped a boy, and before

There was either a question or answer  
Or either had time to speak,  
I just threw my glad arms around him,  
And gave him a kiss on the cheek.

3

Then I started back, scared at my boldness.  
But he only smiled at my fright,  
As he said, "I'm your neighbor's boy, Ellick,  
Come to tarry with you through the night.

"We saw your husband go eastward,  
And made up our minds where he'd gone,  
And I said to the rest of our people,  
'That woman is there all alone,  
And I venture she's awfully lonesome,  
And though she may have no great fear,  
I think she would feel a bit safer  
If only a boy were but near.'

"So, taking my axe on my shoulder,  
For fear that a savage might stray  
Across my path and need scalping,  
I started right down this way;  
And coming in sight of the cabin,  
And thinking to save you alarm,  
I whistled a tune, just to show you  
I didn't intend any harm.

"And so here I am, at your service;  
But if you don't want me to stay,  
Why, all you need do is to say so,  
And should'ring my axe, I'll away."  
I dropped in a chair and near fainted,  
Just at thought of his leaving me then,  
And his eye gave a knowing bright twinkle  
As he said, "I guess I'll remain."

And then I just sat there and told him  
How terribly frightened I'd been,  
How his face was to me the most welcome  
Of any I ever had seen;  
And then I lay down with the baby,  
And slept all the blessed night through,  
For I felt I was safe from all danger  
Near so brave a young fellow, and true.

So now, my dear friend, do you wonder,  
Since such a good reason I've given,  
Why I say I sha'n't care for the music,  
Unless there is whistling in heaven?  
Yes, often I've said so in earnest,  
And now what I've said I repeat,  
That unless there's a boy there a-whistling,  
Its music will not be complete.