

James & Hannah Tucker McCowan Love Story

FEATURING

James & Hannah Tucker McCowan Family

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Transcribed by Darrell Hansen

Love and Romance of Real Life as Told by One of the Lovers Both Await the Visit Of the "Death Angel"



To the Editor of The Tribune:

BENNINGTON, Bear Lake County, Ida. July 6—I was much surprised to read in The Tribune of July 5, an article written by John Willam Headen, headed: "Wedded After Sixty Years. Strange Romance of an Old Couple. Loved and Parted Long Ago, on the Faraway Atlantic Coast. Met Again to Marry in the Intermountain Region, and Now Wife is Dying."

I have no doubt that we are the couple referred to, but he is mistaken as to names. My name is James McCowan. I am, I believe, the only non-Mormon in the town. I was born in the city of Philadelphia, March 16th, 1818. My wife's maiden name was Hannah T. Reed and she was born in Burlington County, New Jersey, May 10th, 1821. Her father died when she was 11 years old, leaving a widow with seven other children.

They moved to Philadelphia and about the year 1838, I became acquainted with Hannah T. Reed, who was then a very pretty girl of 17 years. I fell in love with her and my love was reciprocated.

I courted her a year or more, this lovely girl from New Jersey shore;

No daughter born to Lord or Earl

Could love me like this Jersey girl.

Clouds on the Horizon.

She had a cousin, Charles Reed, who in my absence one 4th of July, introduced my girl, a nice little man who gallanted her out on that day and I was told they had a jolly good time together. On my return the following Sunday, I was going to her home to take her to church, as was my custom, when on the way I met a girl of her acquaintance who accosted me with "Good morning, Mr. McGowan. Oh, you are cut out. Her cousin, Charles Reed introduced her to a young man and they had a good time together on the Fourth."

I tried to make light of it and bade her good morning, but began to feel very hot. I walked around a square to cool off, then went to the home of my girl. Took her to church. While on the way she endeavored to explain to me the reason she went out with her cousin and the other young man on the 4th of July. That did not seem satisfactory to me.

I left her at the church, went to a hotel nearby, tried to read a newspaper and returned to the church about the time of the close of the service. Then I met the man who had gallanted my girl out on the 4th of July, waiting at the door of the church to gallant her home.

I stood some distance off to see if she preferred him to me. She finally appeared past him and came to me.

Received an Apology.

I met the young man afterward and he apologized to me. Said he was not aware I was paying attention to Miss Reed. This matter was exaggerated by pretended friends.

About this time, a people calling themselves Mormons or Latter-day Saints were holding meetings which my girl and mother attended. They became converts to the Mormon doctrines. Left their own church and joined them. This happened when we had been separated for a year or more.

In the meantime, her cousin Charles Reed, who had been the cause in a great measure of our separation, introduced to my girl a man by the name of Jamison, a sea faring man much older than herself, and by persuasion she was induced to marry, and by whom she had a son. This marriage was by no means a happy one. She was soon divorced from him.

In the year 1846 she, with her child and mother, went to New York and joined a party of Mormons, and in the ship Brooklyn sailed for California. After a voyage of six months they reached there. About this time the gold fever broke out and they went to the mines and were there for two years, after which they took wagons, drove to Salt Lake, and arrived there after a rough journey of six weeks.

Brigham Young Married Them.

Some time after this my girl became acquainted with a man by the name of James Graham, and was married to him by Brigham Young. By this husband she had two children, a son and daughter. The husband died in 1853, leaving her with three children, one by her former husband and two by the later marriage. She had a hard struggle to bring them up to manhood and womanhood. But the brave little woman met her serious responsibilities, and by her hard work and waiting upon the sick succeeded at last.

The oldest son, John Jamison, died 17 years ago this July 4th. Her daughter, Mrs. Anna Weaver, 55 years old, is living here while her son, William B. Graham, with his family, is living at Salem, Ida.

Now for a brief history of myself. I married, had quite a number of sons and daughters, four of whom are now living, the oldest, the Reverend W. S. Mccowan. D. D., Ph. D., a Methodist preacher stationed at Woodbridge, N. J., three married daughters living at Millville, Cumberland County, New Jersey and all are fairly prosperous.

I carried on the tailoring business for a number of years and went to Philadelphia occasionally to buy goods. Often I had several hours to wait and on one of those visits some fifteen years ago, after laying a stock of goods, I had to wait for a return train.

Heard of His First Love.

I was walking along Chestnut street when I met Charles Reed, the cousin of my old love, whom I had not seen for many years. He recognized me and insisted that I should come into his store. We talked of by-gone days. Suddenly, he exclaimed, "Oh, by the way, I have a letter from my cousin Hannah in which she inquired of me if you were still living."

Of course, I was very much interested. He gave me her address. I had not heard from her for more than fifty years. When I returned home, I wrote her a few lines telling her how glad I was to hear from her, hoped she was happy, and asked her to give my regards to her husband. You could judge by my surprise about two weeks later when I received a letter from her saying she was a widow and had been for more than twenty years, and how glad she was to hear I was still living.

Several letters passed between us, but my wife was still living, so I wrote to her that we had better not correspond, but it might have might cause trouble. Five years passed. I quit business, built a house for my wife, whose house was poor. When the house was finished and furnished, we lived in it seven months, and at that time my wife died.

I broke up housekeeping, divided the furniture, sold the house and went to live with one of my daughters. I had a room furnished comfortably and had the kindest attention, but with it all I was very unhappy. At this time I wrote to my old love that my wife had died and received a letter of condolence. We renewed our correspondence.

Real Love Letter in Rhyme.

This is my reply to one of her letters:

*Although it will puzzle the gray-headed sage
To know all that is done in this wonderful age.
Yet what I do know, I will write with my quill
To assure you, dear Hannah, I think of you still.
I think of the time when I first I saw you,
When I looked in your eyes, beautiful blue,
How my heart was affected with love's fatal spell,
How much I then loved you I never can tell.
We may try as we will our feelings to smother.
We can never forget the kiss of each other,
Nor the thought we had that soon in this life,
We should be joined together as husband and wife.
But it was not to be, for fate and decree had decreed
Some other would marry my dear Hannah Reed.
I hope he was loved, he has loved her as I would have done.
Had I been her husband instead of that one.
Time has passed on. Many years have been told.
Youth was departed, and now I am old;
But I cannot forget, till I from life I am freed,
The girl I first loved -- my dear Hannah Reed.*

Finally I made-up my mind to visit her. I bought a through ticket to Montpelier Ida. I drove to Bennington and arrived there on November 20, and met my dear old love after a separation of so many long years. I have no words that can fully express the joy of our meeting. We made up our minds to spend the remnant of our days together. So three days after we made up a party of friends, among them Bishop Wright, and we drove to Hot Springs, and there were married by the Bishop.

This event occurred nearly eight years ago. We have lived happy, and often talked over our strange and mysterious experiences. For the last year my dear old love's health has failed. She suffers from asthma and rheumatism. And for the last five weeks, with but few exceptions, has not been able to lie down.

Await the Coming of Death's Angel.

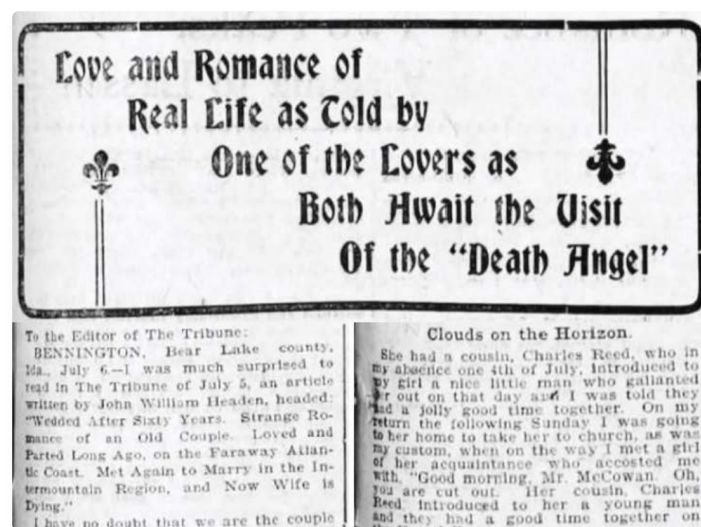
I am feeble and old; we both have lived beyond the allotted period of human life. Soon we must pass beyond the curtain which never outward swings. Sitting by her whenever I can, I am waiting for the death angel to come and relieve her of suffering.

*Ah, yes, the death angel will come for us soon,
But whether it be midnight, morning or noon,
Will matter little if in truth we can say Christ is our hope of salvation today.
Our journey through life has been rather rough.
Of earth's pleasures and troubles we have had quite enough.*

*So let the grim monster shoot from his bow
 His arrow of death, and lay each of us low.
 Our friends can bury us in the earth deep,
 Side by side we can rest in the silence of sleep
 Until the last trumpet of Gabriel shall sound
 To wake up the dead that lie under the ground.
 For in the great book of the Lord it is said
 The earth and the sea shall give up their dead;
 The great angel with foot on sea and on shore,
 Will cry with a loud voice that time is no more
 Then with immortals that never know pain,
 I hope we shall meet each other again.
 Though it may not be as husband and wife—
 For that's a relationship that ends with this life—
 In that beautiful city whose streets are of gold.
 No marriages there, so we were told
 By Jesus himself, our Savior and Lord
 Says all who go there are as the angels of God.*

Much more could be written. If all the strange experiences through which we have passed were known to some competent writer, who could dress it up, it would be as an interesting as any romance ever written. Should you be personally acquainted with the gentleman who wrote the article in reference to it, convey to him our appreciation of his kind words.

JAMES M'COWAN



James McCowan Response to Newspaper Article