

# The Lincoln Courier.

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## A More Important Case.

Hackman is the doctor at home? Bridget—Yes, sir; he's out in the back yard killing a chicken, Hackman—Call 'im in, I've got bigger game.—Puck.

## A Puzzling Custom Explained.

Editha—I wonder why the dudes wear one eye glass? Deborah—To prevent seeing more than they are able to comprehend. *Jeweler's Weekly.*

## Love for Keeps.

Tea—Why don't you take that girl of yours out to see something? Ned—Because she wants me to buy her everything she sees.—*New York Evening Sun.*

"Maad," said the young man, with deep tenderness, "you have long possessed my heart. Do not refuse my hand!"

The lovely girl looked a moment at his out stretched hand and, in a low, tremulous, passionate tone that thrilled him to his heart's core, she said: "Harry, if I had such a looking hand as that I'd wash it!"—*Chicago Tribune.*

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## A Precious Set.

A little boy of five went with his mother to make a call. The lady of the house, who was very fond of children, told him she intended to ask his mother to let her have him: "Don't you think your mother would let me buy you?" she asked. "No," he said, "you haven't got enough money."

"How much would it take?" she asked. "Three hundred pounds," he answered promptly. "and you haven't got that much."

"I think I can manage it," she said. "If I can will you come to me?"

"No," he said, with decision. "Mamma wouldn't sell me, anyhow. There are five of us and mamma wouldn't like to break the set."—*London Tid-Bits.*

Mattie persisted in running off to a neighbor's, and her mother said: "If you go out of that gate again, Mattie, I'll whip you." In a short time Mattie was discovered on forbidden ground, and was led home. "Now, Mattie, what did I tell you?" "Mamma, I didn't go out of the gate; I climbed over the fence."

## MY ICELANDIC MAIDEN.

[Concluded from last week.]

"Tremayne, old chap, not hurt, are you? By jove, how white he is, Hamilton! For heaven's sake, old boy, say you're not killed outright—say something, do!" cried Balfour, bending over me in such a genuine agony of tender feeling that I have never since regarded his want of professional success as a wonder.

Probably if I had made a supreme effort I might have been able to relieve his mind by pronouncing a word or two, but I was in great pain and felt deadly faint, so I did not think it worth the trouble, and, like a certain celebrated warrior's lady, I "neither spoke nor moved."

Hamilton made no inquiries, for, in spite of his want of practice, he knew fast enough what had happened; but, assuring poor Frank that my death was not quite so imminent as he supposed, sent him and the guide to fetch a mattress from the tent. On this they proceeded to carry me somewhere; but, after the first jolt, I did not know much more about it, so that it was not without some surprise I opened my eyes to find myself back again in the comfortable bedroom which I thought that morning I had left forever. I looked round immediately for Thora, but it was only her mother who stood beside me; and so great an appearance of concern and alarm did her face display that I involuntarily began to entertain considerable fears on my own account.

An hour later I was still lying there, but this time with the comfortable consciousness that my leg had been badly broken and put together again, and that, for six delightful weeks at the very least, I might count on the companionship of Thora. I blessed the goddess, I blessed the guide, I blessed the stone over which I had stumbled, and finally—being rather done up by the whole occurrence—I blessed myself very, very drowsily, and fell fast asleep.

When I next woke I was possessed by an uncontrollable desire to put all means of removal completely out of the way, and accordingly I entreated Balfour to leave me to Hamilton's care and take a little pleasure trip himself to Norway in the Wave. At first he most unwillingly, but on having the plan represented to him by me in various cunning lights, and being assured by Ned that my case was by no means a dangerous one, he reluctantly consented, and my six weeks became assured, inasmuch as the yacht was not to return before their close. My spirits rose immensely, and in two or three days I had waxed sufficiently courageous to bint, with Ned's assistance, to our good-natured hostess that it would greatly assist my recovery if she would consent to bring her charming daughter with her the next time she might visit my sick room. This she did at least three times in the day, therefore I had not to wait long for the fulfillment of my wish. That afternoon she came again, and, leading Thora by the hand to my bedside, placed a chair there for her, and taking a seat in the middle of the room herself, waited for our conversation to begin.

Thora, with a world of pity in her lovely eyes, hoped I was better, and when I had made a pretty speech—slowly spoken of course—explaining how very much better I had become within the few minutes, together with the reason why, she looked down at a closed volume on her knee and blushed deeply. Ned had discreetly taken himself off, and the good mother understood not a word; lest the pretty color should die away too quickly, I said a good deal more in the same strain, and then began to wish she would make me an answer. Presently she recovered herself, and said:

"I have English *livre* brought. Shall I to you read?"

The book was, of all books, Tennyson's "Princess," and I did not

fancy it was one that, with her limited knowledge of the language, she could easily read aloud, but her attempt was more successful than I expected. Having asked me to choose a favorite passage, she read, "Tears, idle tears" to the end with very few mistakes, and then I took the book, saying, "It is my turn now, and read:

If you be, what I think you, some sweet dream, I would bid you to fulfil yourself: But if you be that I do whom I knew, I ask you nothing: only, if a dream, Sweet dream, be perfect. I shall die to-night.

Stoop down and seem to kiss me ere I die. "Do you understand it all?" I asked; but the question was unnecessary, for her eyes were full of tears, and her voice trembled as she asked me softly:

"Will you die?"

"No, no," I said; "not for a long time, I hope. But, Thora, would you—would you be sorry if I did?"

"We would all sorry be," she replied guardedly. Then, as if afraid her words were unkindly cold to an invalid, she added, "I am glad that you live."

We were both silent for a little, and then I made a deep and wily suggestion. Would she not like to improve her English? I should be delighted to give her lessons every day. It would be a thousand pities to waste the time of my illness in doing nothing when such an opportunity for usefulness offered. Might I not consider myself her tutor from henceforth?

She caught at the idea at once. It would be delightful. There was nothing she so much wished as to speak English perfectly, and no difficulties were in the way, for she possessed a grammar and some other books which the "learned lady" had left with her as a parting gift. It was therefore arranged, with the good mother's full consent and approval, that our lessons were to begin next day, and then they left me to fall asleep in the midst of my efforts to remember something from that very book we had been reading—something about a swallow—what was it?

Oh, were I thou that she might take me in, And lay me on her bosom, and her heart Would rock the snowy cradle till I died.

It seemed to come to me in a dream, followed by Thora's soft question, "Will you die?" Then every word she had ever spoken to me repeated itself, and, as they murmured through the land of dreams, I felt that I was indeed well contented with my lot.

How I enjoyed those never-to-be-forgotten lessons! She was so quick to understand; so intelligent and appreciative when we turned from grammatical drudgery and exercise writing to literature; and withal so beautiful that I lay in spirit at her feet and worshiped the whole day long. But all things, however sweet, draw to a close, and five weeks of my life in Paradise had passed, leaving me so far recovered that I had to acknowledge myself unprovided with any excuse to protract my stay beyond the specified sixth. I had made no open love to Thora, but I felt sure she knew that she had won my heart, and—without vanity—I felt equally sure that she had given hers to me. It was impossible that I could leave the farm house without speaking to her. No doubt my most dutiful course would have been to return first to England, explain the matter to Lord Fairmount, and get his consent for what I was about to do; but other reasons, I fear, weighed more heavily with me than duty.

In the first place, I could not leave Thora for all that time to suppose herself deserted, and in the second place my uncle's decision would make no real difference, for even if he should disinherit me, or—still worse—quarrel with me, I could not give up my love. Of course his cutting me off with a shilling would not be without evil consequences, for in that case I should have to wait perhaps many years for the fulfillment of my dream of happiness; but nothing should hold me back from the pursuit of it. A chill fear seized me as I pictured myself struggling

among a band of unsuccessful professionals such as Hamilton and Balfour—not at the prospect of a hard life, but of the long waiting for Thora—the impossibility of bringing her to a home chiefly furnished with staring wants—and I grew despondent and miserable as I pondered.

Then a middle course suggested itself to me, and on the spot I resolved to adopt it. I would ask Thora the very next day to give me her promise to be my wife some time in the future, and, if she consented, when the yacht came back I would make all haste to England, and (for alas! necessity has made me cunning) make rather a compliment of it to Lord Fairmount that I had delayed our marriage for the purpose of obtaining his consent in person. That he would not grant it I felt nearly positive. He had, good as he was, certain aristocratic prejudices, and would be sure to object to the union of his high and mighty heir with the daughter of an obscure farmer, even though he should be convinced that she was as perfect a lady as any in the land, and the mere fact of her being a foreigner would, I knew, increase his dislike to the arrangement. Had she been the daughter of a nobleman, her want of fortune would have been no objection to him, but it was her humble birth to which he would be irreconcilable; and, even if he could meet her, her foreign accent would probably counteract the charms of her sweet face, which might as well have belonged to his own as to any other country.

These considerations, however, had nothing to do with my resolution, and on the following day I took an early opportunity of acting in accordance with it. We were sitting together, hand in hand, she and I. I had heard the words I longed for—she had said she loved me—and we were calmly and completely happy in spite of the gloomy uncertainty of our near future.

"You really love me well enough to wait for perhaps years and years, and marry a poor man even in the end?" I asked, greedily seeking reassurance of what I had been already told.

"Well enough for anything," she answered softly. "You are my life. You are as my own soul. Can I more say to you?"

Oh, my darling! I had done nothing to deserve so much. I could only hold her to my heart and kiss her over and over again, with a feeling of strong self-reproach mingled with my joy, for it seemed to me that I had brought a trouble into her life from which she might easily have been saved.

The day wore on in otherwise uninterrupted happiness, for the old man, whose presence always filled me with a vague sense of mysterious uneasiness, was not well, and had not left his room for two or three days; and his wife, who, in spite of her kindness, would naturally have been a restraint, was in close attendance on him. Ned Hamilton had made a journey to Regjaviik to see about stores for our homeward voyage, and so, except when she was employed in paying visits of inquiry to the sick man, I had Thora all to myself. It did not occur to either of us to suppose that there was anything dangerous in his illness, for he was often ailing, and it was looked on in the house as nothing very extraordinary; but, towards nightfall, his wife came to us with a white and troubled face to say that he was worse—much worse—and, seeing that she wished it, I quietly followed her and Thora to the room where he lay.

At the first glance it was apparent to me that his hours were numbered. Hamilton was not expected back for two days, and it would take longer to send for any other doctor, not that I thought the best in Europe could have saved him, but still it would have been some kind of satisfaction to feel that nothing had been left undone. The old man seemed most eager for Thora's presence, but showed such an unmistakable aversion to mine that in a few minutes I left them, feeling sure that I should have done

more harm than good by staying.

Waiting alone in momentary expectation of hearing that all was over, I tried to read, but failed miserably, and whole regiments of fancies—some weird, some ghastly, some merely nonsensical and ludicrous—came and took possession of me. I could not rid my mind of the causeless idea that all around me had been the scene of some long past tragedy, to which the gloom and coming death of that night was but the sequel, and so strong was the hold of my imagination that when, after what seemed to me a very eternity, the door was softly opened and I heard my name called, I should not have been in the least surprised if, on turning round, I had welcomed a "sheeted ghost" as my visitor.

It was only my poor, sorrow-stricken hostess again. She said her husband had become terribly restless and excited since seeing me, and although I had given him such evident annoyance at the time he was now most anxious that I should come back to him. I gathered as much as this from her tearful words, for, during the last few weeks, I had learned nearly as much of Thora's language as she had of mine, and again I followed her as quickly as my lameness would allow, wondering much at this sudden change in her husband's strange feeling towards me.

Clutching my hand tightly as I stood beside him, he gasped out that he had something to tell me—something that must be told before he died—and then followed such unintelligible mutterings that I feared the secret, if secret it were, was doomed never to find coherent expression. However, he soon recovered himself, and, with Thora's help as interpreter, the following story, extraordinary and to the last degree unexpected, slowly unfolded itself:

It was nearly twenty years ago, he said, when once, in the summer of the year, there came to this same house of his an English nobleman with a lovely lady, who was ill and who looked for a place of rest until her trouble should be past. She was taken in and brought to that very great chamber where I myself had spent so many nights and days. The great lord refused to sleep, but watched for long hours below while his fair young wife hovered in the region of mist and darkness that lies between life and death, her hostess being the only one at hand who could help her in her need.

"When morning drew near," the old man went on, "we went to him and told him that she was dead, and his grief was terrible to behold, for he had not thought the end was coming, and the shock broke on him like a thunder clap. He never asked us if his child lived, nor indeed did he seem once to think of it. It was then that a terrible temptation overcame me and I drew my wife aside and whispered evil words in her ear. Twenty years had she and I lived together, always longing for the child that never came, but now there was one that we might keep and call our own. He did not want it, and we did. He cared only for the beautiful lady who had died—nothing for the child. Why should it not be ours? At first my wife was unwilling—no one must ever blame her—but she had always been accustomed to obey me, and she well saw that nothing now would turn me from my wicked purpose, so in the end she was fain to help me with her finer wits, lest I should be discovered in the deed.

"The child was a girl, but for greater safety we settled that we would tell him it was a son that had been born. She wrapped it up and hid it in the farthest corner of the house, while she led the nobleman to look his last upon the dead face of his beloved. Only then he thought to have seen the child dead too, but we made him believe that it was mishapen and had been hidden from his eyes. He thought too little of it in his greater grief to doubt or question, and when the dead lady was borne to Regjaviik we felt glad and breathed easily once more. The nobleman had said

he would never return, and we believed him and were satisfied. The child was called Thora, and we have kept her for our own daughter ever since. From that time until the day you came no Englishman entered our house, so that it was you who first brought into my heart the fear of losing her, but now that I am dying and know that you love her, I thought it well you should hear that the girl is of your own country, whither you will take her when you go. I have done a great wickedness but I repent."

Saying this he fell back gasping so terribly for breath that Thora's grief, which had been mastered by the dreadful interest of her own story, now broke forth afresh, and the poor wife fell upon her knees bewailing him as if he were already dead. My anxiety that the last proof of Thora's identity should not be missing made me question him even in his extremity, and, bending over him, I asked, in a tone of ill-suppressed eagerness, "What was the nobleman's name?"

With a last effort his wasted fingers touched his pillow, and, following the direction of his fast-glazing eyes, I slipped my hand within the covering and drew forth a crushed and yellow scrap of pasteboard, bearing the name I had all along expected to hear—Lord Fairmount's. When I looked back again at the old man's face it was still in death.

One evening, nearly two months later, Lord Fairmount's abode was invaded by myself and two ladies, lately passengers from Iceland by the Wave. He was there, ready to receive us in all the joyousness of his heart, and, having greeted the elder lady with solemn courtesy, he held the younger to his breast and kissed her so repeatedly that, at the end of five minutes, I became undeniably envious and humored my covetous disposition by presently interrupting to shake his hand myself.

"Why, Percy, boy! Percy, I nearly forgot you, child. So you couldn't keep out of mischief after all. Got a fall, eh? Well, well, you must only stop at home until you can take better care of yourself. But—" turning again to his beautiful daughter—"We must not mind the lad's foolish tricks when he brings his old uncle such a precious treasure home from his travels."

"As I have been the one to find the treasure," I said, "I am going to put forward a selfish claim for joint proprietorship. Will you grant me my share, uncle?" For a moment he looked at me with an air of intense bewilderment; then slowly his face changed, and, taking Thora by the hand, he led her to my side. A new light had broken on him and he recognized me as a man at last.

M. PENROSE.

## Cotton Stalk Bagging.

ATLANTA, Ga., April 21.—Wm. E. Jackson, a well-known lawyer of this city, has solved the bagging problem that has agitated cotton circles for so long. Mr. Jackson has perfected mechanical appliances for making bagging from cotton stalks. He is just from New York with a roll of the bagging. Expert cotton men say that it is in every respect equal to cotton bagging. He will utilize bare stalks from the fields and can afford to pay about two dollars a ton, laid down. An annual stalk field will bale a three years' cotton crop. The machinery comprises heavily weighted corrugated rollers, with valves for running water, carding machines and bagging looms.

It is estimated that in making bagging from cotton stalks \$2,000,000 annually will go into the pockets of farmers for what is now cleared from the fields at an expense. Augusta will be headquarters for the company's mill and offices, which will extend from Virginia to Texas. Mr. Jackson had a roll of bagging, which he exhibited woven by the jute bagging looms of J. C. Todd, at Patterson, N. J., and that experts here pronounce equal to its jute rival. The cotton stalk bagging is less inflammable and is only a shade darker than jute. Cotton circles here are jubilant.

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