ONLY A MONTH;

OR, A CURIOUS MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

CHAPTER I.

"You say your things are all ready, Cecil? Then I'll just go below and do up my Gladstone, and put it in your cabin. We shall be at Bergen before long, they say."

The speaker was a young Englishman of three or four-and-twenty, and the sister addressed by him was still in the first flush of girlhood, having but a few days before celebrated her nineteenth birthday.

"Let me see to your bag, Roy," she exclaimed. "It is a shame that you should miss this lovely bit of the fjord, and I shall do it in half the time."

"The conceit of women!" he exclaimed, with a smile in which brotherly love and the spirit of teasing were about equally blended. "No, no, Cis, I'm not going to let you spoil me. I shall be up again in ten minutes. Have you not made any friends here? Is there no one on deck you can talk to?"

"I don't want to talk," said Cecil. "Truth to tell, I am longing to get away from all these English people. Very unsociable of me, isn't it?"

Roy Boniface turned away with a smile, understanding her feeling well enough, and Cecil, with her back to the chattering tourist throng, let her eyes roam over the shining waters of the fjord to the craggy mountains on the further shore, whose ever-varying forms had been delighting her since the early morning.

She herself made a fair picture, though her beauty was not of the order which quickly draws attention. There was nothing very striking in her regular features, fair complexion, and light-brown hair; to a casual observer she would have seemed merely an average English girl, gentle, well-mannered, and nice-looking. It was only to those who took pains to study her that her true nature was revealed; only at times that her quiet gray eyes would flash into sudden beauty with the pleasure of meeting with some rare and unexpected sympathy; only in some special need that the force of her naturally retiring nature made itself felt as a great influence.

Cecil had passed a year of emancipated girlhood, she had for a whole year been her own mistress, had had time and money at her disposal and no special duties to take the place of her school-work. It was the time she had been looking forward to all her life, the blissful time of grown-up freedom, and now that it had come it had proved a dissappointing illusion. Whether the fault was in herself or in her circumstances she did not know; but like so many girls of her age she was looking out on life with puzzled eyes, hardly knowing what it was that had gone amiss, yet conscious of a great want, of a great unrest, of a vague dissatisfaction which would not be reasoned down.

"Cecil is looking poorly," had been the home verdict; and the mother, not fully understanding the cause, but with a true instinct as to the remedy, had suggested that the brother and sister should spend a month abroad, grieving to lose Cecil from the usual family visit to the sea-side, but perceiving with a mother's wisdom and unselfishness that it was time, as she expressed it, for her young one to try its wings.

So the big steamer plied its way up the fjord, bearing Cecil Boniface and her small troubles and perplexities to healthy old Norway, to gain there fresh physical strength and fresh insights into that puzzling thing called life; to make friendships spite of her avowed unsociableness, to learn something more of the beauty of beauty, the joy of joy, and the pain of pain.

She was no student of human nature; at present with girlish impatience she turned away from the tourists, frankly avowing her conviction that they were a bore. She was willing to let her fancy roam to the fortunes of some imaginary Rolf and Erica living, perhaps, in some one or other of the solitary red-roofed cottages to be seen now and then on the mountain side; but the average English life displayed on the deck did not in the least awaken her sympathies, she merely classified the passengers into rough groups and dismissed them from her mind. There was the photographic group, fraternizing over the cameras set up all in a little encampment at the forecastle end. There was the clerical group, which had for its center no fewer than five gaitered bishops. There was the sporting group, distinguished by light-brown checked suits and comfortable traveling-caps. There was the usual sprinkling of pale, weary, overworked men and women come for a much-needed rest. And there was the flirting group—a notably small one, however, for Norwegian traveling is rough work and is ill-suited to this genus.

"Look here, Blanche," exclaimed a gray-bearded Englishman approaching a pretty little brunette who had a most sweet and winsome expression, and who was standing so near to the camp-stool on which Cecil had ensconced herself that the conversation was quite audible to her. "Just see if you can make out this writing; your eyes are better than mine. It is from Herr Falck, the Norwegian agent for our firm. I dare say your father told you about him."

"Yes, papa said he was one of the leading merchants out here and would advise us what to see, and where to go."

"Quite so. This letter reached me just as I was leaving home, and is to say that Herr Falck has taken rooms for us at some hotel. I can read it all well enough except the names, but the fellow makes such outrageous flourishes. What do you make of this sentence, beginning with 'My son Frithiof?'"

"Uncle, uncle, what shocking pronunciation! You must not put in an English 'th.' Did you ever hear of the Frithiof Saga? You must say it quickly like this—Freet-Yoff."

"A most romantic name," said Mr. Morgan. "Now I see why you have been so industrious over your Norwegian lessons. You mean to carry on a desperate flirtation with Herr Frithiof, oh! that is quite clear; I shall be on the lookout."

Blanche laughed, not at all resenting the remark, though she bent her pretty face over the letter, and pretended to have great difficulty in reading Herr Falck's very excellent English.

"Do you want to hear this sentence?" she said, "because if you do I'll read it."

"'My son Frithiof will do himself the honor to await your arrival at Bergen on the landing-quay, and will drive you to Holdt's Hotel, where we have procured the rooms you desired. My daughter Sigrrid (See-gree) is eager to make the acquaintance of your daughter and your niece, and if you will all dine with us at two o'clock on Friday at my villa in Kalvedalen we shall esteem it a great pleasure.'"

"Two o'clock dinner!" exclaimed Florence Morgan, for the first time joining in the general conversation. "What an unheard-of hour!"

"Oh, everything is primitive simplicity out here," said Mr. Morgan. "You needn't expect London fashions."

"I suppose Frithiof Falck will be a sort of young Viking, large-boned and dignified, with a kind of good-natured fierceness about him," said Blanche, folding the letter.

"No, no," said Florence, "he'll be a shy, stupid country bumpkin, afraid of airing his bad English, and you will step valiantly into the breach with your fluent Norwegian, and your kindness will win his heart. Then presently he will come up in his artless and primitive way with a Vaer saa god (if you please), and will take your hand. You will reply Mange tak (many thanks), and we shall all joyfully dance at your wedding."

There was general laughter, and some trifling bets were made upon the vexed question of Frithiof Falck's appearance.

"Well," said Mr. Morgan, "it's all very well to laugh now, but I hope you'll be civil to the Falcks when we really meet. And as to you, Cyril," he continued, turning to his nephew, a limp-looking young man of one-and-twenty, "get all the information you can out of young Falck, but on no account allow him to know that your father is seriously thinking of setting you at the head of the proposed branch at Stavanger. When that does come about, of course Herr Falck will lose our custom, and no doubt it will be a blow to him; so mind you don't breathe a word about it, nor you either, girls. We don't want to spoil our holiday with business matters, and besides, one should always consider other people's feelings."

Cecil set her teeth and the color rose to her cheeks; she moved away to the other side of the deck that she might not hear any more.

"What hateful people! they don't care a bit for the kindness and hospitality of these Norwegians. They only mean just to use them as a convenience." Then as her brother rejoined her she exclaimed, "Roy, who are those vulgar people over on the other side?"

"With two pretty girls in blue ulsters? I think the name is Morgan, rich city people. The old man's not bad, but the young one's a born snob. What do you think I heard him say as he was writing his name in the book and caught sight of ours. 'Why, Robert Boniface; that must be the music shop in Regent Street. Norway will soon be spoiled if all the cads take to coming over.' And there was I within two yards of him."

"Oh, Roy! he couldn't have known or he would never have said it."

"Oh, yes, he knew it well enough. It was meant for a snub, richly deserved by the presuming tradesman who dared to come to Norway for his holiday instead of eating shrimps at Margate, as such cattle should, you know!" and Roy laughed good-humoredly. Snubs had a way of gliding off him like water off a duck's back.

"I should have hated it," said Cecil. "What did you do?"

"Nothing; studied Baedeker with an imperturbable face, and reflected sapiently with William of Wykeham that neither birth nor calling, but 'manners makyth man.' But look! this must be Bergen. What a glorious view! If only you had time to sketch it just from here!"

Cecil, after one quick exclamation of delight, was quite silent, for indeed few people can see unmoved that exquisite view which is unfolded before them as they round the fjord and catch the first glimpses of the most beautiful town in Norway. Had she been alone she would have allowed the tears of happiness to come into her eyes, but being on a crowded steamer she fought down her emotion and watched in a sort of dream of delight the picturesque wooden houses, the red-tiled roofs, the quaint towers and spires, the clear, still fjord with its forest of masts and rigging, and the mountains rising steep and sheer, encircling Bergen like so many hoary old giants who had vowed to protect the town.

Meanwhile, the deck resounded with those comments which are so very irritating to most lovers of scenery; one long-haired aesthete gave vent to a fresh adjective of admiration about once a minute, till Roy and Cecil were forced to flee from him and to take refuge among the sporting fraternity, who occasionally admitted frankly that it was "a fine view," but who obtruded their personality far less upon their companions.

"Oh, Roy, how we shall enjoy it all!" said Cecil, as they drew near to the crowded landing-quay.

"I think we shall fit in, Cis," he said, smiling. "Thank Heaven, you don't take your pleasure after the manner of that fellow. If I were his traveling companion, I should throttle him in a week."

"Or suggest a muzzle," said Cecil, laughing; "that would save both his neck and your feelings."

"Let me have your key," he said, as they approached the wooden pier; "the custom-house people will be coming on board, and I will try to get our things looked over quickly. Wait here and then I shall not miss you."

He hastened away and Cecil scanned with curious eyes the faces of the little crowd gathered on the landing-quay, till her attention was arrested by a young Norwegian in a light-gray suit who stood laughing and talking to an acquaintance on the wooden wharf. He was tall and broad-shouldered, with something unusually erect and energetic in his bearing; his features were of the pure Greek type not unfrequently to be met with in Norway; while his northern birth was attested by a fair skin and light hair and mustache, as well as by a pair of honest, well-opened blue eyes which looked out on the world with a boyish content and happiness.

"I believe that is Frithiof Flack," thought Cecil. And the next moment her idea was confirmed, for as the connecting gangway was raised from the quay, one of the steamer officials greeted him by name, and the young Norwegian, replying in very good English, stepped on board and began looking about as if in search of some one. Involuntarily Cecil's eyes followed him; she had a strange feeling that in some way she knew him, knew him far better than the people he had come to meet. He, too, seemed affected in the same way, for he came straight up to her, and raising his hat and bowing, said with frank courtesy:

"Pardon me, but am I speaking to Miss Morgan?"

"I think the Miss Morgans are at the other side of the gangway; I saw them a minute ago," she said, coloring a little.

"A thousand pardons for my mistake," said Frithiof Falck. "I came to meet this English family, you understand, but I have never seen them."

(To be continued.)

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On the Farm

FRESH vs. ROTTED MANURE.

Most people have an idea that rotted manure is a much more valuable fertilizer than manure fresh from the barns or yards. This idea prevails because of the heavy, compact nature of the rotted manure. The value of manure is determined by the amount of various elements of fertility contained therein. These elements are mainly nitrogen, phosphoric acid and potash. They are usually figured at fifteen cents, six cents and five cents per pound respectively. On this basis a ton of fresh barnyard manure is worth $1.98. A ton of rotted manure is worth $2.04, or only six cents more. When the fact is considered that it takes nearly two tons of fresh barnyard manure to make one ton of rotted manure, owing to the loss from evaporation and leaching, it can be seen that much of the fertilizing matter originally contained is lost in the rotting process.

A report gives some interesting observations on the experimental use of fresh and rotted manure. Both were used on the corn and wheat crops, in comparison with unmanured land. The yield of corn on unmanured land was 38.1 bushels per acre. On land dressed with rotted manure, a yield of 65.1 bushels was secured; and where fresh manure was applied, the yield was 70.7 bushels per acre. The increased yield of corn from the use of rotted manure was 27.6 bushels, and from the use of fresh manure 32.6 bushels, an increase of five bushels per acre in favor of the fresh manure. On the wheat crop the effect was similar, though not so marked. On the unmanured land, the wheat yielded 16.1 bushels per acre; where rotted manure was used, 19.1 bushels; and on the land dressed with fresh manure, 19.7 bushels per acre were secured. The increase in favor of the fresh manure was only six-tenths bushel per acre on the wheat crop.

While the increased returns are comparatively small in both cases, it illustrates clearly the fact that fresh manure is at least as good as the rotted manure, and for some crops even better. The prevention of loss by leaching and in the rotted process should be kept in mind, and the saving in labor by applying manure fresh from the barns is worthy of consideration. It should not be understood that the coarse, fresh barnyard manure is adapted to all crops. It would not be suitable for certain forms of garden and vegetable crops; and even for the small grains, on light soil, it probably would not give as good results as the rotted manure. Where manure is applied as it should be, however, on the grass land or just ahead of the corn crop in rotation, the coarse, fresh manure is better adapted to the succeeding crop than the rotted manure. The heat, and the effect of the acids developed in the process of decomposition, aid greatly in liberating plant food and result in greater crop yields.

Some objections may be made on the score that weed seeds or possibly plant diseases are spread with the unrotted manure. Where applied as suggested above, however, at the proper place in rotation, neither the weeds nor the plant diseases resulting therefrom will be a serious consideration.

The late winter and early spring offer many opportunities for getting manure on the land. These should be taken advantage of; though one should avoid driving over the land when it is very wet from melting snows or from heavy rains. The good effect of the manure may be entirely offset by bad handling of the land.

MR. J. L. HUGHES.
School Inspector of Toronto.

A grown man never feels quite as uncomfortable as a small boy in his Sunday clothes.

UNBREAKABLE GLASS.

Unbreakable glass, for which there might be a demand just now, was invented nearly 2,000 years ago, according to Petronius and Dion Cassius, though Pliny casts doubts on the story, says the London Chronicle. An artist appeared before Tiberius with a cup of glass which he dashed violently on the ground. It was neither broken nor cracked, but merely dented, like a piece of metal. Then the man produced a mallet and hammered the cup back into its proper shape. Tiberius, however, asked whether anybody else knew the secret, and when the artist proudly answered "No," had him instantly beheaded. The emperor feared that such glass would terribly depreciate the value of the precious metal.

He—Madam, you promised to obey me. Do you do it. She—Sir, you promised me your worldly goods. Do I get 'em?

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