ONLY A MONTH;

OR, A CURIOUS MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

CHAPTER II.—(Continued).

"I would run over for the Sunday, perhaps, that would be as much as I could manage, but Frithiof will be there to take care of you. What should you want with a careworn old man like me, now that he is at home again?"

"You fish for compliments, little father," said Sigrid, slipping her arm within his and giving him one of those mute caresses which are so much more eloquent than words. "But, quite between ourselves, though Frithiof is all very well, I sha'n't enjoy it a bit without you."

"Yes, yes, father, dear," said Swanhild, "indeed you must come, for Frithiof he will be just no good at all, he will be sure to dance always with the pretty Miss Morgan, and to row her about on the fjord all day, just as he did those pretty girls at Norheimsund and Faleide."

The innocent earnestness of the child's tone made them all laugh, and Frithiof vowing vengeance on her for her speech, chased her round and round the garden, their laughter floating back to Herr Falck and Sigrid as they entered the house.

"The little minx!" said Herr Falck, "how innocently she said it too. I don't think our boy is such a desperate flirt, though. And as far as I remember there was nothing more than a sort of boy and girl friendship at other place."

"Oh, no," said Sigrid, smiling. "Frithiof was too much of a schoolboy, every one liked him and he liked every one. I don't think he is the sort of man to fall in love easily."

"No; but when it does come it will be a serious affair. I very much wish to see him happily married."

"Oh, father! surely not yet. He is so young, we can't spare him yet."

Herr Falck threw himself back in his arm-chair, and mused for a few minutes.

"One need not necessarily lose him," he replied, "and you know, Sigrid, I am a believer in early marriages—at least for my son; I will not say too much about you, little woman, for, as a matter of fact, I don't know how I should ever spare you."

"Don't be afraid, little father; you may be very sure I sha'n't marry till I see a reasonable chance of being happier than I am at home with you. And when will that be, do you think?"

He stroked her golden hair tenderly.

"Not just yet, Sigrid, let us hope. Not just yet. As to our Frithiof, shall I tell you of the palace in cloud-land I am building for him?"

"Not that he should marry the pretty Miss Morgan, as Swanhild calls her?" said Sigrid, with a strange sinking at the heart.

"Why not? I hear that she is a charming girl, both clever and beautiful, and indeed it seems to me that he is quite disposed to fall in love with her at first sight. Of course, were he not properly in love I should never wish him to marry, but I own that a union between the two houses would be a great pleasure to me—a great relief."

He sighed, and for the first time the anxious look in his eyes attracted Sigrid's notice.

"Father, dear," she exclaimed, "won't you tell me what is troubling you? There is something, I think. Tell me, little father."

He looked startled and a slight flush spread over his face, but when he spoke his voice was reassuring.

"A business man often has anxieties which can not be spoken of, dear child. God knows they weigh lightly enough on some men; I think I am growing old, Sigrid, and perhaps I have never learned to take things so easily as most merchants do."

"Why, father, you were only fifty last birthday, you must not talk yet of growing old. How do other men learn, do you think, to take things lightly?"

"By refusing to listen to their own conscience," said Herr Falck, with sudden vehemence. "By allowing themselves to hold one standard of honor in private life and a very different standard in business transactions. Oh, Sigrid! I would give a great deal to find some other opening for Frithiof. I dread the life for him."

"Do you think it is really so hard to be strictly honorable in business life? And yet it is a life that must be lived, and is it not better that such a man as Frithiof should take it up—a man with such a high sense of honor?"

"You don't know what business men have to stand against," said Herr Falck. "Frithiof is a good, honest fellow, but as yet he has seen nothing of life. And I tell you, child, we often fail in our strongest point."

He rose from his chair and paced the room; it seemed to Sigrid that a nameless shadow had fallen on their sunny home. She was for the first time in her life afraid, though the fear was vague and undefined.

"But there, little one," said her father, turning toward her again. "You must not be worried. I get nervous and depressed, that is all. As I told you, I am growing old."

"Frithiof would like to help you more if you would let him," said Sigrid, rather wistfully. "He was saying so just now."

"And so he shall in the autumn. He is a good lad, and if all goes well, I hope he will some day be my right hand in the business, but I wish him to have a few months' holiday first. And there is this one thing, Sigrid, which I can tell you, if you really want to know about my anxieties."

"Indeed I do, little father," she said, eagerly.

"There are many matters which you would not understand even could I speak of them; but you know, of course, that I am agent in Norway for the firm of Morgan Brothers. Well, a rumor has reached me that they intend to break off the connection and to send out the eldest son to set up a branch at Stavanger. It is a mere rumor and reached me quite accidentally. I very much hope it may not be true, but there is no denying that Stavanger would be in most ways better suited for their purpose; in fact, the friend who told me of the rumor said that they felt now that it had been a mistake all along to have the agency here, and they had only done it because they knew Bergen and knew me."

"Why is Stavanger a better place for it?"

"It is better because most of the salmon and lobsters are caught in the neighborhood of Stavanger, and all the mackerel, too, to the south of Bergen. I very much hope the rumor is not true, for it would be a great blow to me to lose the English connection. Still, it is not unlikely, and the times are hard now—very hard."

"And you think your palace in cloud-land for Frithiof would prevent Mr. Morgan from breaking the connection?"

"Yes; a marriage between the two houses would be a great thing; it would make this new idea unlikely if not altogether impossible. I am thankful that there seems now some chance of it. Let the two meet naturally and learn to know each other. I will not say a word to Frithiof, it would only do harm; but to you, Sigrid, I confess that my heart is set on this plan. If I could for one moment make you see the future as I see it, you would feel with me how important the matter is."

At this moment Frithiof himself entered, and the conversation was abruptly ended.

"Well, have you decided?" he asked, in his eager, boyish way. "Is it to be Ulvik or Balholm? What! You were not even talking about that. Oh, I know what it was, then. Sigrid was deep in the discussion of to-morrow's dinner. I will tell you what to do, abolish the romekolle, and let us be English to the backbone. Now I think of it, Mr. Morgan is not unlike a walking sirloin with a plum-pudding head. There is your bill-of-fare, so waste no more time."

The brother and sister went off together, laughing and talking; but when the door closed behind them the master of the house buried his face in his hands, and for many minutes sat motionless. What troubled thoughts, what wearing anxieties filled his mind, Sigrid little guessed. It was after all a mere surface difficulty of which he had spoken; of the real strain which was killing him by inches, he could not say a word to any mortal being, though now in his great misery he instinctively prayed.

"My poor children!" he groaned. "Oh, God, spare them from this shame and ruin which haunts me! I have tried to be upright and prudent; it was only this once that I was rash. Give me success for their sakes, oh, God! The selfish and unscrupulous flourish on all sides. Give me this one success. Let me not blight their whole lives."

But the next day, when he went forward to greet his English guests, it would have been difficult to recognize him as the burdened, careworn man from whose lips had been wrung that confession and that prayer. All his natural courtesy and brightness had returned to him; if he thought of his business at all he thought of it in the most sanguine way possible, and the Morgans saw in him only an older edition of Frithiof, and wondered how he had managed to preserve such buoyant spirits in the cares and uncertainties of mercantile life. The two o'clock dinner passed off well; Sigrid, who was a clever little housekeeper, had scouted Frithiof's suggestion as to the roast beef and plum-pudding, and had carefully devised a thoroughly Norwegian repast.

"For I thought," she explained afterwards to Blanche, when the two girls had made friends, "that if I went to England I should wish to see your home-life just exactly as it really is, and so I have ordered the sort of dinner we should naturally have, and did not, as Frithiof advised, leave out the romekolle."

"Was that the stuff like curds and whey?" asked Blanche, who was full of eager interest in everything.

"Yes; it is sour cream with breadcrumbs grated over it. We always have a plateful each at dinner; it is quite one of our customs. But everything here is very simple, of course, not grand as with you; we do not keep a great number of servants, or dine late, or dress for the evening; here there is nothing"—she hesitated for a word, then in her pretty foreign English, added, "nothing ceremonious."

"That is just the charm of it all," said Blanche, in her sweet, gracious way. "It is all so real and simple and fresh, and I think it was delightful of you to know how much best we should like to have a glimpse of your real home-life instead of a stupid party. Now mamma cares for nothing but just to make a great show, it doesn't matter whether the visitors really like it or not."

Sigrid felt a momentary pang of doubt; she had fallen in love with Blanche Morgan the moment she saw her, but it somehow hurt her to hear the English girl criticize her own mother. To Sigrid's loyal nature there was something out of tune in that last remark.

"Perhaps you and your cousin would like to see over the house," she said, by way of making a diversion. "Though I must tell you that we are considered here in Bergen to be rather English in some points. That is because of my father's business connection with England, I suppose. Here you see, is his study, he has a real English fireplace; we all like it much better than the stoves, and some day I should like to have them in the other rooms as well."

"But there is one thing very unEnglish," said Blanche. "There are no passages; instead, I see, all your rooms open out of each other. Such numbers of lovely plants, too, in every direction; we are not so artistic, we stand them all in prim rows in a conservatory. This, too, is quite new to me. What a good idea!" And she went up to examine a prettily worked sling fastened to the wall, and made to hold newspapers.

She was too polite of course to say what really struck her; that the whole house seemed curiously simple and bare, and that she had imagined that one of the leading merchants of Bergen would live in greater style. As a matter of fact, you might, as Cyril expressed it, have bought the whole place for an old song, and though there was an air of comfort and good taste about the rooms and a certain indiscribable charm, they were evidently destined for use and not for show, and with the exception of some fine old Norwegian silver, and a few good pictures Herr Falck did not possess a single thing of value.

Contrasted with the huge and elaborately furnished house in Lancaster Gate with its lavishly strewn knickknacks, its profusion of all the beautiful things that money could buy, the Norwegian villa seemed poor indeed, yet there was something about it which took Blanche's fancy.

(To be continued).

Perpetual motion is easy enough with a scandal that once starts.

A woman doesn't consider the wearing of diamonds vulgar—unless she hasn't any.

Fond Mother (to teacher)—"Don't you think my boy is bound to make his mark?" Teacher (despairingly)—"I'm afraid so. It seems impossible for him to learn to write."

A little boy, who had just recently mastered his catechism, confessed his disappointment in the following terms:—"Say, dad, I obey the Fifth Commandment, and honor my father and mother, yet my days are not a bit longer in the land, for I'm put to bed every night at seven o'clock just the same."

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F-2-12

On the Farm

THE GRASS YIELD.

Farmers who content themselves with two tons or less cannot understand how yields of three or four tons, or even more, are obtained. There are, however, four chief essentials, a smooth surface, with even, steady grade, thorough preparation of the soil, an abundance of good, healthy seed and plenty of fertility and to which might be added the proper amount of moisture, writes Mr. R. B. Rushing.

Where land is stumpy or rocky, it may be considerable expense to remove them, but to obtain the greatest amount of grass it must be done. The rocks must either be sunk or hauled away and the surface smoothed so as to give a gentle grade. A little depression where the water can stand may cause a patch of grass to die out and a few patches will kill a hundred pounds of hay.

The same with stumps or bush thickets her and there and they soon cut down the yield.

After this thorough grading the land is thoroughly fitted. This does not mean just plowed and harrowed in the ordinary way. I prefer the use of a cut-away disc, which does the work just the opposite to the turning plow.

The turning plow turns the furrow slice over, leaving the hard upper soil at the bottom. The harrowing which follows simply works over the soil which has been turned to the top, while the surface soil remains untouched.

The cut-away, on the other hand, tosses or throws the soil up instead of turning it over. At the first sight it means to leave the ground rough and in poor condition, but a little thought will show the object of it.

We do not want to turn the furrow over, for this leaves practically half the soil undisturbed by the harrow and most of the weed seeds and grass roots are at the bottom, where they will not be destroyed by ordinary tillage.

They are, of course, hidden from view, but later will be sure to grow and injure the new seeding of grass. With the cut-away, the soil is tossed up again and again, thus letting the air and the sun into it while many grass and weed roots will be thrown up where the sun will destroy them.

This continued working of the soil with the cut-away clears the soil of foul stuff and gives the new seeding a chance. The soil should be worked over with the cut-away and the smoothing harrow many times, not all at once, but continued through July and August. In this way, when ready to seed the soil is certainly as fine as an ash heap.

The seed then should be put on carefully and accurately, so as to have every square inch of surface covered, thus having two blades of grass where one formerly was.

I see many farmers seem to be content with six quarts of timothy and four quarts of red clover to the acre, but I have found it most profitable to use from ten to twelve quarts of timothy and about the same of red top and six quarts of clover.

The reason for so doing is that often this intensive soil culture is so fine in result that everywhere that a seed can fall should be covered, thus securing grass on every particle of the soil.

The red top is added because it is a tall, slender grass which grows well between the salks of timothy and will add from one-half to a ton of hay to the yield.

It would not pay to use this heavy seeding where the land was left lumpy or stony, for unless every inch of the soil is well prepared a good share of the seed will be wasted.

After the soil is perfectly fitted and the seed is thoroughly sown, the question of plant food must be settled if it has not been previously seen to, as it should have been before seeding. The thicker the seed the more plant food is required to make a full crop.

First, we must remember that five tons of hay will remove from the soil nearly 100 pounds of nitrogen, 25 of phosphoric acid and about 130 of potash.

A very good mixture of the commercial fertilizer is to use one third of each nitrate of soda, fine ground bone and muriate of potash. This, however, should be regulated according to the needs of the particular soil. Some will need more of one and some more of another.

The questioon frequently asked is: Why is the large amount of potash necessary? No one who has ever used fertilizers on grass need be told that nitrogen gives the grass a rich, green color and makes it grow very rapidly.

I, for one, have never been able to grow merchantable hay without plenty of potash. The grass would grow, but it would not stand up so as to cut with the mower.

The potash gives the strength to the stems so that the timothy and red top do not lodge or fall down before cutting. With a thin crop of grass this would not make so much difference, but when one starts out to raise four tons or more of hay on an acre of land at one cutting every stalk of grass must stand up straight.

Let it once go down and nothing can save it, for its very thickness will make a heavy mat which will ruin the hay.

Farmers who expect to grow heavy crops of grass should remember this and always use potash freely, especially when nitrogen is used.

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HANDS UP!

"You say you were held up this morning by a footpad with a revolver. At what time?"

"Five minutes to one."

"How can you fix the time so precisely?"

"Because I could see the church clock, and I noticed that its hands were exactly in the same position as my own."

"I understand that he was critically ill." "He was as soon as he became convalescent." "As soon as he became convalescent?" "Yes. He was dangerously ill, and then as soon as he became convalescent he became so critical there was no pleasing him."

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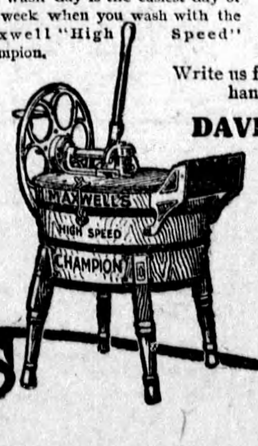

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129