ONLY A MONTH;

OR, A CURIOUS MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

CHAPTER III.

Even so limp a specimen of humanity as Cyril Morgan found that, after all, existence in this primitive region had its charms, while Blanche said, quite truthfully, that she had never enjoyed herself so much in her life. As for Frithiof, he made no secret of his love for her, it was apparent to all the world; to the light-hearted Norwegians, who looked on approvingly.

One morning, a little tired with the previous day's excursion to the Suphelle Brae, they idled away the sunny hours on the fjord, Frithiof rowing, Swanhild lying at full length in the bow with Lillo mounting guard over her, and Blanche, Sigrid, and Cecil in the stern.

"You have been all this time at Balholm and yet have not seen King Bele's grave!" Frithiof had exclaimed, in answer to Blanche's inquiry. "Look, there it is, just a green mound by that tree."

"Isn't it odd," said Sigrid, dreamily, "to think that we are just in the very place where the Frithiof Saga really lived?"

"But I thought it was only a legend," said Cecil.

"Oh, no," said Frithiof, "the Sagas are not legends, but true stories handed down by word of mouth."

"Then I wish you would hand down your saga to us by word of mouth," said Blanche, raising her sweet eyes to his. "I shall never take the trouble to read it for myself in some dry, tiresome book. Tell us the story of Frithiof now as we drift along in the boat with his old home Framnaes in sight."

"I do not think I can tell it really well," he said; "but I can just give you the outline of it:

"Frithiof was the only son of a wealthy yeoman who owned land at Framnaes. His father was a great friend of King Bele, and the king wished that his only daughter Ingeborg should be educated by the same wise man who taught Frithiof, so you see it happened that as children Frithiof and Ingeborg were always together, and by and by was it not quite natural that they should learn to love each other? It happened just so, and Frithiof vowed that, although he was only the son of a yeoman, nothing should separate them or make him give her up. It then happened that King Bele died, and Frithiof's father, his great friend, died at the same time. Then Frithiof went to live at Framnaes over yonder; he had great possessions, but the most useful were just these three: a wonderful sword, a wonderful bracelet, and a wonderful ship called 'Ellida,' which had been given to one of his Viking ancestors by the sea-god. But though he had all these things, and was the most powerful man in the kingdom, yet he was always sad, for he could not forget the old days with Ingeborg. So one day he crossed this fjord to Bele's grave, close to Balholm, where Ingeborg's two brothers, Helge and Halfdan, were holding an assembly of the people, and he boldly asked for Ingeborg's hand. Helge, the king, was furious, and rejected him with scorn, and Frithiof, who would not allow even a king to insult him, drew his sword and with one blow smote the king's shield, which hung on a tree, in two pieces. Soon after this good King Ring of the far North, who had lost his wife, became a suitor for Ingeborg's hand; but Helge and Halfdan insulted his messengers and a war was the consequence. When Frithiof heard the news of the war he was sitting with his friend at a game of chess; he refused to help Helge and Halfdan, but knowing that Ingeborg had been sent for safety to the sacred grove of Balder, he went to see her in 'Ellida,' though there was a law that whoever ventured to approach the grove by water should be put to death. Now Ingeborg had always loved him and she agreed to be betrothed to him, and taking leave of her, Frithiof went with all haste to tell her brothers. This time also there was a great assembly at Bele's grave, and again Frithiof asked for the hand of Ingeborg, and promised that, if Helge would consent to their betrothal, he would fight for him. But Helge, instead of answering him, asked if he had not been to the sacred grave of Balder, contrary to the law? Then all the people shouted to him, 'Say no, Frithiof! Say no, and Ingeborg is yours.' But Frithiof said that though his happiness hung on that one word he would not tell a lie, that in truth he had been to Balder's Temple, but that his presence had not defiled it, that he and Ingeborg had prayed together and had planned this offer of peace. But the people forsook him, and King Helge banished him, until he should bring back the tribute due from Angantyr of the Western Isles; and every one knew that if he escaped with his life on such an errand it would be a wonder. Once again Frithiof saw Ingeborg, and he begged her to come with him in his ship 'Ellida,' but Ingeborg, though she loved him, thought that she owed obedience to her brothers, and they bade each other farewell; but before he went Frithiof clasped on her arm the wonderful bracelet. So then they parted, and Frithiof sailed away and had more adventures than I can tell you, but at last he returned with the tribute money, and now he thought Ingeborg would indeed be his. But when he came insight of Framnaes, he found that his house and everything belonging to him had been burned to the ground."

"No, no, Frithiof, there was his horse and his dog left," corrected Sigrid. "Don't you remember how they came up to him?"

"So they did, but all else was gone; and, worst of all, Ingeborg, they told him, had been forced by her brothers to marry King Ring, who, of she had not become his wife, would have taken the kingdom from Helge and Halfdan. Then Frithiof was in despair, and cried out, 'Who dare speak to me of the fidelity of women?' And so it happened that that very day was Midsummer-day, and he knew that King Helge, Ingeborg's brother, would be in the Temple of Balder. He sought him out, and went straight up to him and said, 'You sent me for the lost tribute and I have gained it, but either you or I must die. Come, fight me! Think of Framnaes that you burned. Think of Ingeborg whose life you have spoiled!' And then in great wrath he flung the tribute-money at Helge's head, and Helge fell down senseless. Just then Frithiof caught sight of the bracelet he had given Ingeborg on the image of Balder, and he tore it off, but in so doing upset the image, which fell into the flames on the altar. The fire spread and spread so that at last the whole temple was burned, and all the trees of the grove. Next day King Helge gave chase to Frithiof, but luckily in the night Frithiof's friend had scuttled all the king's ships, and so his effort failed, and Frithiof sailed out to sea in the 'Ellida.' Then he became a Viking, and lived a hard life, and won many victories. At last he came home to Norway and went to King Ring's court at Yuletide, disguised as an old man; but they soon found out that he was young and beautiful, and he doffed his disguise, and Ingeborg trembled as she recognized him. Ring knew him not, but liked him well, and made him his guest. One night he saved Ring when his horse and sledge had fallen into the water. But another day it is happened that they went out hunting together, and Ring, being tired, fell asleep, while Frithiof kept guard over him. As he watched, a raven came and sung to him, urging him to kill the king; but a white bird urged him to flee from temptation, and Frithiof drew his sword and flung it far away out of reach. Then the king opened his eyes, and told Frithiof that for some time he had known him, and that he honored him for resisting temptation. Frithiof, however, felt that he could no longer bear to be near Ingeborg, since she belonged not to him, and soon he came to take leave of her and her husband. But good King Ring said that the time of his own death was come, and he asked Frithiof to take his kingdom and Ingeborg, and to be good to his son. Then he plunged his sword in his breast, and so died. Before long the people met to elect a new king, and would have chosen Frithiof, but he would only be regent till Ring's son should be of age. Then Frithiof went away to his father's grave and prayed to Balder, and he built a wonderful new temple for the god, but still peace did not come to him. And the priest told him that the reason of this was because he still kept anger and hatred in his heart toward Ingeborg's brothers. Helge was dead, but the priest prayed him to be reconciled to Halfdan. They were standing thus talking in the new temple when Halfdan unexpectedly appeared, and when he caught sight of his foe he turned pale and trembled. But Frithiof, who for the first time saw that forgiveness is greater than vengeance, walked up to the altar, placed upon it his sword and shield, and returning, held out his hand to Halfdan, and the two were reconciled. At that moment there entered the temple one dressed as a bride, and Frithiof lifted up his eyes and saw that it was Ingeborg herself. And Halfdan, his pride of birth forgotten and his anger conquered by his foe's forgiveness, led his sister to Frithiof and gave her to be his wife, and in the new Temple of Balder the Good the lovers received the blessing of the priest."

"How well you tell it! It is a wonderful story," said Blanche.

It was such a contrast to her ordinary life, this quiet Norway, where all was so simple and true and trustworthy, where no one seemed to strain after effects. And there was something in Frithiof's strength, and spirit, and animation, which appealed to her greatly, "My Viking is adorable!" she used to say to herself; and gradually there stole into her manner toward him a sort of tender reverence. She no longer teased him playfully, and their talks together in those long summer days became less full of mirth and laughter, but more earnest and absorbing.

Cecil saw all this, and she breathed more freely. "Certainly she loves him," was her reflection.

Sigrid, too, no longer doubted; indeed, Blanche had altogether won her heart, and somehow, whenever they were together, the talks always drifted round to Frithiof's past, of Frithiof's future, or Frithiof's opinions. She was very happy about it, for she felt sure that Blanche would be a charming sister-in-law, and love and hope seemed to have developed Frithiof in a wonderful way; he had suddenly grown manly and considerate, nor did Sigrid feel, as she had feared, that his new love interfered with his love for her.

"Will there be church to-morrow?" asked Blanche, as they rested half-way. "I should so like to go to a Norwegian service."

"There will be service at some church within reach," said Frithiof; "but I do not much advise you to go; it will be very hot, and the place will be packed."

"Why? Are you such a religious people?"

"The peasants are," he replied. "And of course the women. Churchgoing and religion, that is for women; we men do not need that sort of thing."

She was a litle startled by his matter-of-fact, unabashed tone.

"What, are you an agnostic? an atheist?" she exclaimed.

"No, no, not at all," he said, composedly. "I believe in a good providence, but with so much I am quite satisfied, you see. What does one need with more? To us men religion, church going, is—is—how do you call it in English? I think you say 'an awful bore.' Is it not so?"

The slang in foreign accent was irresistible. She was a little shocked, but she could not help laughing.

"How you Norwegians speak out!" she exclaimed. "Many Englishmen feel that, but few would say it so plainly."

"So! I thought an Englishman was nothing if not candid. But for me I feel no shame. What more would one have than to make the most of life? That is my religion. I hear that in England there is a book to ask whether life is worth living? For me I can't understand that sort of thing. It is a question that would never have occurred to me. Only to live is happiness enough. Life is such a very good thing. Do you not agree?"

"Sometimes," she said, rather wistfully.

"Only sometimes? No, no, always, to the last breath!" cried Frithiof.

"You say that because things are as you like; because you are happy," said Blanche.

"It is true, I am very happy," he replied. "Who would not be happy walking with you?"

Something in his manner frightened her a little. She went on breathlessly and incoherently.

"You wouldn't say that life is a very good thing if you were like our poor people in East London, for instance."

"Indeed, no," he said, gravely. "That must be a great blot on English life. Here in Norway we have no extremes. No one is very poor, and our richest men have only what would be counted in England a moderate income."

"Perhaps that is why you are such a happy people."

"Perhaps," said Frithiof, but he felt a little inclined to consider the problem of the distribution of wealth just then, and the talk drifted round once more to that absorbing personal talk which was much more familiar to them.

(To be continued.)

BOVRIL

IS THE

GREAT BODY-BUILDER

See the British Medical Journal, Sept. 16, '11, and the Medical Times, Nov. 18, '11.

B-2-12

PICKERING'S PEERS.

As his father, the Earl of Clarendon, is no longer a young man, Lord Hyde's much-talked-of-action in emigrating as a farmer to Canada with his wife and children and his brother-in-law, Lord Somers, has not that air of permanent exile about it which lends, as a rule, a definitely depressing quality to such actions, says the London Bystander. Indeed, it is probable that

Lord Hyde.

health considerations, especially for his children, are the prime reasons for a step which is certainly an unusual one for a former young man about town, the heir to a rich earldom and a fine estate, and the son of a life-long courtier. In Edwardian days Lord Hyde, who is dark and well set-up, though slightly lame, was one of the few young

Lord Somers.

men about the Court, and it was at Dublin in the gay days of the Dudley Vice-royalty that he met his fair-haired, blue-eyed wife, the daughter of that Mrs. Somers Cox who was the adopted daughter of the painter Watts. Her brother, Lord Somers, though he had a long minority, succeeded to a somewhat attenuated fortune, the bulk of the Somers estates.

ARMY DESERTIONS.

Official government reports show thta the number of desertions from the British army last year reached the surprising height of 1,600, or nearly 400 more than the previous year. Though very little is ever said about it in the press, it is generally known that the recruiting authorities find it more and more difficult to get the necessary number of suitable young men for the army, and that to fill the gaps in the ranks all sorts of human derelicts and even ex-convicts are taken, with the result that the army is not thought by all to be altogether reliable.

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BLACK, GREEN or MIXED

FIGHT WITH A DEVIL-FISH.

A Terrible Struggle With One of These Monsters.

One of the largest of fishes—perhaps the largest of true fishes, since the whale is a mammal—is the manta or giant devil-fish of tropical waters. A man who catches one of these monsters knows he has been fishing, for he often stands in no small peril of his life before the creature is landed. In the Wide World Magazine a writer gives this lively account of his experience with an unusually large manta:

We were fishing from a gasoline launch some fifteen miles down the coast from Manzanillo, Mexico. I was standing in the bows, ready to harpoon a large fish that had bitten, and was being pulled to the surface.

Suddenly fish and line were snapped away, and through the clear water I saw a huge dark purple mass, scarcely a fathom below the boat. Shouting to our Mexican engineer to start the launch, I threw the harpoon with all my strength. It struck home, and instantly a great disturbance took place. Some monstrous creature rose to the surface and dashed at the boat, striking out with what looked like two great wings.

The strokes were terrific, and we had the utmost difficulty in keeping clear. Had one of these "wings" touched the boat, it would have been smashed like match-wood, and, as sharks were watching the disturbance, our fate would soon have been decided.

Although the water all around us was seething from the fury of the monster's onslaught, we kept our heads, and did our best to disable the creature.

We embedded three harpoons in it. We also fired three revolver bullets into it, each of which produced volumes of dark exudus; and every time the madly flapping wings came near enough, the man in the bows gave them a lance-thrust.

Gradually the manta's struggles grew less, and it began to yield to the strain on the ropes. It was a long battle, however, for every now and then the great fish, seeming to regain strength, would attack us with renewed ferocity. Eventually, after a final flurry that caused the water to heave as if with an earthquake, it ceased its struggles, and we towed it ashore, escorted by shoals of sharks.

Tying the boat up at the wharf, I got permission from the commandant of the port to land our prize. Making it fast, we hoisted it on the crane, and ran it along to the railway office, in front of which we photographed it. It measured eighteen feet three and a half inches from tip to tip of the wings, and sixteen feet one inch from head to tail; near the centre it was over nine feet thick.

We estimated its weight at five tons. When we had photographed the great fish, we cast it off the end of the wharf, and the sharks demolished the carcass in an incredibly short time.

He (after popping the question)—"Why do you cry, my angel? Did I offend you by my proposal?" She (still sobbing)—"Oh, no, dear, it is not that; I am crying for joy. Mother always said to me: 'May,' she said, 'you are such an idiot that you would not get even a donkey for a lover,' and now I have got one after all."

She (tearfully)—"Our engagement is at an end, and I wish to return to you everything you have ever given me." He (cheerily)—"Thanks, Blanche! You may begin at once with the kisses!" They are married now.

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