ONLY A MONTH;

OR, A CURIOUS MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

CHAPTER IV.—(Cont'd)

Then presently, as they walked down to the little pier, she talked fast and gayly of all they would do when he came to England; she talked because, for once, he was absolutely silent, and because she was afraid that her uncle would guess their secret; perhaps it was a relief to her that Frithiof volunteered to run back to the hotel for Mr. Morgan's opera-glass which had been left by mistake in the salon, so that, literally, there was only time for the briefest of farewells on the steamer. He went through it all in a business-like fashion, smiling mechanically in response to the good wishes, then, with a heavy heart, stepping on shore. Herr Falck, who was returning to Bergen by the same boat which took the other travelers only as far as Vadheim, was not ill-pleased to see his son's evident dejection; he stood by the bulwarks watching him, and saying a word or two and then to Blanche who was close by him.

"Why, see!" he exclaimed, "the fellow is actually coming on board again. We shall be carrying him away with us if he doesn't take care."

"A thousand pardons!" Frithiof had exclaimed, shaking hands with Cecil and Roy Boniface. "I did not see you before. A pleasant journey to you. You must come again to Norway some day, and let us all meet once more."

"Vaer saa god!" exclaimed one of the sailors; and Frithiof had to spring down the gangway.

"To our next merry meeting!" said Roy, lifting his hat; and then there was a general waving of handkerchiefs from the kindly little crowd on the pier and from the parting guests, and, in all the babel and confusion, Frithiof was conscious only of Blanche's clear "Auf wiedersehn!" and saw nothing but the sweet, dark eyes, which to the very last dwelt on him.

"Well, that is over!" he said to Sigrid, pulling himself together, and stifling a sigh.

"Perhaps they will come here next year," suggested Sigrid, consolingly.

"Perhaps I shall go to England next autumn," said Frithiof, with a smile.

"So soon!" she exclaimed involuntarily.

He laughed, for the words were such a curious contradiction to the ones which lurked in his own mind.

"Oh! you call two months a short time?" he exclaimed; "and to me it seems an eternity. You will have to be very forbearing, for I warn you such a waiting time is very little to my taste."

"Then why did you not speak now, before she went away?"

"You wisest of advisers!" he said, with a smile, "I did speak yesterday."

"Yesterday!" she cried, eagerly. "Yesterday, on Munkeggen?"

"Yes; and all that now remains is to get Mr. Morgan's consent to our betrothal."

"Oh, Frithiof! I am so glad! so very glad! How pleased father will be! I think you must write and let him know."

"If he will keep it quite secret," said Frithiof; "but of course not a word must be breathed until her father has consented. There is no engagement as yet, only we know that we love each other."

"That ought to be enough to satisfy you till the autumn. And it was so nice of you to tell me, Frithiof. Oh, I don't think I could have borne it if you had chosen to marry some girl I didn't like. As for Blanche, there never was any more sweet and lovely."

It seemed that Frithiof's happiness was to bring happiness to the whole family. Even little Swanhild guessed the true state of things, and began to frame visions of the happy future when the beautiful English girl should become her own sister; while as to Herr Falck, the news seemed to banish entirely the heavy depression which for some time had preyed upon him. And so, in spite of the waiting, the time slipped by quickly to Frithiof, the mere thought of Blanche's love kept him rapturously happy, and at the pretty villa in Kalvedalen there was much laughter and mirth, and music and singing; much eager expectation and hope, and much planning of a future life which should be even more full and happy.

At length, when the afternoons closed in early, and the long winter was beginning to give signs of its approach, Frithiof took leave of his home, and, on one October Saturday, started on his voyage to England. It was, in a sense, the great event of his life, and they all instinctively knew that it was a crisis, so that Sigrid drew aside little Swanhild at the last, and left the father and son to have their parting words alone.

"I look to you, Frithiof," the father said eagerly, "I look to you to carry out the aims in which I myself have failed—to live the life I could wish to have lived. May God grant you the wife who will best help you in the struggle! I sometimes think, Frithiof, that things might have gone very differently with me had your mother been spared."

"Do you not let this depression influence you too much, father?" said Frithiof. "Why take such a dark view of your own life? I shall only be too happy if I make as much of the world as you have done. I wish you could have come to England too. I think you want change and rest."

"Ah!" said Herr Falck, laughing, "once over there you will not echo that wish. No, no, you are best by yourself when you go a-wooing, my son. Besides, I could not possibly leave home just now; we shall have the herring-fleet back from Iceland before many days."

Then, as the signal was given that all friends of the passengers must leave the steamer, he took Frithiof's hand and held it fast in his.

"God bless you, my boy; I think you will bring honor to our name, sooner or later. Now, Sigrid, wish him well, and let us be off"

He called little Swanhild to him, and walked briskly down the gangway, then stood on the quay talking very cheerfully, his momentary depression quite past. Before long the steamer began to glide off, and Frithiof, even in the midst of his bright expectations, felt a pang as he waved a farewell to those he left behind him.

"A happy return to Gammle Norge!" shouted Herr Falck. And Sigrid and Swanhild stood waving their handkerchiefs till the steamer could no longer be seen.

"I am a fool to mind going away!" reflected Frithiof. "In three weeks' time I shall be at home again. And the next time I leave Bergen, why, who knows, perhaps it will be to attend my own wedding!"

And with that he began to pace the deck, whistling, as he walked, "The Bridal Song of the Hardanger."

CHAPTER V.

The event to which we have long eagerly looked forward is seldom all that we have expected, and Frithiof, who for the last two months had been almost hourly rehearsing his arrival in England, felt somewhat depressed and disillusioned when, one chilly Monday morning, he first set foot on English soil. The southerner, arriving at Folkstone or Dover, with their white cliffs and sunny aspect, gains a cheerful impression as he steps ashore; but the Norwegian, leaving behind him his mountains and fjords, and coming straight to that most dingy and unattractive town, Hull, is at a great disadvantage.

A fine drizzling rain was falling; in the early morning the shabby, dirty houses looked their very worst. Swarms of grimy little children had been turned out of their homes, and were making their way to morning school, and hundreds of busy men and women were hurrying through the streets, all with worn, anxious-looking faces. As he walked to the railway station Frithiof felt almost overpowered by the desolateness of the place. To be a mere unit in this unthinking, unheeding crowd, to be pushed and jostled by the hurrying passengers, who all walked as if their very lives depended on their speed, to hear around him the rapidly spoken foreign language, with its strange north-country accent, all made him feel very keenly that he was indeed a foreigner in a strange land. He was glad to be once more in a familiar-looking train, and actually on his way to London; and soon all these outer impressions faded away in the absorbing consciousness that he was actually on his way to Blanche—that on the very next day he might hope to see her again.

Fortunately the Tuesday proved to be a lovely, still autumn day. He did not like to call upon Mr. Morgan till the afternoon, and, indeed, thought that he should scarcely find him at home earlier, so he roamed about London, and looked at his watch about four times an hour, till at length the time came when he could call a hansom and drive to Lancaster Gate.

There are some houses which the moment you enter them suggest to you the idea of money. The Morgans' house was one of these; everything was faultlessly arranged, your feet sunk into the softest of carpets, you were served by the most obsequious of servants, all

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In the whole room there was nothing which suggested to him the presence of Blanche; on the contrary, there was everything which combated the vision of those days at Balholm and of their sweet freedom.

Before many minutes had passed, however, his host came into the room, greting him politely but somewhat stiffly.

"Glad to make your acquaintance," he said, scanning him a little curiously as he spoke. "I heard of you, of course, from my brother. I am sure they are all very much indebted to you for planning their Norwegian tour for them so well."

Had he also heard of him from Blanche? Had she indeed prepared the way for him? Or would his request come as a surprise? These were the thoughts which rushed through Frithiof's mind as he sat opposite the Englishmen and noted his regular features, short, neat-looking, gray beard, closely cropped hair, and rather cold eyes.

"It is curious that you should have come to-day," he remarked, after they had exchanged the usual platitudes about the weather and the voyage, and the first impressions of England. "Only to-day the final decision was arrived at about this long-mooted idea of the new branch of our firm at Stavanger. Perhaps you have heard rumors of it?"

"I have heard nothing at all" said Frithiof. "My father did not even mention it."

"It is scarcely possible that he has heard nothing of the idea," said Mr. Morgan. "When I saw you I half thought he had sent you over on that very account. However, you have not as yet gone into the business, I understand?"

"I am to be taken into partnership this autumn," said Frithiof. "I was of age the other day, and have only waited for that."

"Strange," said Mr. Morgan, "that only this very morning the telegram should have been sent to your father. Had I known you were in England, I would have waited. One can say things better face to face. And yet I don't know how that could have been either, for there was a sudden chance of getting good premises at Stavanger, and delay was impossible. I shall, of course, write fully to your father by the next mail, and you will tell him that it is with great regret we sever our connection with him."

Frithiof was so staggered by this unexpected piece of news that for a minute all else was driven from his mind.

"He will be very sorry to be no longer your agent," he said.

"And I shall be sorry to lose him. Herr Falck has always been most honorable. I have the greatest respect for him. Still, business is business; one can't afford to sentimentalize in life over old connections. It is certainly best in the interests of our firm to set up a branch of our own with its headquarters at Stavanger. My son will go out there very shortly."

"The telegram is only just sent, you say?" asked Frithiof.

"The first thing this morning," replied Mr. Morgan. "It was decided on last night. By this time your father knows all about it; indeed, I almost wonder we have had no reply from him. You must not let the affair make any breach between us; it is, after all, a mere business necessity. I must find out from Mrs. Morgan what free nights we have, and you must come and dine with us. I will write and let you know. Have you any particular business in London? or have you only come for the sake of traveling?"

(To be continued.)

J .R. BOOTH'S WORK.

John R. Booth, the lumber and paper king of Canada, recently celebrated his eighty-sixth birthday in Ottawa. All his life he has been a hard worker and was never much given to dress, style or titles. When the editors of "Who's Who in Canada" asked him to state what his favorite recreation was, Mr. Booth replied, "work," and so it appears in that publication. Notwithstanding that he is a millionaire many times over, Mr. Booth never stood on dignity or ceremony. In this respect he differs from a certain glib ex-alderman of the Capital City who once managed to squeeze into the Council, and although he was never successful in being re-eleteed, he was particularly fond of referring to himself as Ex-Alderman D——.

Now "Ex-Alderman" is a peculiar designation in that you can hang on to it until the day you die if you feel disposed to make use of the prefix. The proud retainer of the title, going to the telephone one day, rang up Mr. Booth, who had

Mr. J. R. Booth.

some cattle to sell, for the former civic functionary was a drover by trade. In answer to the ring of the instrument, he inquired, "Is that you, Booth?"

Receiving an answer in the affirmative, he proclaimed, "This is Ex-Alderman D—— speaking. I understand, Booth, you have some fat cattle to sell. What is your price for them?"

Mr. Booth told the inquirer, but evidently the figure did not meet his fancy.

"Too dear, Booth, we cannot deal at the quotation you name," and the speaker rang off.

A bystander remarked, "Don't you think that Ottawa's leading captain of industry might have been styled Mr. Booth?"

"Oh, I don't know about that," observed the ex-alderman. "He is entitled to no special distinction. You see, he never occupied a seat in the Council."

SPAIN'S PREMIER TOREADOR.

How Madrid Welcomed Return of Bombita to the Ring.

Bombita, the darling of Spain, has recovered from the dangerous wound he had received in a bull fight, and last Sunday all Madrid went to the Plaza de Toros to welcome the greatest of all toreadors to the scene of former triumphs, writes a correspondent of the London Standard.

The sun was beating down on the tiers of seats opposite me, where a thousand fluttering fans looked like brilliant butterflies. King Alfonso and the Queen were in the royal box surrounded by the flower of the Spanish aristocracy. All the women wore the graceful mantilla and the Queen had red roses in her hair.

Charmed as the people were to see the youthful King and Queen, their chief thoughts were for Bombita, the dashing Bombita, whose photograph appears in dozens of newspapers every week. He is as daring and as expert a toreador as the men of the old school, but he is not in ordinary life the toreador with a little pigtail, happier in the cafe than in the drawing-room.

The fabulous fees he receives for his dangerous work permit of his keeping a motor car and enables him to dine in the most fashionable restaurants. He is faultlessly dressed by a London tailor, and when I met him the other night at an evening party I took him to be a diplomatist or a Spanish grandee.

In the arena Bombita was radiant in rose color silk and gold lace, and he wore white silk stockings and dainty shoes—a charming costume for a masquerade, but inappropriate for the work of slaying ferocious bulls. But Bombita was superb. He played with death like a child with a toy.

He knelt for a moment in the sand as his second bull, snorting with fury, rushed upon him. The creature's horns seemed within an inch of his body when he rose, stepped aside with the grace of Nijinsky, and plunged his short sword into the animal's neck.

The dexterity, the amazing daring of the man, filled the critical audience with new wonder at the prowess of their favorite. A great shout went up. "The ear! The ear!" The toreador who has pleased the public by his skill is accorded the right to keep the ear of the bull he has killed as a trophy. It is for the spectators to judge whether he deserves the supreme reward.

On Sunday some were opposed to the award and for at least two minutes it hung in the balance whether Bombita would take home the trophy and, as I suppose he does, nail it to the wall of his dining-room. King Alfonso decided the matter by joining in the popular cry, and Bombita received his reward.

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NEW FRENCH BATTLESHIPS.

British Models Followed — England to Store Oil Fuel.

French battleship designers appear to be following the general lines of British constructors in their 1912 building programme for capital ships of the first class, except that the tonnage of the French ships will considerably exceed that of the British ships of the Orion class, the displacement of which is 22,680 tons.

The French are placing ten 13.4 inch guns on the new ships as a primary armament, mounted on five twin gun turrets, all placed on the centre line after the Orion model. These guns are of slightly less calibre than the British 13.5 inchers, though the French ships will be larger by over 1,000 tons.

The new French ships will be 541 feet long and 88 feet 6 inches broad. Their speed will be 20 knots. The time for building and completing is to be three years, compared with the two years of the British builders.

The secondary armament will remain of the same calibre as in previous ships, that is, 5.5 inches, while in future ships the British will carry six inch guns. The armor will not be quite so extensive in area, but will be thicker in parts than in previous types. Turbine engines will be used.

The British Admiralty is making a considerable increase in oil fuel storage. This was determined upon when the coal strike was by no means regarded as a certainty. Still further extension has since been decided upon.

At Portsmouth the amount of expenditure in providing storage has been raised from $65,000 to $250,000; on the Humber from $210,000 to $600,000; at the Invergordon from $40,000 to $220,000; on the Medway from $210,000 to $650,000. A sum of $35,500 is to be spent to provide new accommodation for oil fuel at Hambowline Dockyard; $125,000 for new works at Hongkong and $66,500 at Pembroke.

The commencement of work on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway hotel assures the fact that Edmonton will have a hostelry as large as the railway hotel in Winnipeg.

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