ONLY A MONTH;

OR, A CURIOUS MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

CHAPTER XVI.—(Cont'd)

And then with a pleasant farewell the stranger bowed and went out of the shop, leaving behind him a memory which did more to prevent the blue devils from gaining the mastery of Frithiof's mind than anything else could possibly have done. When he left, however, at his usual dinner hour he was without the slightest inclination to eat, and with a craving for some relief from the monotony of the glaring streets he walked up to Regent's Park, hoping that there perhaps he might find the fresh air for which he was longing.

"Come along, will you!" shouted a rough voice behind him. He glanced round and saw an evil-looking tramp who was speaking to a most forlorn little boy at his heels.

The child seemed ready to drop, but with a look of misery and fear and effort, most painful to see in such a young face, it hurried on, keeping up a wretched little sort of trot at the heels of its father, who tramped on doggedly. Presently the tramp paused outside a public-house.

"Wait for me there in the park," he said to the child, giving it a push in the direction.

And the little fellow went on obediently, until, just at the gate, he caught sight of a costermonger's barrow on which cool green leaves and ripe red strawberries were temptingly displayed. Frithiof lingered a minute to see what would happen, but nothing happened at all, the child just stood there patiently.

"Have you ever tasted them?" said Frithiof, drawing nearer.

The boy shook his head shyly.

"Would you like to?"

Still he did not speak, but a look of rapture dawned in the wistful child eyes.

"Sixpennyworth," said Frithiof to the costermonger; then signing to the child to follow, he led the way into the park, sat down on the nearest seat, put the basket of strawberries down beside him, and glanced at his little companion.

"There, now sit down by me and enjoy them," he said.

And the child needed no second bidding, but began to eat with an eager delight which was pleasant to see.

"Eat, too," said the child, pointing to the basket.

And Frithiof, to please him, smiled and took two or three strawberries.

"There, the rest are for you," he said. "Do you like them?"

"Yes," said the child emphatically; "and I like you."

"Why do you like me?"

"I was tired, and you was kind to me, and these is real jammy!"

But after this fervent little speech he said no more. Then before long the father reappeared, and the little fellow with one shy nod of the head ran off, looking back wistfully every now and then at the stranger who would be remembered by him to the very end of his life.

The next day, something happened which added the last drops to Frithiof's cup of misery, and made it overflow. The troubles of the past year, and the loneliness and poverty which he had borne had gradually broken down his health, and there came to him now a revelation which proved the final blow. He was dining at his usual restaurant. Too tired to eat much, he had taken up a bit of one of the society papers which some one left there, and his eye fell on one of those detestable paragraphs which pander to the very lowest tastes of the public. No actual name was given, but every one knowing anything about her could not fail to see that Blanche Romiaux was the woman referred to. The most revolting insinuations, the most contemptible gossip, ended with the words, "An interesting divorce case may soon be expected."

Frithiof grew deadly white. Feeling sick and giddy, he made his way along Oxford Street, noticing nothing, walking like a man in a dream. Just in front of Buzzard's a victoria was waiting, a remarkably good-looking man stood on the pavement talking to its occupant. Frithiof would have passed by without observing them had not a familiar voice startled him into keen consciousness. He looked up hastily and saw Lady Romiaux—not the Blanche who had won his heart in Norway, for the lips that had once been pressed to his wore a hard look of defiance, and the eyes that had ensnared him had now an expression that confirmed only too well the story he had just read. He heard her give a little artificial laugh in which there was not even the ghost of merriment, and after that it seemed as if a great cloud had descended on him. He [illegible] mechanically, but it was chiefly by a sort of instinct that he found his way back to the shop.

"Good heavens, Mr. Falck! how ill you are looking!" exclaimed the head man as he glanced at him. "It's a good thing Mr. Robert will be back again soon. If I'm not very much mistaken, he'll put you into the doctor's hands."

"Oh, it is chiefly this hot weather," said Frithiof, and as if anxious to put an end to the conversation. he turned away to his desk and began to write, though each word cost him a painful effort, and seemed to be dragged out of him by sheer force. At tea-time he wandered out in the street, scarcely knowing what he was doing, and haunted always by Blanche's sadly altered face. When he returned he found that the boy who dusted the shop had spilled some ink over his order-book whereupon he flew into one of those violent passions to which of late he had been liable, so entirely losing his self-control that those about him began to look alarmed.

"I can bear it no longer," he said to himself. "I have tried to bear this life, but it's no use—no use."

Yet after awhile there rose within him a thought which checked the haunting visions of failure and the longing for death. He remembered the face which had so greatly struck him the day before, and again those kindly words rang in his ear, "Courage! the worst will pass."

At length cloisng time came. He dragged himself back to Vauxhall, shut himself into his dreary little room, pulled the table toward the open window, and began to work at Herr Sivertsen's translating. But at last he was at the very end of his strength. A violent shivering fit seized him. Work was no longer possible; he could only stagger to the bed, with that terrible consciousness of being utterly and hopelessly beaten, which to a man is so hard to bear.

Later on, when the summer twilight deepened into night, and he could no longer make out the harbor, and the shipping, and the familiar mountains, he buried his face in the pillow and sobbed aloud, in a forlorn misery which, even in Paradise, must have wrung his mother's heart.

* * * *

Roy Boniface came back from Devonshire the following day, his holiday being shortened by a week on account of the illness of Mrs. Horner's uncle. As there was every reason to expect a legacy from this aged relative, Mr. Horner insisted on going down at once to see whether they could be of any use.

Like many other business men he relieved the monotony of his daily work by always keeping two or three hobbies in hand. The mania for collecting had always been encouraged at Rowan Tree House, and just now botany was his keenest delight. He was contentedly mounting specimens on the night of his return, when James Horner looked in, the prospective legacy making him more than ever fussy and pompous.

"Ah, so you have come back; that's all right!" he exclaimed. "I had hoped you would have come round to us. However, no matter, I don't know that there is anything special to say, and of course this sad news has upset my wife very much."

"Ah," said Roy, somewhat skeptical in his heart of hearts about the depth of her grief. "We were sorry to hear about it."

"We go down the first thing tomorrow," said James Horner, "and shall, of course, stay on. They say there is no hope of recovery."

"By the bye," said Mr. Horner, "I have just remembered to tell you that provoking fellow, Falck, never turned up to-day. He never even had the grace to send word that he wasn't coming."

"Of course he must be ill," said Roy, looking disturbed. "He is the last fellow to stay away if he could possibly keep up. We all thought him looking ill before we left."

"I don't know about illness," said James Horner, putting on his hat; "but he certainly has the worst temper I've ever come across. It was extremely awkward without him to-day, for already we are short of hands."

"There can hardly be much doing," said Roy. "London looks like a desert. However, of course I'll look up Falck. I dare say he'll be all right by to-morrow."

But he had scarcely settled himself down comfortably to his work after James Horner's welcome departure when the thought of Frithiof came to trouble him.

Like most people, Roy was selfish. With an effort he tore himself away from his beloved specimens, and set off briskly for Vauxhall, where, after some difficulty, he found the little side street in which, among dozens of others precisely like it, was the house of the three Miss Turnours.

A little withered-up lady opened the door to him, and replied nervously to his question.

"Mr. Falck is ill," she said. "He seems very feverish; but he was like it once before, when he first came to England, and it passed off in a day or two."

"Can I see him?" said Roy.

"Well, he doesn't like being disturbed at all," said Miss Charlotte. "He'll hardly let me inside the room. But if you would just see him, I should really be glad. You will judge better if he should see the doctor or not."

"Thank you, I'll go up then. Don't let me trouble you."

"It is noise he seems to mind so much," said Miss Charlotte. "So if you will find your way up alone. perhaps it would be best. It is the first door you come to at the top of the last flight of stairs."

Roy went up quietly, opened the door as noiselessly as he could, and went in.

"I wish you wouldn't come in again," said an irritable voice from the bed. "The lightest footstep is torture."

"I just looked in to ask how you were," said Roy, much shocked to see how ill his friend seemed.

"Oh, it's you!" said Frithiof, turning his flushed face in the direction of the speaker. "Thank God you've come! That woman will be the death of me. She does nothing but ask questions."

"I've only just got back from Devonshire, but they said you hadn't turned up to-day, and I thought I would come and see after you."

Frithiof dragged himself up and drank feverishly from the ewer which stood on a chair beside him.

"I tried to come this morning," he said, "but I was too giddy to stand, and gave it up. My head's gone wrong somehow."

"Poor fellow! you should have given up before," said Roy. "You seem in terrible pain."

"Yes, yes; it's like a band of hot iron," moaned poor Frithiof. Then suddenly starting up in wild excitement. "There's Blanche! there's Blanche! Let me go to her! Let me go! I will see her once more—only this once!"

Roy with some difficulty held him down, and after awhile he seemed to come to himself. "Was I talking nonsense?" he said. "It's a horrid feeling not being able to control one's self. If I go crazy you can just let me die, please. Life's bad enough now, and would be intolerable then. There she is again! She's smiling at me. Oh, Blanche! you did care once. Come back! Come back! He can't love you as I love! But it's no use—no use! she is worse than dead. I tell you I saw it in that cursed paper, and I saw it in her own face. Why. one might have known! All women are like it."

And then he fell into incoherent talk, chiefly in Norwegian.

(To be continued.)

SIR HERBERT'S WIT.

Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the famous English actor-manager, has a reputation as a wit also.

When he appeared at the Palace recently, a fellow variety artist, given to hailing everybody by

Sir A. Beerbohm Tree.

Christian name, saluted him with "Hallo, Herbert!" Sir Herbert, who was accompanied at the moment by Lady Tree, responded by shaking hands and asking leave to introduce "My wife, Maud."

One day, at rehearsal, Sir Herbert asked a youthful actor to "Step back a little." The player did so. Tree eyed him critically—and went on rehearsing. After a time he repeated the request: "A little further back." The youth obeyed. Surveying him, Tree went on with his work. Shortly afterwards he again asked him to step still further back. "If I do," expostulated the youth, "I shall be right off the stage." "Yes," said Tree, "that's right."

POVERTY A WHIP AND SPUR.

"Appetite for Achievement" Grows Stale on a Diet of Sweets.

Poverty is capital—a creative force, a whip, a spur, an incentive. Ambition dies on a diet of truffle and goose liver, says a writer in Woman's World.

Hard schools teach great lessons. An unearned dollar is a fool maker. Those who do not understand how to make money can't retain it. Don't mind these few Spartan years. They are blessings. The appetite for achievement stales on sweets—hunger lends zest to doggedness.

You must work—you have no choice. You must earn or you can't eat. There's no helping hand behind you—you've got to seize the opportunity before you.

Responsibility is riding on your shoulders, but duty broadens character. Pack your chest with courage and begin to win. What you've missed in training you can make up in steadiness and readiness. Education at its best merely points out the most competent method, and if you keep your eyes open and put your heart in your tasks common sense will show you as much as a text book. You are ignorant of theories, but theory after all, isn't nearly so important as practice.

You can't achieve more than you believe. Your reward will be proportionate to your effort. Whatever you can grasp with clean hands is your property, but you'll be knocked about, blocked and fought by every man who wants what you seek. If you have a yellow streak you haven't a show.

The years that face you are full of promise. To-morrow is always mightier than yesterday.

The newcomer profits by the trials and struggles of the past, and more knots have been untied, more problems have been solved in this single generation than in any previous century.

Legislation is tearing whip after whip from the hand of Privilege—hours are shorter, sanitation is better, and facilities of every sort are at the disposal of all who wish to improve their minds and bodies.

But we offer no charity—only cowards and shirkers whine for concessions. We want the greatest ability at the top, so we are merciless to quitters. It's the only way in which we can truly test efficiency.

When you are discouraged, weep on your own shoulder—pluck is ashamed to display its tears.

Hold hard to hope—fling your faith in the teeth of ridicule, disaster and enmity.

Dream far—we build close to the stars in this century. Think with unleashed imagiantion.

CAUSE AND EFFECT.

Travelling in the wild and woolly west, a gentleman entered a small township in order that he might make the purchase of a watch and chain.

The storekeeper was very pleased to oblige, but as he wrapped up the articles purchased he included with them a fearsome-looking revolver of very respectable dimensions.

"I say," observed the astonished traveller, "what are you doing? I didn't offer to buy a revolver."

The watchmaker, puzzled in turn, and thinking his customer must have lost his sense and reason, replied:

"But you have bought a gold watch. If you are going to keep it in these parts, you'll want the gun, too!"

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Violet perfume may be made at home by placing half an ounce of chopped orris-root in one ounce of spirits of wine, corking the bottle tightly, and leaving it for a week.

A good cure for increasing baldness is to rub the affected part with the following ointment: One part, ammoniated mercury ointment; four parts, benzoated lard.

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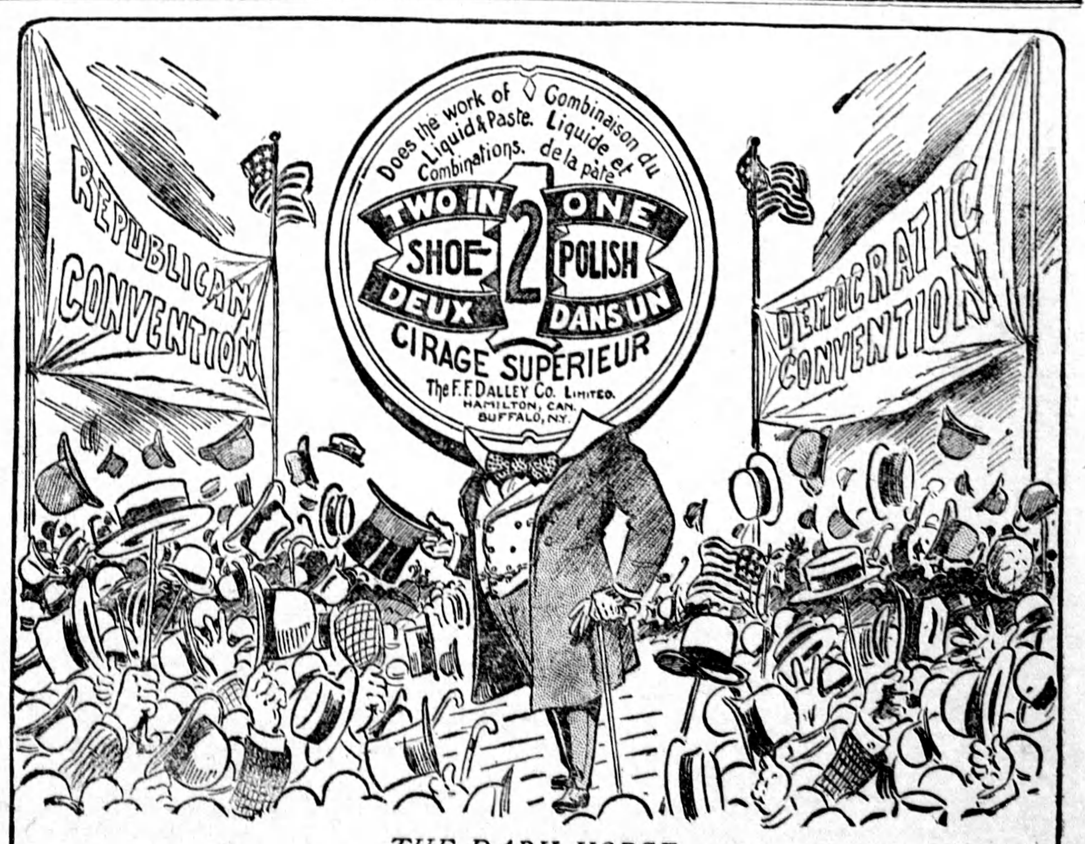

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