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ONLY A MONTH;

OR, A CURIOUS MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

CHAPTER XXXIV.—(Cont'd)

But Frithiof stooped down and silenced her with a kiss. "You see the harm it has done," he said, "but you don't see the good. Come, stop crying and let us have tea, for your news has given me an appetite, and I'm sure you are tired and hungry after all this."

"But could it ever have entered any one's head that such an improbable thing should actually happen?" said Roy. "To think that Sardoni should get change for his note, and Darnell steal it on the very day that Swanhild had given you that unlucky contribution to the debt fund!"

"It is just one of those extraordinary coincidences which do happen in life," said Sigrid.. "I believe if every one could be induced to tell all the strange things of the kind that had happened we should see that they are after all pretty common things."

"I wonder if there is a train to Plymouth to-night?" said Roy. "I shall not rest till I have seen Darnell. For nothing less than his confession signed and sealed will satisfy James Horner. Do you happen to have a Bradshaw?"

"No, but we have something better," said Sigrid, smiling; "on the next landing there is Owen, one of the Great Western guards. I know he is at home, for I passed him just now on the stairs, and he will tell you about the trains."

"What a thing to live in model lodgings!" said Roy, smiling. "You seem to me to keep all the professions on the premises. Come, Frithiof, do go and interview this guard and ask him how soon I can get down to Plymouth and back again."

Frithiof went out, there was still a strange look of abstraction in his face. "I scarcely realized before how much he had felt this," said Roy. "What a fool I was to be so positive that my own view of the case was right! Looking at it from my own point of view, I couldn't realize how humiliating it must all have been to him—how exasperating to know that you were in the right, yet not to be able to convince any one."

"It has been like a great weight on him all through the autumn," said Sigrid, "and yet I know what he meant when he told Swanhild that it had done him good as well as harm. Don't you remember how at one time he cared for nothing but clearing off the debts? Well, now, though he works hard at that, yet he cares for other people's troubles too—that is no longer his one idea."

Before long Frithiof returned.

"I don't think you can do it," he said. "Owen tells me there is a train from Paddington at 9.50 this evening, but it isn't a direct one, and you won't get to Plymouth till 9.28 to-morrow morning. A most unconscionable time, you see."

"Why not write to Darnell?" suggested Sigrid.

"No, no, he would get out of it in some mean way. I intend to pounce on him unexpectedly, and in that way to get at the truth," replied Roy. "This train will do very well. I shall sleep on the way, but I must just go to Regent Street and get the fellow's address."

This, however, Frithiof was able to tell him, and they lingered long over the tea-table, till at length Roy remembered that it might be as well to see his father and let him know what had happened before starting for Devonshire. Very reluctantly he left the little parlor, but he took away with him the grateful pressure of Sigrid's hand, the sweet, bright glance of her blue eyes, and the echo of her last words, spoken softly and sweetly in her native language.

"Farvel! Tak skal De have." (Farewell! Thanks you shall have.) Why had she spoken to him in Norse? Was it, perhaps, because she wished him to feel that he was no foreigner, but one of themselves? Whatever her reason, it touched him and pleased him that she had spoken just in that way, and it was with a very light heart that he made his way to Rowan Tree House.

The lamp was not lighted in the drawing-room, but there was a blazing fire, and on the hearth-rug sat Cecil with Lance nestled close to her, listening with all his ears to one of the hero stories which she always told him on Sunday evenings.

"Has father gone to chapel?" asked Roy.

"Yes, some time ago," replied Cecil. "Is anything the matter?"

"Don't look so frightened," said Roy, as the fire-light showed him her dilated eyes. "Nothing is the matter—I have brought home some very good news. Frithiof is cleared, and that wretched business of the five-pound note fully explained."

"At last!" she exclaimed. "What a relief! But how? Do tell me all."

He repeated Swanhild's story, and then, hoping to catch his father in the vestry before the service began, he hurried off, leaving Cecil to the only companionship she could have borne in her great happiness—that of little Lance.

But Roy found himself too late to catch his father, there was nothing for it but to wait, and, anxious to speak to him at the earliest opportunity, he made his way into the chapel that he might get hold of him when the service was over.

When by and by he listened to Roy's story, told graphically enough as they walked home together, his regret for having misjudged Frithiof was unbounded. He was almost as impatient to get hold of Darnell as his son was.

"Still," he observed, "you will not gain much by going to-night; why not start to-morrow by the first train?"

"If I go now," said Roy, "I shall be home quite early to-morrow evening, and Tuesday is Christmas-eve—a wretched day for traveling. Besides, I can't wait."

Both the father and mother knew well enough that it was the thought of Sigrid that had lent him wings, and Mr. Boniface said no more, only stipulating that he should be just and generous to the offender.

"Don't visit your own annoyance on him, and don't speak too hotly," he said. "Promise him that he shall not be prosecuted or robbed of his character if only he will make full confession, and see what it was that led him to do such a thing. I can't at all understand it. He always seemed to me a most steady, respectable man."

Roy being young and having suffered severely himself through Darnell's wrong-doing, felt anything but judicial as he traveled westward on that cold December night; he vowed that horsewhipping would be too good for such a scoundrel, and rehearsed interviews in which his attack was brilliant and Darnell's defense most feeble. Then he dozed a little, dreamed of Sigrid, woke cold and depressed to find that he must change carriages at Bristol, and finally, after many vicissitudes, was landed at Plymouth at half past nine on a damp and cheerless wintry morning.

Now that he was actually there, he began to dislike the thought of the work before him, and to doubt whether after all his attack would be as brilliant in reality as in imagination. Rather dismally, he made a hasty breakfast, and then set off through the wet, dingy streets to the shop where Darnell was at present employed. To his relief he found that it was not a very large one, and, on entering, discovered the man he sought behind the counter and quite alone. As he approached him he watched his face keenly; Darnell was a rather good-looking man, dark, pale, eminently respectable; he looked up civilly at the supposed customer, then, catching sight of Roy, he turned a shade paler and gave an involuntary start of surprise.

"Mr. Robert!" he stammered.

"Yes, Darnell; I see you know what I have come for," said Roy, quietly. "It was certainly a very strange, a most extraordinary coincidence that Mr. Falck should, unknown to himself, have had another five-pound note in his pocket that day last June, but it has been fully explained. Now I want your explanation."

"Sir!" gasped Darnell; "I don't understand you; I—I am at a loss—"

"Come, don't tell any more lies about it," said Roy, impatiently. "We know now that you must have taken it, for no one else was present. Only confess the truth, and you shall not be prosecuted; you shall not lose your situation here. What induced you to do it?"

"Don't be hard on me, sir," stammered the man. "I assure you I've bitterly regretted it many a time."

"Then why did you not make a clean breast of it to my father?" said Roy. "You might have known that he would never be hard on you."

"I wish I had," said Darnell, in great distress; "I wish to God I had, sir, for it's been a miserable business from first to last. But I was in debt, and I thought of my wife who was ill, and I knew that the disgrace would kill her."

"So you went and disgraced yourself still more," said Roy, hotly. "You tried to ruin another man instead of yourself!"

"But he wasn't turned off," said Darnell, "and they put it all on his illness, and it seemed as if, after all, it would not hurt him so much. It was a great temptation, and when I had once given way to it there seemed no turning back."

"Tell me just how you took it," said Roy, getting rather more calm and judicial in his manner.

"I saw Mr. Horner give Signor Sardoni the change, sir, and I saw him put the note in the till; and I was just desperate with being in debt, and not knowing how to get straight again."

"But wait a minute—how had you got into such difficulties?" interrupted Roy, "and how could a five-pound note help you out again?"

"Well, sir, I had been unlucky in a betting transaction, but I thought I could right myself if only I could get something to try again with; but there wasn't a soul I could borrow from. I thought I should get straight again at once if only I had five pounds in hand, and so I did, sir; I was on my feet again the very next day."

"I might have known it was betting that had ruined you," said Roy. "Now go back and tell when you took the note."

"I kept on thinking and planning through the afternoon, sir, and then presently all was quiet, and only Mr. Falck with me in the shop, and I was just wondering how to get rid of him, when Mr. Horner opened the door of Mr. Boniface's room and called to me. Then I said, 'Do go, Mr. Falck, for I have an order to write to catch the post.' And he went for me, and I hurried across to his counter while he was gone, and took the note out of the till and put it inside my boot; and when he came back he found me writing at my desk, just as he had left me. He came up looking a little put out, as if Mr. Horner had rubbed him the wrong way, and he says to me, 'It's no use; you must go yourself after all.' So I went to Mr. Horner, leaving Mr. Falck alone in the shop."

"Were you not afraid lest he should open the till and find out that the note was gone?"

"Yes, I was very much afraid. But all went well, and I intended to go out quickly at tea-time—it was close upon it then—and do what I could to get it straight again. I thought I could invent an excuse for not returning to the shop that night; say I'd been taken suddenly ill, or something of that sort. It was Mr. Falck's turn to go first; and while he was out, as ill-luck would have it, Mr. Horner came to take change from the till, and then all the row began. I made sure I was ruined, and no one was more surprised than myself at the turn that affairs took."

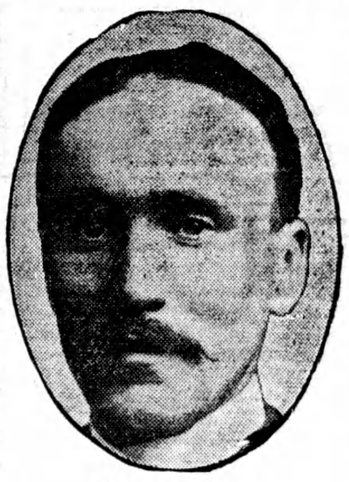
(To be continued.)

HUGH CLARK'S JOKE.

Hugh Clark is known as a very funny man.

As editor of the Kincardine Review, the genial member of the Commons representing South Bruce is never at a loss for a dry and humorous reply to any old kind of question.

Hugh is the colonel of the 32nd Bruce, and as such is some entertainer. During a recent camp he



Col. Hugh Clark.

was host to Hon. W. J. Hanna, Provincial Secretary for Ontario. There were big times around the colonel's quarters between the guests, and the newspaper men and the P.S. had a fine time sleeping out and telling stories.

One morning about two o'clock several privates on late leave, who had been down city celebrating, got past the guards and wandered about the streets of the white village singing "The Holy City" with a vengeance on the chorus, and before long the crowd was augmented by a couple dozen from the various regiments.

Mr. Hanna heard the noise and turned over on his cot. Next morning he asked Colonel Clark what the rumpus was.

"Oh," said Hugh, and he never cracked a smile, "I'll find out." He went out and gathered a coterie of newspaper men and officers back to his guest's tent for the fun. When all were comfortable Hugh started.

"Did you know that Hanna was given a 'tremendous' ovation by this camp last night?" he said, and all listened for the news.

"Yes," he continued, "it was an immense ovation for him. During the night there were throngs passing and repassing his tent crying 'Who's Hanna? Who's Hanna? Who's Hanna to the King.'"

We Do Hope It Wasn't You.

"There goes a man who hasn't a single bad habit."

"Excepting the bad habit of continually bragging that he has none."

When fools are glad wise men are sad.

Lord Byron, in reference to a lady he thought ill of, writes: "Lady —— has been dangerously ill, but it may console you to learn that she is dangerously well again."

Work of the British Mint.

Some colossal figures demonstrating the enormous industry of the British Mint were given in a recent report of current coinage for 1911, when over 33,000,000 sovereigns were coined. But such extraordinary despatch was even rivalled by the average output of silver during thot same period, which amounted to something like 50,000,000 coins, while the bronze circulation followed closely with 44,270,400 pieces. Indeed, so heavy in point of weight was this later coinage that its dimensions had to be taken in tons, reaching 240½, 71 3/5 and 15½ tons respectively for pennies, half-pennies, and farthings. It is also interesting to note with regard to the gold circulation that more than 5,500,000 ounces of bullion was brought into the country for the purpose of transforming it into sovereigns and half-soveerigns. While worn and thin gold coin to the tune of £2,000,000 was received back by the Mint to await recoining.

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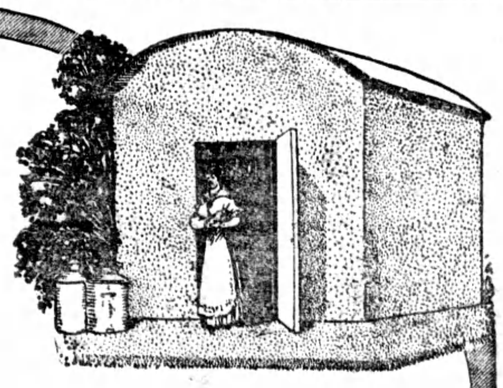

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