

WHILE TODAY FOR CATALOGUE STORE AT ADELAIDE & JARVIS STS TORONTO ONT

SEEDS

ONLY A MONTH;
OR, A CURIOUS MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—(Cont'd)

The children's faces fell. It seemed almost as if they instinctively knew of the cloud that hung over their father. They had always known that he would some day come to them; but his name had been little mentioned. It was difficult to mention it without running the risk of the terrible questions which as children they were so likely to ask. All the gladness and spirit seemed to have left them. They were both shy, and the meeting with this unknown parent was a terror to them. They clung to Frithiof as he took them downstairs, and catching sight of Ceeli leaning back in one of the half-chairs, they made a rush for her, and poured out all their childish fears as she clung to them and kissed them with all the tenderness of a real mother.

"We don't want to go and see father," said Lance, stoutly. "We had much rather not."

"But you must think that he wants to see you very much," said Ceeli. "He remembers you quite well, though you have forgotten him; and now that he has come to you, you must both make him very happy, and love him."

"I don't like him at all," said Gwen, perversely.

"It is silly and wrong to say that," said Ceeli. "You will love him when you see him."

"I love you," said Gwen, with a vehement hug.

"Have you only room for one person in your heart?"

"I rather love Herr Frithiof," said Gwen, glancing up at him through her eyelashes.

They both smiled, and Ceeli, seeing that little would be gained by discussing the matter, got up and led them toward the drawing-room, her pale, brave face contrasting curiously with Gwen's rosy cheeks and rebellious little air.

Mr. Boniface sat talking to the new-comer kindly enough. They both rose as Ceeli and the children entered.

"This is my daughter," said Mr. Boniface.

And Ceeli shook hands with the ex-prisoner, and looked a little anxiously into his face.

He was rather a pleasant-looking man of five-and-thirty, and so much like Lance that she could not help feeling kindly toward him. She hoped that the children would have well, and glanced at Gwen nervously.

"But Gwen, who was a born flirt, speedily forgot her dislike, and was quite willing to meet the stranger's advances half-way. In two minutes' time she was contentedly sitting on his knee, while Lance stood shyly by, studying his father with a gravity which was, however, inclined to be friendly and not critical. When he had quite satisfied himself he went softly away, returning before long with a toy pistol and a boat, which he put into his father's hands.

"What is this?" said Mr. Grantley.

"It's my favorite toy," said Lance. "I wanted to show them you. Quick, Gwen, run and find your doll for father."

He seemed touched and pleased; and indeed they were such well-trained children that any parent must have been proud of them. To this ex-convict, who for years had been cut off from all child-life, the mere sight of them was refreshing. He seemed quite inclined to sit there and play with them for the rest of the evening. And Ceeli sat by in a sort of dream, hearing of the new home that was to be made for the children in British Columbia—where land was to be had for a penny an acre, and where one could live on grapes and pines, and all the most delicious fruits. Then, presently, with many expressions of gratitude for all that had been done for the children, Mr. Grantley took leave, and she led the little ones up to bed, leaving Mr. and Mrs. Boniface to go into

the old wounds, though to the end of his life they must leave a scar, were really healed. He had lived through a great deal, and had lived in a way that had developed the best points in his character. He had now a growingly keen appreciation for all that was really beautiful—for purity, and strength, and tenderness, and for that quality which it is the fashion to call altruism, but which he with his hatred of affectation in words, called goodness.

As he thought of Ceeli during those days he began to see more and more clearly the full force of her character. Hitherto he had quietly taken her for granted; there was nothing very striking about her, nothing in the least obstrusive. Perhaps if it had not been for that strange little scene in the garden he would never have taken the trouble to think of her actual character.

Through the week that followed he watched her with keen interest and sympathy. That she should be in trouble—at any rate, in trouble that was patent to all the world—was something entirely new. Their positions seemed to be reversed, and he found himself spontaneously doing everything he could think of to please and help her. Her trouble seemed to draw them together; and to his mind there passed something very beautiful in her passionate devotion to the children—for it was devotion that never in the least bordered on sentimentality. She went through everything-

came sweeping over her; just as they were then, innocent, and unconscious, and happy, she could never see them again.

"Be good, Lance," she said, through her tears. "Promise me always to try to be good."

"I promise," said the little fellow, hugging her with all his might. "And we shall come back as soon as ever we're back."

"Yes, yes," said Ceeli, "you must come back."

But in her heart she knew that however pleasant the meeting in future years might be, it could not be like the present; as children, and as her own special charge, she was parting with them forever.

The carriage drove up to the door, there came sounds of hurrying feet and fetching and carrying of luggage; Ceeli took them downstairs, and then, with a last long embrace from Lance, and kisses interspersed with sobs from Gwen, she gave them up to their father and turned to take leave of their nurse. "I will take great care of them, miss," said the maid, herself crying, "and you shall hear from me regularly."

In another minute the carriage had driven away, and Ceeli was left to make the best she might of what she could not but feel, at first, a desolate life.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

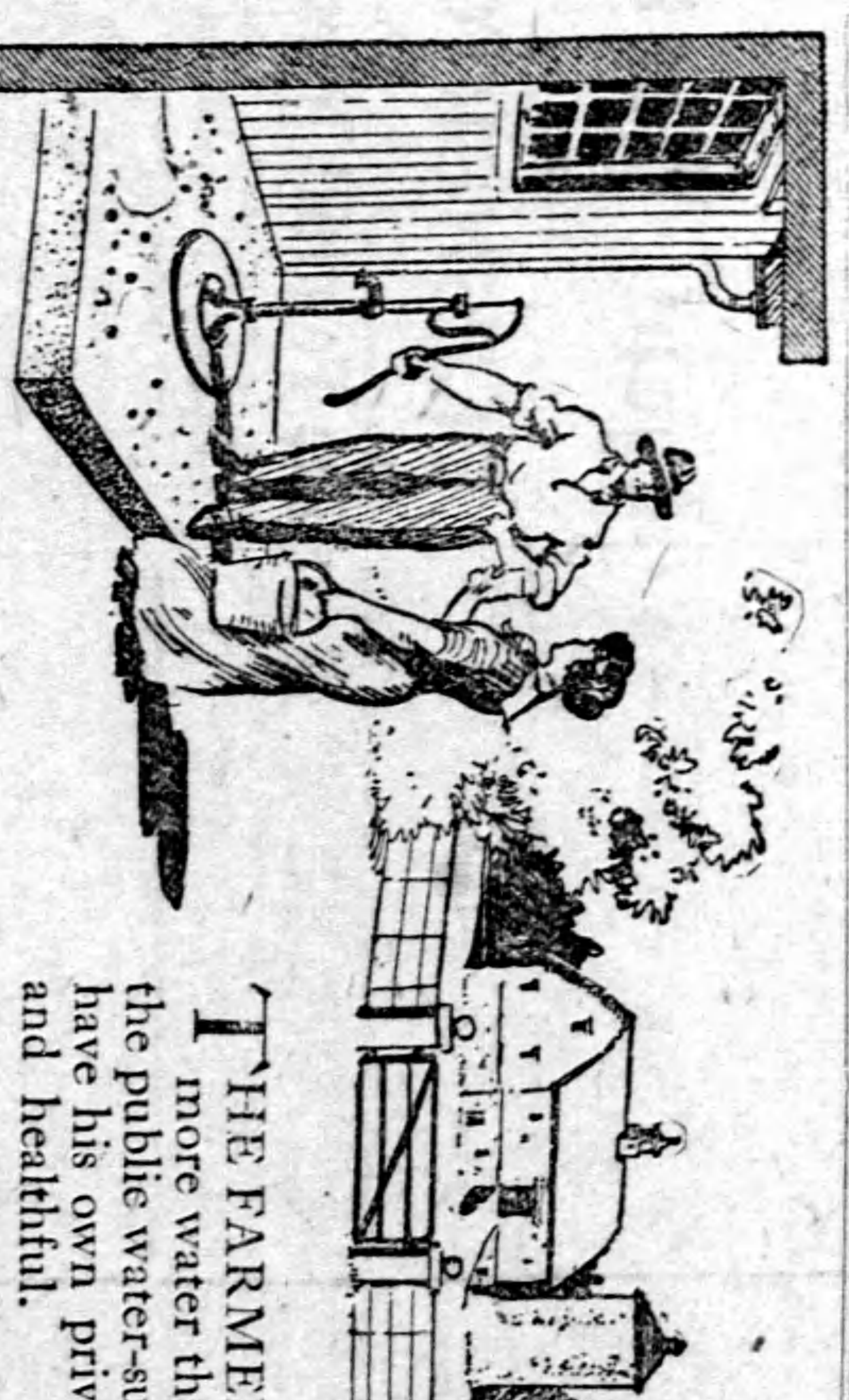
Hardly had the bustle of departure quieted down at Rowan Tree House when a fresh anxiety arose. Herr Sivertsen, who had for some time been out of health, was seized with a fatal illness, and for three days and nights Frithiof was unable to leave him; on the third night the old Norseman passed quietly away, conscious to the last minute, and with his latest breath inveighing against the degeneracy of his age.

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