

WIDOWS, FERNS, AND ROMANCE.

CHAPTER I.

"What possible connection can there be between these?" says one.

Is it sarcasm, meaning to insinuate that those who indulge in romance are green, like ferns?

No, my dear; for if it referred to color, the folly might as truthfully be termed gray; and we have all learned that romantic ideas are not confined to the green age of youth.

It was a lovely day in September that a party gathered in the porch of Rose Cottage, discussing the feasibility of a trip up the mountain-side for ferns and mosses.

If Hi, Norton could go to-day with them, all agreed that it would be charming. Hi, was their favorite guide, and an excursion was readily postponed if there was any hope of having Hi, by waiting.

Our party was composed of James and Hannah, John and Maria, pretty gray-haired Mrs. Bedell (a widow whose sorrow had some time reached the passive, interesting stage), Dr. Malbone, and poor, insignificant Hi, that in our rambles was paired off with Hi.

Little did I care, for Hi's "talk" was far more interesting to me than that of my companions; such original remarks and ideas of things as he treated me to, brimful of natural wit and keenness!

It was he that first opened my eyes to the fact that Dr. Malbone was infatuated with our sweet-faced widow of forty, but neither of them fairly seemed to be physical beauty that rendered her so charming; yet charming she was to all, male or female, young or old.

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heartless, there must be thieves around; he had suspected Hi for some time, but he had just begun to think that possibly Grace was in some danger.

I did not see but their mutual blushes were just as becoming to them as to younger lovers—for lovers they are most certainly now, whatever may have been their relation in the youth that is forever left behind them.

CHAPTER IV.

Ferns and mosses well worthy of the name did Hi, pilot us to that day. Cheerful, more elegant than all the chameleon ever produced.

Soft, crisp mosses; soft, velvety mosses; lichens of all kinds and descriptions, upon trunks of trees that looked sound and rich with verdure, but into which one would sink untold depths if they ventured to tempt foothold upon its treacherous surface.

The loveliest of rock ferns upon boulders of tons weight, which rested firmly against the side of the mountain as if maintaining their position by mere force of an excursion was readily postponed if there was any hope of having Hi, by waiting.

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never any apparent danger of being thus afflicted.

Grace's dearly-purchased cluster was most daintily imbedded in the best of chip-dirt, whose surface was concealed by short, crisp moss, and its edges fringed with the loveliest bits and varieties of moss imaginable; carefully she watered it each day, and soon we could see that it really was growing. Grace had imagined it was for some time, but now the delicate fronds were expanding, and tiny bits of ferns could be seen peering through the cunningly placed moss.

The Doctor and Grace both seemed to feel that that basket and its ferns was something a little more choice than any of the others.

One day they asked us to bring them each day curious roots and odd-shaped branches, and the Doctor began the making of a rustic stand, which was not finished until the last evening of our stay. It was a beauty, and the Doctor proudly placed the mossy bank of ferns upon it, and told us in a matter-of-fact manner, that "It will adorn our library this winter—Grace's and mine."

Thus truly was the engagement announced to the world, and we never knew a word of how it happened, nor what had been their previous relation to each other; perhaps they thought it was nobody's business. I shouldn't wonder in the least; some folks are just so odd.

We knew it was no use to "act mad" because our curiosity was not gratified, so we cordially congratulated them, and bade them a cheerful good-by, promising to attend the wedding at Christmas.

The Doctor did not get quite enough to return to New York, and Grace was too old to feel prudish about staying with him after our departure. Our kind host and hostess were nice fatherly and motherly people, and would properly care for the young (?) folks, so we were not at all sorry to leave.

Grace will return to Boston when the Doctor's health permits, to prepare for that wedding.

I have ordered a painting of ferns, mosses and autumn leaves for my wedding gift to Grace and the Doctor.

The Helpless Bivalve.

If they had not noticed it already, it is perhaps unnecessary to inform our readers that the oyster crop of the present season is in several respects better than that which we have had for a number of years past.

From almost every point at which these shell-fish are collected, reports have been received, that this year generally larger and healthier than usual, statements which those who are at all critical in their tastes must have had many opportunities of verifying.

But while recognizing the increased excellence of the harvest, we have heard an article of food, we have not been able, even from those who are directly interested in the business, to obtain any well-defined reason for the admitted improvement.

Indeed, very few attempt to account for the change, and the only fairly sensible explanation that we have heard given is that the sea water was of a warmer temperature this year during the months of September and October than for a number of preceding years.

Of course, this may in no way account for the circumstances mentioned, but the subject is one which does not appear to have attracted the amount of scientific investigation that it deserves.

In fact, there are several features in respect to oysters that do not seem to be generally understood, and which, if ascertained from those who are in the business, added to some slight personal experience, is worth anything, the oyster, unlike most kinds of fish, improves by keeping out of the water.

Perhaps, however, it ought to be said in explanation that that very few fish can be kept for any length of time, after a removal from their native element, and that dead oysters lose their virtue quite as quickly as other fish.

But if oysters are carefully packed, with the bowl shaped shell underneath, they will live in a temperate atmosphere for a number of days, feeding on the liquid that is confined within their shells.

If they are opened immediately after they are scooped from the ground, the fish will be found floating, so to speak, in quite a quantity of water, but if they are opened after three or four days' proper keeping, this water will almost wholly have disappeared, while the fish will be found much richer and fuller than it was on the first day, the reason given by oyster dealers for this being that it has fed itself on the liquid that had previously been in the shell.

This leads to the remark that the desirability of packing oysters in ice is an open question.

A large number of the best-informed in the trade maintain that the practice of putting large lumps of ice upon oysters in the shell that have been stacked up, as they commonly are in restaurants, is a highly injurious one.

If the fish are dead, no doubt this treatment is intended to keep them in a condition to be fit to eat, but if they are alive, they have already lost a large part of their excellence as a species of human food, as they should remain alive until killed by the forcing open of the shells.

If, however, they are alive, this application of ice, it is said, is pretty certain to kill them speedily and to their existence.

To the many lovers of this shell-fish the controversy is one of no slight importance, and the question involved should be settled definitely one way or the other.—N. Y. Times.

THE REAL AND UNREAL.—Those who get their ideas of French domestic life from the novels of the French writers, are a little startled to learn that the widow of "Clam," otherwise the Vicomte de Noe, the great caricaturist, has killed herself in a fit of despondency over the loss of her husband.

Probably even in France, the last place where one would look for conjugal tenderness and devotedness, even to death, would be in the household of that remorseless and unsparring satirist, who had for years been the Nemesis of French vanity, folly and weakness.

But there is no civilized country in the world in which domestic affection is so strong as in France, none in which the ties of marriage and kindred are so potent an influence; and the true life of France is something as different from the boulevard novel as the true life of America is different from the dime novel.

Comments.

Prof. J. M. Gregory, President of the Illinois Industrial University says: "Every editor is a teacher, a teacher of men as well as of children. The newspaper is the freshest of books."

"It is the latest history, the newest science treatise, the current political economy, the marvel of the arts, the text-book of a living philosophy."

"That school-room, other things being equal, will be brightest, freshest and most productive in practical learning into which the newspaper penetrates."

How Bismarck Did Resign in 1877.

It will be remembered that about the end of March, 1877, a report was current that Prince Bismarck had resigned and that his resignation had been accepted by the Emperor William.

In M. Hansen's "Contouilles de la Diplomatie" the following account is given of the event: The Emperor William spent the evening of Thursday, the 27th of March, in the house of Prince Anton Radzwill, who is distantly related to the royal family, and there met the Count N., who is well known.

"Well, Count," said the Emperor, "are you going to dine of the Easter lamb with Prince Ferdinand on Easter Sunday?" "Certainly, your Majesty," replied the Count, "unless Herr Falk confiscates the lamb."

"In that case," replied the Emperor, "you need not be under any apprehension for your dinner." "I am, however, not quite certain," replied the Count; "for how can your subjects feel safe when even Her Majesty, the Empress, has to hide her charitable acts to avoid being annoyed?"

"How so, Count?" asked the Emperor. "Why, sire," replied the Count, "the Empress gave officially 200 marks (about £10) to the Ursuline Nuns who had been expelled from Berlin; but secretly Her Majesty sent 1000 marks." Encouraged by the Emperor, Count A. cited a great number of other petty vexatious acts of Herr Falk, according to the orders of Prince Bismarck.

The Emperor evidently much annoyed, left early, and next day he sent for Prince Bismarck, who pleaded ill health. A second messenger ordered the Prince immediately to appear at the Castle, where he was so ill as to have to keep his bed, in which case the Emperor would call upon him.

Prince Bismarck had to obey, and was closeted for more than an hour with the Emperor. On returning home, he at once sent in his resignation.—Pall Mall Gazette.

He would Write to their Parents.

Colonel X., of John Morgan's Cavalry, was not a martinet, but, bearded like the pard, he had a military air. Discipline was his hobby.

The soldiers of his regiment were young men from eighteen to twenty-five years old—all of them blue-blooded. To restrain these hot-spurs required tact, skill and firmness.

It was no easy task to curb this jeunesse dorée. But the Colonel did it, and this was the way he did it: In the morning he had been ordered, the Brigadier and his staff visited the Colonel's camp for the purpose of conducting it.

While the regiment was in line, undergoing inspection, two privates, who had been ranging the night before in search of buttermilk, and had endeavored to sneak into camp unobserved, were detected by the outpost sentinels and brought under arrest to Colonel X. at the head of his regiment.

The Colonel, cocking his hat on three grains, sternly ordered them to his tent to await his coming after inspection, remarking to General D. that he would make an example of these rovers.

Arriving at the tent with the General and staff, after the ranks were broken the Colonel arraigned the culprits before him. "Young gentlemen," said he, severely, "you are aware that you have been guilty of a serious offense against the discipline of my camp?"

"Yes, Colonel," was the meek reply. "Yes, sirs," thundered the Brigadier, "but I desire you distinctly to understand that if this offense is repeated I will write to your parents about it. Go to your company."

Turning to the surprised officers looking on, he said: "You see how severe I must be with these young fellows. Discipline must be preserved."

"Well, you hand over the cents as security that you will pay it back." The two sums changed hands, and the borrower scratched his head and slowly asked: "How does this come? I haven't got as much as I had before I borrowed any."

Then the others scratched their heads and looked at each other. "The borrower had no collateral, and in this emergency the advice of Jack Shepard was called for. "Easiest thing in the world when you understand finance," replied Jack. "You would borrow eight cents?"

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The Deep Sea.

Some interesting results of recent deep sea explorations were concisely stated in a late lecture at the Royal Institution, London. Four-elevenths, or nearly three-fourths of the surface of the earth is covered by sea.

The average depth of the ocean is, according to the latest calculations of Mr. Otto Krusenstern, about 1,877 fathoms, or something over two miles. The greatest depth known to exist was discovered by the United States ship Thetis, near the Kurile Islands, in the North Pacific. It is 4,685 fathoms, or about five miles and a quarter.

The highest mountain existing is of about the same height as the deepest sea is deep. Mount Everest is 4,830 fathoms in height. So insignificant, however, is the total volume of the land raised above the sea level in proportion to the vast cavity occupied by the sea, that were this cavity emptied of its water, the whole of the land now above sea level could be shoveled into it twenty-two and a half times over before it would be filled up to the present sea level.

Nevertheless, the depth of the oceans, great as it is, is not in comparison with the vastness of their extent of surface. As Mr. Croll has said, the oceans in relation to their superficial area are as shallow as a sheet of water 100 yards in length and one inch in depth. The sides of the ocean basins are not at all steep. They are mostly lowly inclined that an ordinary locomotive engine could run up them in a straight line with ease.

There are few deeps in the ocean more than three or four degrees or less. Around some oceanic islands the slope is greater. The steepest slope known is at Bermuda, where there is an inclination of nearly twenty degrees from the edge of the reef to 2,000 fathoms. There are no such things as mountains and valleys on the deep sea bottom.

Animals cannot slip down against their will into the depths, and the most liberally into them and travel a long journey to reach them. The pressure exerted by the superincumbent water at great depths is so great as to be almost beyond conception. It grows most likely unaffected by consequent changes of pressure.

With regard to the temperature of the deep sea water, the conditions which would affect animals are comparatively few. Nearly all over the ocean the temperature at 500 fathoms is as low as 50° F., and this is the case even immediately under the equator in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Below 2,000 fathoms the temperature is never more than a few degrees above freezing point, excepting in the peculiar cases of land-locked seas, such as the Sulu Sea.

"Collateral."

The other day one of the postoffice brigade of bootblacks desired to raise a loan of eight cents, and after some looking around he found little English, who was perfectly willing to advance the amount, provided he was secured.

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