

OUR STORY TELLER



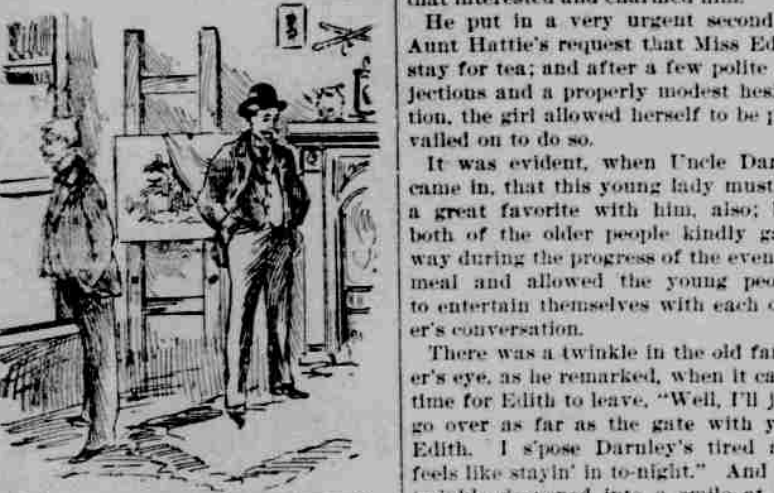
THE GIRL WITH THE TAM O'SHANTER

DARNLEY WATERS had a crown morose and pessimistic. His rooms at 33 Vance street were in disorder. Rough sketches were scattered here and there about the floor. Palette and brushes were lying on a table in a neglected corner. An unfinished picture stood half uncovered on the easel and the artist himself, in a sadly disheveled condition, sat leaning his head on his hand and gazing dejectedly out into the gray day.

Things had not gone altogether well with Darnley Waters of late. A few months ago he had thrown up his position as an illustrator on a magazine and dismissed half of his pupils in order to give his time to the painting of a picture which, he dreamed, should be his masterpiece.

He was an enthusiast, and, like most of his class, ignored the fact that men at 23 years of age do not give to the world their masterpieces, as a general thing.

At the exhibition where his work was hung the crowds passed by his picture and the critics scored it. Naturally it found no buyer. For a time the young



"I'M GOING UP INTO THE COUNTRY."

artist was angry, and while that emotion lasted he bore the disappointment well. Then followed the reaction, when even his resentment could not sustain his broken spirit, and he felt that he never wished to paint again. His neglected pupils fell away one by one and now began to say that Darnley Waters was getting cranky, and although he did not say so, that was what his friend Tom Rivers thought when he dropped in and found him in the situation described.

"You see, old man," said Rivers, "you're getting morose because that picture of yours didn't set the world on fire. I always have said, and I maintain even now, that you were not at your best in it."

"I shall never do anything better," replied Waters.

"Oh, nonsense," said his friend. "Do you think you have exhausted all your capabilities for performance?"

"No; but I threw into that picture an enthusiasm which I cannot summon in the painting of another."

"That's capital. If you'll temper your enthusiasm with a little common sense you'll do something good, I know."

"It's no use trying to talk to me, Rivers; I have decided what I'm going to do."

"That's right, and what is it?"

"I'm going up into the country to my Uncle Daniel's farm."

"Thunder and 'ounds, man, there's nothing to paint up there in the dead of winter. It's the prosiest place in the country—not even a good 'winter landscape' available."

"I am not going there to paint."

"Well, what in creation, then, are you going there for?"

"I am going there to forget that I ever was an artist. I shall not take a brush along."

"And what do you intend to do—clip hounds for a living?" The sarcasm in Rivers' remark was not lost on Darnley Waters, but he answered, with a smile:

"Well, no; but Uncle Daniel has always wanted me to come to him. A share of the farm whenever I wish to take it, and a gentleman farmer is almost as good as any other occupation, I suppose."

"And when do you leave us, my dear Dan Quinote?" asked Rivers.

"Tomorrow."

"If I did not know that you were fool enough to do what you say I should recommend you." And Mr. Rivers pulled his hat and left his friend.

And the sorrow found Darnley Waters at his Uncle Daniel's farm. The old man and his good wife were delighted to have their talented nephew with them and they put forward their utmost efforts to entertain him. But January on an up-country farm is not particularly lively or inspiring sea-

Darnley Waters worked hard in his room, with frequent interruptions, for visits and long winter rambles with Edith Burton. It was late in the spring before he left the farm, and then he carried with him a picture which no one but himself had seen.

At the next exhibition of that highly authoritative, artistic body, the S. P. H. A., the crowds clustered about a painting which seemed to have won the universal sentiment of approval. The critics were unanimous in their praise of it. It represented a young girl dressed in winter clothing, wind-blown and snow-flaked, with a white Tam O'Shanter on her head, just entering a room from without, where the air was filled with falling snow. The girl's face was full of sparkle, life and a certain winning sweetness that drew and held the spectators.

Reporters and public voted it the success of the exhibition, while every one with human curiosity consulted the catalogues, where it was set down as "The Girl in the Tam O'Shanter," by Darnley Waters.

"Shrewd dog!" said his fellow artists. "Who but he would have thought of going up into the country at winter and painting such a picture on such a subject?"

It was not until the exhibition was nearly over that Darnley Waters brought Edith down to the city to see his picture. It was late in the afternoon and the gallery was almost deserted when she stood before the canvas.

Meanwhile, the extraordinary story was spread abroad. The newspapers, thankful for such subject matter in the dead season, had paragraphs each day on this exciting topic, and when they had exhausted conjecture, short articles, moral, religious, joose, philological, antiquarian, filled up convenient portions of their space.

"The Thunderer" remarked shortly, that the crimes of a period bore the stamp of its intellectual characteristics. Extreme ingenuity and logical precision were essential to project and execute so daring, so original a robbery as that which had lately started society at Evesleigh Manor; that probably when statistics, mathematics and registration had been perfected and properly applied, we should find that only in the first decade of the last quarter of the nineteenth century—only at this precise epoch—could this special outrage have been committed.

"The Banner" traced this remarkable and heinous act to one fruitful source of evil, moral, social and religious, neglect of due instruction in the church, catechism and of committing the Ten Commandments to memory and, apropos, drew a pathetic picture of a gray-haired rector standing beneath the east window of the village church, through which the light streamed in many-tinted rays on the rosy, chubby reverent arches, who repeated in awe-struck tones after their beloved pastor, "Thou shalt not steal!"

"The Daily Instructor" proved incontrovertibly from certain racial indications, that so base and infernal a plot could only be conceived by an American Irishman, with a dash of Russian blood from, say a great-uncle, or perhaps a strain of Malay on the mother's side; while "The Delirium Tremens" grew hysterical over an appalling list of robberies, with and without bloodshed, battery, torture and murder, from the earliest date to the present crime, which, from certain characteristics, might be considered the most audaciously wicked of all.

"The Universe," in its usual lively style, hinted that among the latter infernal plots of the present at the Evesleigh festivities, whispers were circulated that the over-strained enthusiasm of a ritualistic and self-subsiding curate, whose taste for ecclesiastical magnificence was in the inverse ratio to his regard for personal cleanliness, had been carried away by visions—the result of overfasting and meditation—that he had annexed the lost robes for the decoration of a favorite image of the Virgin in the new and splendid church of St. Withold the Wool-gatherer within, and that Mrs. Ruthven, of the generous sympathy and delicate tact which distinguished her, was arranging for the substitution of an admirable imitation, modeled at her own expense, of the lost robes and diamonds, so as to save the pious young man's taste and feelings; and to this project the delay in the progress of justice was due.

To this dastardly attack the "Churchman's Friend" replied with vigorous indignation, and much fine writing ensued, till a fresh trial presented itself, and for awhile public interest was diverted from the Evesleigh robbery.

CHAPTER VI.

The sudden burst of life and gaiety in the long-deserted manor house, made its quickly succeeding silence and gloom more marked and depressing. Lady Dorrington tried to persuade Nora to accompany her to Scotland, where Lord Dorrington had shot, but the young lady said she could not think of leaving Mrs. L'Estrange, and Mrs. L'Estrange would not leave her little girl; so everything returned to the same condition of stillness and tranquility which Marsden's unexpected appearance and outburst of hospitality had broken up.

But this stillness was no longer restful.

The curious circumstances of the robbery had left behind an impression of insecurity, and Mrs. L'Estrange, whose natural timidity had been confirmed by long attendance upon an invalid and irritable husband, immediately made arrangements with the gardener to sleep in the house instead of in the lodge, and Waldman, the pet Dachshund, was allowed to lie at the foot of the stairs, while Nora herself inspected the bolting and barring of doors and windows every night.

"I assure you, you are alarming yourselves unnecessarily," said Winton, who had ridden over, as he often did, to share the evening meal at Brookdale, and was now leaning against the chimney-piece while Nora was playing some of Bea's favorite airs before the little one went off to bed with her German "Kinderkartnerin," who was patiently waiting for her. It was a chill, wild night, the wind sighing in sudden gusts through the trees surrounding the cottage, the occasional flash of the rain against the windows making the bright fire of wood and coal peculiarly acceptable. Winton looked round him with a delightful sense of comfort—of being at home.

The refined simplicity of the pretty drawing-room, the soft light of well-trimmed lamps—Mrs. L'Estrange in her semi-toilet of black silk and lace, her work-basket filled with bright-colored wools beside her, her small fingers deftly weaving a square of dull green cloth with flowers and foliage—Nora at the piano, her graceful shoulders draped in dainty muslin gathered to her pliant waist by a band of black velvet—all had grown familiar to him. He had had a hard life all through his boyhood; an orphan with barely enough means to supply him education, brought up by an uncle

Japanese Origin of Decoration.

Decoration Day, in fact and custom, though not in name, has been a Japanese institution for many centuries past. As early as 1857 our first envoy, Townsend Harris, whose journals and biography are to be published in Boston in a few weeks hence, planted flowers on the graves of the tombs of the four United States marines buried at Shimoda. None more than young Japanese, who know only their modernized country, will be surprised at the revelations of old Japan.—New York Sun.

Texas Justice—You admit you stole the pig out of the pen? Colored Prisoner—Yes, I admits I stole de pig, but I wuz hungry, an' I didn't have nuttin' to eat. "Pork reacher," said the Judge, with tears in his eyes, as he chalked him down for two years.—Tammany Times.

Considering the opportunities the Lord has for finding people out, we don't see where he gets any angels.

There is so much abuse of the man that it never occurs to the women that they need any.



WOMAN'S WIFE

CHAPTER V.—(Continued.)

"I don't think much of your celebrated detective," said Mrs. Ruthven. "He is by no means the monosyllabic insensate man one reads of in novels. I have no faith in detectives who talk so much."

"I fancy the insensate men only exist in fiction," returned Marsden, smiling. "This person has, however, done some remarkable things. I believe he is considered a very valuable officer."

The day after Mrs. Ruthven and her host went up to town the party broke up; the great house was closed, and impenetrable darkness still wrapped the great jewel robbery.

Nevertheless, the familiarity to which bygone comradeship with Mrs. L'Estrange entitled him, was very delicious. He had never been on such terms of intimacy with women before, and he was quick to perceive that his coming to the robbery caused no disturbance, that he had fallen into the march of their quiet lives, and felt that to part with them would be the keenest grief he had ever known. Then—or one? For awhile he scarcely knew.

"You are alarming yourself unnecessarily," he had been saying, when this digression began. "There is small chance of any professional thief visiting this part of the world for some time to come, but I suppose it is not easy to throw off the impression such a scene as you witnessed must have created."

"Good-night," cried Bea, holding up a rosy mouth to be kissed. "Will you bring me a new spade to-morrow?"

"Not to-morrow—the day after. Good-night, Miss Beatrix—sleep well. Good-night, fraulein."

Nora rose from the piano, and drew a low chair by the fire.

"There is no use in arguing the matter," she said. "Helen cannot resist her nervousness. I myself, though I feel quite brave in the daylight, begin to be a little uncomfortable as night draws in, and I see Helen look up with a startled, restless look at my sudden sound, and really, after seeing what a daring thief can do, one's faith in chains, bars and bolts dies away."

"Our chief safeguard is the absence of valuables," said Mrs. L'Estrange.

"Do you think," resumed Nora, "that it would be well to go up to town for a couple of months, just in the dead of the winter? We should throw off these disagreeable impressions and be our noble selves again."

"I do believe it would be the best thing you could do," said Winton. "It is a capital idea. Of course, I am speaking selfishly. I must be in London a great part of November, and your nervousness may transfer itself to me if I find myself lonely and friendless in that vast wilderness."

Nora laughed.

"I don't fancy your nerves trouble you much. But it would be rather nice to go to the theater and concerts, sometimes."

"And you would be a capital escort," said Mrs. L'Estrange, "though, perhaps, you do not care for such things?"

"When I find acting that can make me forget it is acting, I am deeply interested, but a concert bores me, though I am very fond of certain kinds of music."

"If," began Mrs. L'Estrange, going back to the subject uppermost in her mind, "if I had not seen that dreadful knife, I should feel less creepy."

"Don't think about it, dear Helen," cried Nora. "Go, play a game of chess with Mr. Winton; that will effectually divert your thoughts."

"I will, if you would like it, Mark—I mean," smiling and coloring, "Mr. Winton."

"Yes, let us have a trial of strength, by all means."

"My strength is of the broken-reed order," said Mrs. L'Estrange, smiling. "I will go and see Bea tucked up, and then do my best," began Nora, as Mrs. L'Estrange left the room, "I wonder what they are doing in London. If they have discovered anything?" She clasped her hands on her knee, and sat looking dreamily into the fire. "Mrs. Ruthven promised to write to me, but she has not."

"There has scarcely been time," said Winton, as he brought over the chess-table, and began to set forth the pieces. "And I fear there is small chance of discovery. It is unlucky for Marsden, for I suppose the best thing he can do is to marry the charming widow; they would suit each other admirably. Now, I should not be surprised if the notion that he is unlucky to her should take possession of her mind." Winton watched Nora's face as he spoke.

"Poor Squire, I hope not; it would be a shame. He is so nice, and so is she. If he is fond of her I do hope she will marry him."

"If? Then you do not agree with every one that he is devoted to her?" And while he spoke, Winton thought, "It is acting or real indifference?"

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"I am not sure, I have scarcely seen them together. But I like her; she is very nice to me. Why don't you like her, Mr. Winton?"

"Why do you think I do not?"

"I know it, because—oh! I can hardly tell. By the tone of your voice, by the expression of your eyes."

"Hum! so my eyes can express dislike at any rate?"

"Oh! they can express liking, too, I mean," blushing quickly at his dinner-table, "I mean that they can look kindly; but am I right, you do not like Mrs. Ruthven?"

"The reason why I cannot tell. But I do not like the widow, ma belle!" said Winton.

"Oh! bravo!" cried Nora, laughing. "I did not suspect you were capable of improvising."

"I dare say I am capable of more than you imagine. I suppose I ought to assure you that I have no reason for disliking Mrs. Ruthven—it is an instinct."

"I thought these instincts of liking and disliking were characteristic of women; that men built up their preferences on a solid foundation of reason."

"We ought, and at least, I try to be just."

"I am afraid you are a little hard."

"I dare say I am, or have been; at present, I may, for all I know, be learning

to be a better man." He looked down as he spoke these words thoughtfully. "But in the battle of life we can rarely afford to lay aside our armor."

"What a dreadful idea of life!" said Nora with a sigh. Winton did not reply; he glanced, his hand on a book, and looked intently at his companion, whose eyes were fixed on the fire.

"Now, Mr. Winton, I shall do my best to conquer," said Mrs. L'Estrange, returning. Winton brought her a chair.

"Do you never care to learn?" he said to Nora as he took his place.

"I have tried. I used to try and play with my father, but I never could learn. I never could be interested; there is some deficiency, I suppose in me, for I never care if I win or lose at any game."

"Which shows an unmathematical, unpractical turn of mind," said Winton, smiling. "I wait your attack" to Mrs. L'Estrange.

For awhile Nora read the newspaper; then she rose, and leaning on the back of her step-mother's chair, looked on at the game, as if watching an opportunity of speaking.

"Check to your king," said Mrs. L'Estrange at last. "You are not playing your best, Mr. Winton; is it negligence or politeness? No, you cannot move there, you are still in check, nor there either."

"It is checkmate!" replied Winton; "well and quickly done, too!"

"Then I may speak?" cried Nora. "There is a paragraph in the paper about the robbery I will read it. The mystery which enshrouds the great jewel robbery is still unsolved; but, although we must on no account betray the secrets of the police, it is perhaps admissible to state that a faint clue has at length been found, which in the experienced hands of a certain famous officer may, indeed will, probably lead to the detection of the villains whose dastardly attack almost cost its object a serious illness. We are happy to state that Mrs. Ruthven has very nearly recovered the effects of the shock to her nervous system, and is about to proceed to Italy for change of air and scene."

"Which means," said Winton, rising, "that the penny-a-liner knows nothing, and has no chance of knowing anything. When these fellows are most profoundly ignorant, they assume the greatest knowledge. But it is late! If you will allow me, I will say good-night, and make my way to the stables. I can be my own groom."

"Oh! Roberts is in, I am sure, having a talk in the kitchen. He is our body-guard now; he will bring your horse round." Mrs. L'Estrange rang as she spoke, and ordered Mr. Winton's horse.

"What a dreadfully dark night!" said Nora, going to the open door a few minutes after, while Winton said good-bye to Mrs. L'Estrange. "It is raining, too. I am afraid you will get very wet."

"There was genuine kindly interest in the eyes raised to his.

"If you care whether I am wet or dry, alive or dead, I shall be obliged to lay aside my armor," said Winton, smiling, as his hand closed on hers with a friendly pressure, so close, so warm, that it set an electric thrill of surprise through her heart. "I shall come to-morrow to report myself, and bring you the 'History of Blackshire' we were speaking of. Good-night!" And the sound of his horse's tread soon died away.

"I have such a headache, Helen. I think I shall go to bed—do you mind?"

"No; by no means. I would rather sleep than listen to that morning wind. I hope we may have news of some kind from Lady Dorrington or Clifford Marsden to-morrow. The world seems to have left us stranded here."

They hid each other good-night and separated.

But Nora sat long pondering, her elbows on her dressing-table, her head on her hands, thinking with a startled, suddenly awakened, sense of alarm of the curious influence Mark Winton, without the smallest apparent effort on his part, had gained over her.

From the first hour they met, he had attracted her unconsciously. He was not good-looking, or particularly agreeable or flattering. He was, on the contrary, silent, slightly abrupt, and decidedly uncomplaisant; yet to Nora there was veiled pathos in his eyes, and an utter unconsciousness of himself, that gave dignified simplicity to his manner. She was always wondering what he thought and how this or that would strike him. Then, when he gradually came to talk to her of books, and topics of the dusty track of conventional chatter, the sincerity of his opinions, the tone of calm, clear common sense which pervaded his conversation, delighted and refreshed her. Strange to say, despite her recognition of his strength and self-sufficiency, Mrs. L'Estrange's story of his lonely youth—his resolute struggle for fortune—had touched a chord of tender pity in her heart; and in short before she was aware that he was more than an interesting acquaintance, Nora was in love with him.

(To be continued.)

ALL KINDS OF QUEER PETS.

Frogs, Owls and Cock-roaches Trained by a Maryland Scientist.

Harry C. Hopkins, one of the youngest members of the Maryland Academy of Science, has a special fondness for animals, says the Baltimore Sun.

Among his earliest pets were three frogs, which he raised from tadpoles. They became so tame that they would recognize his voice and hop eagerly to him whenever they heard him speak. His next pets were five screech owls, which he kept in the garret of his home. One of the owls, which he called Bob, became so accustomed to his voice that it would screech back a reply when called, and would haste to join Mr. Hopkins in the lower rooms of the house. Mr. Hopkins had at other times raccoons, opossums, foxes, white mice and white rats for pets. The latest pet in his collection was the most unique of them all, and was, perhaps, the only pet of the kind ever heard of. It was a roach—an ordinary brown roach—that ran out of his desk one day and took a sip from a drop of ink that had fallen on the desk. Mr. Hopkins let the little creature indulge itself undisturbed, and one day induced it to take a sip from the point of his pen. After that to tame the roach was an easy matter, and he soon had it so tame that it would come from his hiding place when called, and would follow the pen over the paper while Mr. Hopkins wrote. Mr. Hopkins did not enjoy the society of this little pet long. A new servant with a mania for "cleaning-up" and antipathy to roaches saw the pet on the desk one day and killed it.



A PICTURE OF GRACE AND BEAUTY.

however, did not leave him, so finally, on the fly-leaf of a book, he made in pencil a sketch, under which he wrote: "The Girl in the Tam O'Shanter." Then Edith came and he tore up the sketch in anger at the very inadequacy of the black and white to express one-half of her charm. He took the train next day and went to the city after his materials. When Uncle Daniel saw him return with them, he remarked, with a smile: "There's a farmer spoiled."

Then followed many days in which