The Mermaid.

BY E. JACK APPLETON.

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He sat on a gray, wave-scarred rock and gazed thoughtfully out to sea. It was early morning and a tiny salt breeze was blowing inland, of which Van Holden was pleasantly but indolently conscious. His straight, aristocratic nose was tilted at the proper angle to catch this odor so keenly appreciated by those who live far from the ocean, and his soft hat was tilted the other way, over his keen blue eyes.

Van Holden was not in love. He was not even contemplating suicide. He had merely arisen early to enjoy the novelty of such a thing and had wandered half a mile from the summer hotel to this protected little cove. As his digestion was excellent he took from his pocket now a briar pipe, filled it and struck a match.

"If it were not so beautiful," he remarked aloud, looking out to the sea as the match burned up, "if it were not a real sacrifice to disturb the absolute harmony of this scene—and if other people did not go in so much and muss the water up—I believe I would take a dip right here and now." The match having gone out, Van Holden struck another and lighted his pipe. Then he clasped his hands about his knees and rocked gently back and forward. "I ought really to be in love," he went on, "so that I might spout poetry this very minute. Poor old ocean! How much you have borne from love-sick individuals who insist on murderin' good verse, with you as an audience! It is really too bad. But I cannot imp ovise, and I never could quote, so you ll be saved this morning. I ought to be in love, but as no modern Venus is apt to rise from the waves—by all the gods, I'm not so sure! What's that?"

His eyes opened widely as his soliloquy was interrupted by the appearance of a rapidly moving, graceful figure, swimming easily toward him from around the little promitory at his right, and Van Holden held his breath for a moment as he gazed at it. It was assuredly what he had thought at first glance—a girl, or a young woman, swimming toward shore, her rosy face turned to one side, her white arms gleaming through the little whirl of foam that she made with long, graceful, overhand strokes.

But before Van Holden had decided that a noiseless retreat was his cue, she caught sight of him; and then, with a little scream, seemingly more of fright than surprise, she turned quickly and started seaward again. But something seemed to retard her progress, and in a moment more the golden head, with masses of soft hair piled high upon it, had disappeared beneath the water.

Van Holden sprang to his feet, and threw off his coat. Waiting only to see that she was indeed in need of assistance, he tossed his pipe and hat beside his coat, and plunged into the cool waves, and struck out for the spot where she had gone under. Accustomed as he was to fresh water swimming, he found it easy enough to make speed here, and by the time she had come to the surface again, he was beside her. Slipping one arm beneath hers, he turned upon his back and swam back to the beach, in that matter-of-fact way in which he was wont to do everything. Once there, he carried the dripping little figure to a dry spot and laid her down. The girl was unconscious and Van Holden turned to pick up his coat to throw over her, when a sight met his gaze that took away what breath he had had left.

"Heavens alive!" he muttered, "I have rescued a mermaid, not a mortal. Either that, or I am clear crazy!" She lay on her side, her hair, shimmering with water, her eyes closed, the upper part of her trim body clothed in a regulation bathing suit; but at the waist line reality stopped and romance began. A delicately shaped, tapering

"Poor old ocean!"

extremity like that of a great mountain trout, dotted with spangles of gold and red, finished the uncanny picture that Van Holden beheld. For a moment he could only stare; then, recovering himself somewhat, he picked up his coat and spread it gently over her. Recovering his pipe also, he walked dazedly to the rock from which he had first seen her.

So rapidly had the remarkable incident occurred that he found the tobacco still alight, and for the space of a minute he smoked fast and furiously, trying to think what he could say or do. At the end of that time he turned and looked at the pathetic little heap—and saw her stir.

"What an idiot I am," he cried, springing to his feet. "Mermaid or girl, she needs attention, instead of foolish gazing at—where's my flask?"

He found it, still uninjured in his hip pocket, and stooping, he gently forced the pretty lips apart and poured a few drops of brandy into her mouth.

"Where am I?" she said, pressing her hands to her ears, and making that time honored remark in excellent English. "Did I go under again?" An embarrassed expression came across her face, as she added, "And you had to go after me? It is too bad—but I am very grateful, sir."

Sir? Van Holden looked again. She was a mere child, not over fifteen or sixteen at the most, and—Gracious Heaven! she was stripping off that remarkable extremity, as if it were made of rubber!

As she shook herself free from it and stood up in a very fetching bathing suit and stockings, he smiled—and took a swallow of the brandy himself.

"If you'll excuse me," he said apologetically, "I—your appearance rather upset me." A rare, but strangely pathetic smile answered him.

"I don't wonder," she said; "you must be colder than I." Shaking herself free of the sand which clung to her dress, she gathered up the remarkable covering and rolled it into a bundle which she tucked under one arm. "I am very grateful to you," she said again, "and I hope you have not worn yourself out——"

"No," he interrupted, "but before you go will you kindly tell me why

"Where am I?"

you are out so early in the morning, alone, and with that most peculiar—peculiar costume on?"

The girl's pretty face grew seriously wistful. "My father," she said, and then went on in a lower tone, "You must not breathe a word of this, for he would punish me if you did; but he makes me learn to swim so. My mother died last winter. Then my father, whom I had never seen before, came and took me away, and I am learning to swim with that tail. It is like swimming without your feet—and that wouldn't be very easy, would it?"

"I should imagine not," answered Van Holden gravely. "I think your father should be thrashed himself for making you do this. How old are you, my little siren?"

"Fifteen," she answered. "He wants me to be a mermaid in the show this summer. You wouldn't make me do that—if you were my father, would you?" she added suddenly, as if struck by a happy thought.

"Assuredly not," answered Van Holden, taking one of her cold little hands in his; "what is your father's name?"

"Frank Moran," she answered. "It is Moran's Great Three Ring Circus, you know."

"Yes," said Van Holden, a curious light coming into his eyes, "I do know." The child came closer to him and looked up at him for a moment without speaking. Then:

"You are good," she said slowly; "you are strong, too. I think I like you very much." Ere he could stop her, she stood on tiptoes, pressed her pretty lips to his, and turned and ran fleetly away toward the hotel in the far distance. Van Holden smiled and called after her, "Good-bye, little mermaid!"

She paused a moment to wave her hand to him, and answer, "Good-bye, good man!" Then she was gone again.

"Frank Moran, indeed," said Van Holden, the determined lines about his mouth showing plainly. "He is adding kidnapping to his other fine arts. Well, Mr. Moran, I have stopped some of your smaller games; I'll see if I can put an end to this. Poor little mermaid!"

By five o'clock that afternoon Van Holden was back in New York, and a day later there was a brief but intense scene in the room which Mr. Moran occupied at the seaside hotel. At the end of that scene, in which Van Holden, Moran, an old but determined lawyer from New York, and a frightened, shabbily dressed little woman, who proved to be the small mermaid's aunt, took part, Van Holden showed the circus owner the door, with the admonition: "I give you two hours to get away; at the end of that time if you are still here, or if you try to take this child again by pretending to be her father, or any other relative, into the penitentiary you go!"

And that evening the little mermaid, whom her delighted aunt called Marian, was placed in the motherly care of Mrs. Hargrave, the manager of the hotel. A few days later Van Holden's mother came, looked at the child, looked at her son—and took the former to her heart, for all time.

* * *

That was five years ago. Today Van Holden is no longer a careless, irresponsible bachelor. If you care to look him up, you will find him ensconced in a delightful little flat, deeply and increasingly in love with his wife—graceful and beautiful in every way—and calling her, at times, "mermaid dear."

FLASHES OF WIT.

"This is an imposition. Your sign says 'Shoes Repaired While You Wait,' and here I've been over two hours." "Well, isn't that waiting?"

"I wouldn't fight, my good men," said the peacemaker. "But he called me a thief, sir,'" exclaimed one of the combatants. "And he called me a lazy loafer," cried the other. "Well," said the peacemaker serenely, "I wouldn't fight over a difference of opinion; you may both be right."

Wife (3 a. m.): "John Henry, you're drunk." John Henry: "N-no (hic), my dear; I'm only ti(hic)red. Wez my slippers?" Wife (in disgust): "Over there beside the fireplace, where they have been since 6 o'clock last evening." John Henry (after wandering around for half an hour): "'Scuse me (hic), my dear. Wez the fireplace?"

HIS GROUNDS.

"And on what grounds do you base your application for divorce?" asked the lawyer of his new client.

"Exertion, sah."

"You mean desertion. I suppose. Your wife has left you, doubtless."

"No, sah, she hasn't left me sah."

"Then you can't ask fo a divorce on the ground of desertior

"I said exertion sah. It's de ground perzackly. She done exert herself continually to make me mizzable, sah. Put it on de ground ob exertion, sah."—Detroit Free Press.

TOO TOOTHSOME.

The Lion: By Heaven! I'd give a thousand cocoanuts to lay my hands on the monkey who asked me to have a nice ···tle sandwich.—Metropolitan Magazin

LITTLE LAUGHLETS.

The Strenuous Swim.

'Mid martyrs' epitaphs we may yet see: "She wore herself out for society."

Music and Music.

"What do you think of barring out ragtime airs?

"Oh, peanuts have a right to live as well as salted almonds."

The Bad Habit of Hoarding Trash.

In cleaning house from year to year
A woman's ways are ···irous queer;
She wails o'er rubbis' ···m, alack,
'Tis dusted and put ···ay back.

A New Monocle.

"What a peculiar monocle that golfer is wearing!"

"Yes, that is the very latest. It is called the hoot-monocle!"—Detroit Journal.

Had Not Changed Her Mind.

"Before she married him, you know, she used to say there wasn't another man like him in the world."

"Yes, but now she says she'd hate to think that there was."—Philadelphia Press.

The Cherub's Bath.

"My wife didn't stay but a week down at her mother's."

"Homesick?"

"No; but her younger sisters admired our baby so much they nearly washed it to pieces."

A Wall Street Victim.

Mr. Plink: I sympathize with you, Mr. Plunk.

Mr. Plunk: Yes; that's the worst of it; I don't mind dropping the money so much as I do having fellows who are really tickled about it come and tell me they feel sorry for me.

Cultivate Beauty of Spirit.

Intelligence and common sense in regard to the laws of health will change a comparatively ordinary looking woman into a creature who can claim her own share of good looks. Such a woman will eat only healthy, nutritious food and endeavor to get a good supply of fresh air each day. She will know that a bath taken before retiring each night is essential to preserve her health and beauty. A sponge bath taken in the morning immediately after rising will commence for her one of the duties of the day, says Julia Teresa Butler in the Weekly Bouquet. And she will not forget to cultivate beauty of spirit. No woman can be lovely without a lovely disposition. She may be fair to look upon, but, like a rose without fragrance, she will impart no sweetness.

Wireless Telegraphy to Australia.

Attempts are being made by the Marconi Wireless Telephone Company of London to inaugurate a wireless telegraph service to Australia. Although the total distance is considered in excess of that from England to this country, it can be more easily negotiated owing to the facilities offered at various points en route for transmitting stations. Arrangements are being made to erect stations at Prawle Point, the Lizard, Ushant, Cape Finisterre, Gibraltar, Malta, Algiers, Sardinia, Sicily, Cape Malea in Greece, Alexandria, Aden, Socotra, Colombo, Sumatra, the Cocos Islands, Perth, Albany, Adelaide and Melbourne.

STRICT TUTELAGE.

Relations of Apprentice and Master in the Middle Ages.

Apprenticeship was an important institution in France in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and was regulated with the utmost care, as will be seen by the following account of "An Idler in Old France." By the rules of the book the master was held greatly responsible for his apprentice; and under a wise and kindly roof, the lad who was learning to be a master workman and a ruler in his little world might lead a happy and profitable life. Often he did so, and when the day came that he might claim his freedom, he chose to remain the paid servant, friend and fellow-worker of te master who had sheltered him from boyhood and taught him all his craft, rather than to seek a fortune less assured elsewere. During the years of his apprenticeship the patron or master was to feed, clothe and shelter him, in the homely wording of the clockmaker's rule, to cherish him "beneath his roof, at is board and by his hearth." Nay, it was strictly enjoined upon the master to treat his apprentice "as his own son," and in some trades he was bidden to remember that his responsibility did not end on the threshold of the workshop, that the "soul and morals" of the little stranger had claims on his solicitude. In a day when the streets of Paris were not very nice for anybody, and were more or less dangerous after dark for everybody, the master was instructed to be careful of what errand he dispatched the youngster, and the pastry cooks, whose apprentices were often sent to cry cakes and creams upon the public ways, were continually warned to prevent the lads from falling among evil company. It seems certain that, so far as the middle ages are concerned, the rules, precepts and admonitions were not only framed with great good sense and care, but were very rigidly enforced upon all masters who had youths and lads in their employ. High and low, in the society of that day, the rod and birch were flourished, with small discrimination and less nicety; and if the tutors of little princes had leave to whip them freely, apprentices could not expect to come off too lightly at a master's hand.

PLANTS EAT INSECTS.

Venus' Fly-Trap Discriminates Between Animal and Other Matter.

A few insecting eating plants have been gathered from the swamp lands of North Carolina and California, and others have been sent from India, Australia and Madagascar. Perhaps the best known of the group is Venus' Fly Trap. The leaves vary from one to six inches long, and at the extremities are placed two blades or claspers. On the inner walls of these claspers there are six irritable hairs, any one of which receiving the slightest touch from an insect is sufficient to bring the two blades together with such rapidity as to preclude any possibility of the fly escaping. A correct idea of how the trap closes on its victim may be obtained by bringing the two hands rapidly together, the fingers of one being firmly pressed between those of the other. This plant readily discriminates between animal and other matter; this, if a small stone or piece of wood be dropped into the trap it will instantly close, but as soon as it has found out its mistake, and it only takes a few minutes, it begins to unfold its trap, and the piece of wood or stone falls out. On the other hand, should a piece of beef or a blue bottle fly be placed in it, it will remain firmly closed until every piece of organic matter is absorbed through the leaf. It will then unfold itself, and is ready for another meal.

New Director of Lick Observatory.

William Wallace Campbell, who has just been elected director of Lick observatory, to succeed the late James E. Keeler, was born on a farm in Hancock county, O., in 1862. He studied astronomy at the University of Michigan under Prof. Schaeberle, and took the chair of mathematics and astronomy at the University of Colorado, and later at Ann Arbor. He has written several text-books.

Wooing of the Minister.

BY SARA LINDSEY COLEMAN.

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The most careless observer among the villagers might have noticed something unusual in the Reverend Mr. Wigglesworth's manner that night. The Widow McLean was the first to see it; she dropped her eyes in blushing confusion and did not lift them until the end of the service when she led the choir in a triumphant song.

Mr. Wigglesworth was a bachelor and a scholar, a little seamy along the back, a little frayed out at the wrists, a timid, self-conscious, gentle, forgetful man with dreamy, patient eyes forever turned inward on a brain toiling with abstractions.

Miss Eliza Ellington noticed it, and as the sermon progressed the members of the flock turned in their seats and stared at each other. Some mysterious change had taken place in him. He stood erect, his figure was animated, he looked years younger; in his usually pale cheeks the color came and went and his eyes were alight with enthusiasm.

As the congregation passed out from the church, on all sides there was unstinted praise of the sermon.

The minister hurried home to his modest room, flung himself into a chair by an open window, and gazed on the beauty of a moon flooded Southern night. The perfume of the jessamine that climbed about the window was in his nostrils, the exquisite song of a mocking-bird pouring forth its melody from a near tree was in his brain.

"She loves me," he muttered, and again, "she loves me."

He knew women so slightly. Seen through a veil of mystery, they were such formidable creatures and yet, the priest in him giving place to the man, he had often longed to lift that veil. He had felt a sudden heartache for ties he had never known—sweet, warm, human ties.

That night, as he had gone up the steps of the church the Widow McLean, who was as comely and young and pretty as any girl among his flock, had stepped on her dress and fallen downward. The minister had lifted her to her feet, her soft fingers had closed over his hand. "You are so good," she had murmured, and with a quick, spontaneous burst of passion, and a modesty that was enchanting, she lifted his hand, pressed her warm, red lips to it, and glided into the church.

An hour passed, the minister had not moved from his chair; another hour, he sprang up. "If she ever does it again I will marry her," he declared enthusiastically. And in the morning when the breeze fluttering at his window blinds awoke him, "If she ever does it again," he muttered, half awake, he sprang to his feet, "I will marry her anyway," he vowed.

He could hardly wait, so eager a lover had he become by afternoon, for the return of the small colored boy who carried his message of love. Like most timid men he had trusted his fate to a written message.

The afternoon was hot. Eliza Ellington, who had spent the morning in the household work that was always so much harder on Monday, had taken some sewing to the cool shadowed depths of the grape arbor at the back of her simple home. Her sewing lay beside her untouched. Her figure drooped, her eyes were downcast, her delicate brows arched with melancholy. She could not escape the knowledge that thoughts of the minister had become a source of disquietude.

All unaware the little love god had nestled in her heart. Poor starved heart that refused to be old at thirty, that cried out for the rights that belonged to its womanhood.

Into the quiet nook and upon the solitude of her thoughts a little negro boy with outstretched hand that held a note obtruded himself.

She read the note, turned it over,

A little negro with a note.

there was no address and read again words that sunk into her brain.

She looked at the small boy wonderingly, piteously. "Is there not some mistake?" she asked timidly. Joy was slow to enter where sorrow had so recently dwelt.

When the minister read the note that the colored boy brought him, unconsciously he repeated the words he had used the night before, "She loves me." But a great dismay had fallen on the man, for the yes that he so ardently waited for had been written in a neat, precise hand by another, by Eliza Ellington.

The messenger, with a child's heedlessness, had loitered on the way, his mind diverted by a dozen things. When he picked up the note for the last time, it had been laid down carefully while he took part in a fight, he carried it without further delay to the rose-covered cottage.

The glory of sunset was upon the earth and sky as the minister turned in at the cottage whose portico was covered with great clusters of crimson roses. He had agonised over the note, for he was a tender man; he had prayed over it, and led by the spirit he had come to tell Eliza Ellington, who was one of his best church workers and a faithful, conscientious woman, that the letter she had received belonged to another. He would be very tender with her, he assured himself.

He sat in the parlor tremblingly, awaiting her approach, and when she fluttered in gowned in a simple white dress, with a great cluster of the crimson roses on her breast, he noticed that she trembled, too. The roses were aquiver, the color came and went in her face, her eyes were shy as a dove's.

The minister went forward and took her hand. He didn't speak, he couldn't break her dream of happiness at one blow. He held her hand, looking down at her with troubled eyes, when she suddenly met his gaze, and in her eyes he thought he saw a faint reproach. Was it thus that men wooed the women they loved? Sorely perplexed, the minister bent and kissed her on the brow.

They sat down on the wide, old-fashioned sofa. She, noting his silence and seeming coldness, pitied him, and told herself that his unaccustomedness to women made him shy, and that by sweet, womanly means, she,

"If I had known," he said.

when she became his wife, would woo him from such ways; and he, looking at her and thinking that he must break her heart, pitied her. Ah, sweet, sweet pity, so near akin to love.

Woman-like, and to cover his embarrassment, she began to talk in a nervous, hurried way. Of her geraniums that had not done so well, of the violets that had finished blooming, of the beautiful, bountiful roses in their wealth of flower. She told him timidly that she had wanted to send him some of them from the day the first violet had lifted its head.

"If I had known," he said huskily.

A rose unfolds its crimson heart to the sun—she moved nearer the minister.

A flush of shame mounted the Reverend Mr. Wigglesworth's brow. He mopped his face with his handkerchief, the thought had crossed his brain that the Widow McLean didn't know a blessed thing about his sensations during the last twenty-four hours.

The girl talked on with a shy consciousness. The minister had never thought her pretty before, and now her earnest, almost somber eyes looked at him gravely as if questioning this thing that held them apart.

A sudden vision of a cottage with crimson roses clustering on the veranda came to him, and down a trellised walk above w··· crimson roses grew, Eliza, and not the widow, moved with eyes alight with happiness.

"Miss Ellington," he asked unhesitatingly. She gave him a look of sweet reproach. "Eliza, was there ever another?"

"Never," she said.

"And you have loved me?" questioningly.

"From the first," she said simply. The Widow McLean had been married twice. The last scruple had vanished from the Reverend Mr. Wigglesworth's mind, and he drew her into his arms and held her silently. A man has wisdom straight from the gods who is silent at such a time.

Some hours later when he went home by way of the stars, he didn't even glance at the young widow's house, he didn't even remember that she lived there.

She, although she did not remain the Widow McLean, when tender thoughts of her former pastor came to her, felt always a flush of shame when she remembered that night on the church steps. And to the day of her death she believed that by her unseemly conduct on that night she had lost the minister.

Eliza, secure in a good man's love, and unconscious of any debt to the widow, dwelt at peace.

Valuable Picture Frame.

Perhaps the most valuable frame ever made for a picture is that which incloses "The Virgin and Child" in the Cathedral of Milan. Its size is 8 feet by 6 feet, and it is of massive hammered gold, with an inner molding of lapis lazuli. The corners have hearts designed in large pearls, and precious stones are inlaid around it. It is said to have been the gift of a rich nunnery, and its estimated value is $125,000. One of the pictures in the Vatican at Rome is inclosed in a frame studded with jewels, so that the value of the frame nearly equals that of the picture. Many of the churches on the continent of Europe have pictures with similarly ornamented frames of great value.