

"OUT OF HUN."

A Short Story in Three Parts.

By ROBERT BARR.

Author of "The Face and the Mask," "In the Midst of Alarms," Etc.

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I-BESSIE'S BEHAVIOR.

On one point Miss Durand agreed with Alexander von Humboldt, in fact she even went further than that celebrated man, for while he asserted that Thun was one of the three most beautiful spots on earth...

Bessie had an eye for all these things, of course, but while waterfalls and profound ravines were all very well in their way, her habit had to be filled with the right sort of company before any spot on earth was entirely satisfactory to Bessie.

So it happened that in touring through Switzerland Bessie and her mother (somehow people always placed Bessie's name before that of her mother, who was a quiet, little, unobtrusive woman) stopped at Thun, intending to stay but a day, as most people do, but when Bessie found the big hotel simply what she wanted, she told her mother that Humboldt had once said Thun was one of the three most beautiful spots on earth.

"They tell me," said Bessie in her most doting manner, "that you are a famous climber and that you have been to the top of the Matterhorn."

"Oh, not famous; far from it," said Archie modestly. "I have been up the Matterhorn three or four times, but when women and children make that ascent nowadays, so that it is nothing unusual."

"I am sure you must have had some awfully nice views of the Alps, looking with admiration at Archie's stalwart form."

"Mr. Willman had an awful experience," "Yesterday," interrupted Archie. "I heard he left early this morning."

"No, not yesterday," said Miss Durand coolly, drawing herself up with some indignation, but as she glanced sideways at Mr. Severance, she thought perhaps he meant nothing in particular by his remark. So, after a slight pause, Bessie went on again.

"And what did Jimmy do? Waited till the clouds rolled by, I suppose."

"I assure you, Miss Durand, I was not laughing at you, I was laughing at Jimmy. I never regarded the Stockhorn as a formidable peak. It is something like 7,195 feet high, I believe, not to mention the inches."

On a bit. The next thing I knew I was in a heap at the foot of that long stairway, thinking every bone in my body was broken. I had many bruises, but no hurt that was serious, nevertheless, for I was in a fright in my life, and I hope never to have such another."

"I am obliged to you for your recital, Mr. Severance," she said, frostily. "If I do not seem to appreciate it as much as I should, it is perhaps because I am not accustomed to being laughed at by a young man."

"I assure you, Miss Durand, that I am not laughing at you and that this pathetic recital was anything but a laughing matter to me. The Stockhorn has no such danger lying in wait for a man as a bit of orange peel on a dark and steep stairway."

Archie had risen to his feet, but there was no forgiveness in Miss Durand's eyes as she bade him "Good afternoon" and went into the hotel, leaving him standing there.

During the week that followed Archie had little chance of making his peace with Miss Durand, for in that week the Sanderson episode had its beginning, its rise, and its culmination. Charley Sanderson, emboldened by the sudden departure of Wellman, became the constant attendant of Bessie, and everything appeared to be in his favor until the evening he left.

Second Proposal. Richard King is a very nice fellow, and was tremendously in earnest. He says his life is blighted, but he will soon come to a different opinion at Intralaken, where I forget Dunn writes me rather very early, and where Richard has gone.

First Proposal. This came on rather unexpectedly. His name is Samuel Caldwell and he is a curate here for his health. He is not in the least in love with me, he thinks he engaged so I suppose it comes to the same thing. He began by saying that I was the only one who ever understood his real aspirations, and that if I would join him with me he was sure we would not only bring happiness to ourselves, but others as well.

Richard interrupted me with something that sounded remarkably like "Hang Thun," then he went on to say that I was all the world to him; that he could not live without me. I shook my head slowly and did not reply.

He spoke with a fluency that seemed to suggest that he had had some special preparation. Then he folded his arms, sitting motionless back in the boat, saying I had blighted his life. He did look handsome as he sat there in the moonlight, with a deep frown on his brow, but I could not help thinking that he sat back purposely so that the moonlight might strike his face.

A fine, stalwart young man came to the hotel today, brought by mountain climbing. He looked like a man who had been through a great deal of the world, and he was so much like all the rest, I have found that his name is Archibald Severance, and they say he is a great mountaineer.

half a dozen proposals with Bessie myself. If I ever come to the point she won't find it so easy to get rid of me as she does with all the other fellows."

Meditating thus he sat down on a bench under the tree facing the lake. Archie wondered if the moonlight would be so good at this spot. It seemed just the place for it and he noticed that the gravel on the path was much disturbed, as if by the iron shoes of a heavy boot.

"I shall have revenge on you, Archie," he said to himself, as he looked at the moonlight. He had a great deal to think of, and he was not at all sure that he was not being followed.

"I do so love to hear of narrow escapes," said Bessie, as she sat beside him. "It is so inspiring to hear of men who are so brave and endure being pitted against the dangers of the Alps and coming out victorious."

"Yes, they usually come out victorious, according to the accounts that reach us, but this, you know, we never hear the mountaineers say anything about."

"But surely Mr. Severance," appealed Bessie, "you do not imagine that a real climber would exaggerate when telling of what he had done?"

"No, Oh, no. I would not go so far as to say that he would exaggerate exactly, but I do think that he would not tell the truth."

"Why, what do they use?" asked Bessie, much interested.

"Ice axes, of course. Now there is a useful individual in Intralaken who is what you might call a wholesale brander. He has the names of all the peaks done in iron at his shop, and if you take your Alpenstock to him he will for a few francs brand it on all the names it will hold."

"I intend to leap with you into the abysses," he said to himself, as he looked at the moonlight. He had a great deal to think of, and he was not at all sure that he was not being followed.

delight of the hotel proprietor, when without warning these young men had gloomily deserted Thun, while its beauty undoubtedly remained unchanged. Naturally the good man who owned the hotel was bewildered, and began to think that, after all, the English were an uncertain, mind-changing race.

Among the Alpine guides there was one young fellow who was quite as much perplexed as the proprietor. Archie Severance was one of the last to fall under the spell of Bessie, if indeed it is correct to speak of her as being so completely monopolized by Miss Durand for the last few days that no one else had a chance, but now that she had departed he was in a most unusual state of things.

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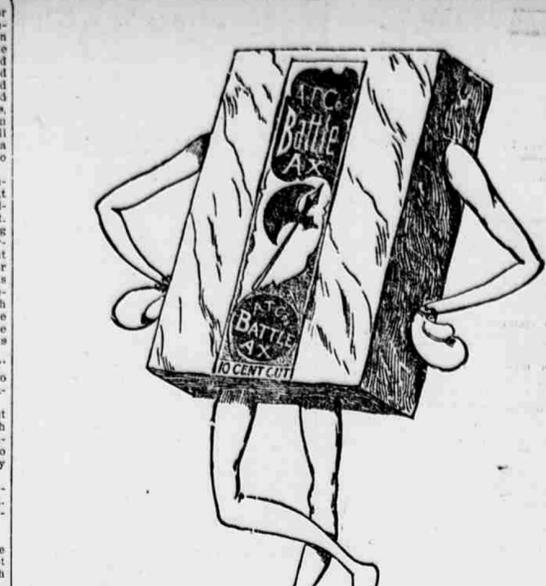
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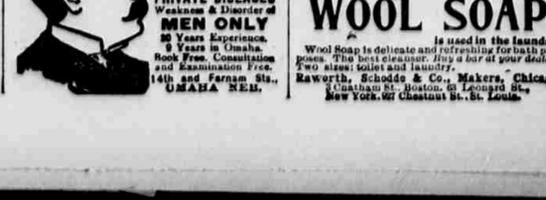
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