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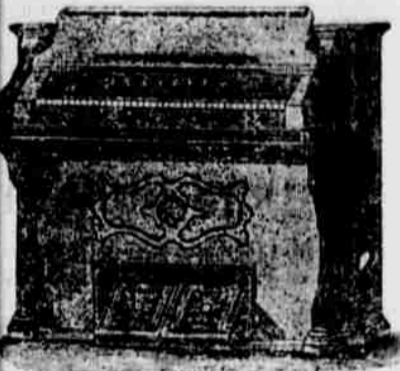
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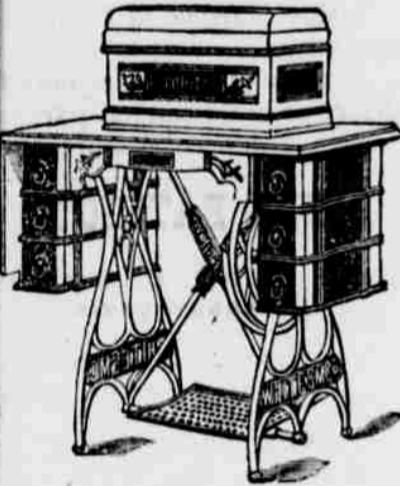
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## A SUMMER EPISODE.

Every young man has time and time again heard of the Summer girl, and lucky indeed is he who has been able to withstand her wiles and enchantments. We hear her mentioned in poetry and prose, until at last the fortunate ones (by those I mean those who have thus far only had the pleasure of reading about and hearing her spoken of) begin to think that to look for angels we need not leave this earth but only to look for the Summer girl.

In dealing with a question of importance we must always look on two sides, not always the one we think brightest; it is so with this question we must look at now.

To define the model Summer girl with all her peculiarities I must leave to some one who may be interested enough to study closely her ways and manners. I have lost interest in everything connected with her; the reason I am about to relate.

The Summer of 1890 had gone; vacation days, which we always look forward to with such fond hopes and dreams, had left us with nothing but the sweet memories that invariably cling to good times past.

When at college together five of my comrades and myself made an agreement that when our college life had ended and we parted, each to fight life's battle alone, we would, if we were spared, meet at least once a year to tell each other's successes or failures, as the case might be. The year 1890 was no exception to the rule, and the first night in October, the evening of our annual meeting, came around.

The evening proved to be cold and stormy, yet notwithstanding, on this our fifteenth meeting, we were all accounted for in our usual places; among the last, but not least, to arrive was Franklin Nelson, one of the youngest, but more thought of by us than any other one. I can still remember how he used to look at college—tall, well built, with dark brown hair and eyes, the latter especially calling attention to him if his manners and bearing, that were almost perfect, had not; to look at him it would seem as if trouble and care were entirely unknown to him. He had a way of looking at you while talking, as if he were reading your very thoughts, but to hear him laugh, which he did frequently, was a pleasure indeed. It seemed as if his whole soul was in it, which, added to his rare conversational powers, made him so popular wherever he happened to be; but to return to our narrative.

As I said, he entered rather late; we greeted his entrance with three cheers. We intended to give them with a will, but they almost died on our lips as we noticed his appearance. Could this be our Franklin of olden times? No! but, yes, we had to realize that it was. How changed! Pale, thin, all the life seemed to have been taken from him; even his oldest hat gone. He greeted each one of us personally, and then, with what seemed to be, to us a heavy sigh, sank into the nearest chair. We started the evening's sport at once. Some cracked jokes, others sang, but through it all we felt as if something had gone wrong, yet we could have hardly said what it was. Frank laughed and joked with the rest, but the duller one in the party could see he was playing a part, especially as his old laugh that we had so much admired had left him.

The part of the evening we always looked forward to with the greatest pleasure was after we had seen that our inner man had been well satisfied, and the cigars had been passed around, we settled down to hear each one relate his experience. To-night we applauded every one and everything. It needed something to keep our spirits up. Frank's time to speak (we always reserved him to the end, believing that the best should be kept until the last) was eagerly awaited. At last it came—would that we had never called on him! He slowly arose as his name was called, and advancing to the center of the room, so that the light fell full on his colorless face, and leaning heavily on the table, as if too weak to support himself, began: "Dear friends and comrades, we have met again to-night for the fifteenth time. As we look back on each meeting we think what joyous times they were, bright spots on the pathway of life, like some bright oasis in the desert where the weary traveller has time to stop a moment and drink the cooling waters, and rest, before resuming his burden and starting forth on the weary road once more. I have not the time to-night to say all I would like to, but will come to what I have to say at once: You may all have noticed a change in my appearance and manner, and of that my story to-night has to deal. You all know that from the cradle I was reared in luxury and how my life, previous to this year, has been spent, after college, doing nothing but live, enjoying it as if it was some bright dream. But now—"

He drew his hand over his brow, his large brown eyes set in a marble face, burned like coals of fire; not one of us dared breathe, so afraid we were of interrupting him.

"Now," he resumed, "all has changed. Last spring I awoke to the fact that my health was failing. My parents were soon aware of the fact and, so, urged on by them and my doctor, I found myself at the beginning of the summer at a small hotel in a pretty village situated near our largest and most fashionable watering place; the hotel being convenient to both ocean and river, the place being quiet, away from all noise and excitement, it suited a person in my position very well. Things went quietly for a few weeks and then I noticed a gradual improvement in my health, and the color came back to my cheeks, at last I was myself once more. One day a friend and myself started for a day's fishing. We went to our usual fishing grounds, but luck seemed against us; we could not tempt the fish to bite. We waited later

than usual, hoping our luck would change, but we did not succeed so we started for home. The row homeward was very pleasant, we being treated on our way to a beautiful sunset.

"When nearing our destination my friend called my attention to a small sailboat containing two young ladies, in the center of the stream, where the current was both swift and deep; we were gradually approaching each other when we noticed a sudden squall of wind strike the boat that immediately overturned it. Without a moment's hesitation I leaped overboard, striving to reach the spot where I had seen one of the young ladies sink. I reached it as she came up and grasped her by her hair, trying to keep her afloat, but the severe exertion I had undergone to reach the spot was too severe for me; my head swam around, lights appeared before my eyes, and I lost consciousness. Just as I was sinking I was seized and drawn into the boat by my friend.

"A week passed before I was able to leave my room, the shock losing for me what I had gained. One afternoon my friend, who had been a constant companion at my bedside, asked me to take a drive. I felt able to go and consented. We were just about to enter the carriage when a young lady met us. My friend introduced her to me as the one I had saved. She thanked me over and over again. I myself could only say something about my not wishing it spoken about. My whole heart seemed to have left me in an instant. I could hardly look into her eyes, so confused was I. I may say here, during my life I had very little to do with the ladies; so to suddenly find myself deeply in love was very strange to me at first. I managed to call on her almost every day. She encouraged me in many different ways, and by and by I could always be found in her company, with sailing, driving, rowing and all kinds of pleasures. Time sped swiftly along, and before I could realize it the time for our departure was at hand. The last night of our stay at B. had arrived. I had walked with her to our favorite retreat on the cliff overlooking the sea. The moon had just risen and everything was covered with its silvery light. I took her hand in mine. She did not resist. I spoke to her of the happy times we had together, and growing bolder, at last declared my love and asked her to be mine. At that moment the moon was covered by a dark cloud. I think, since then, it must have been an evil omen, but I scarcely heeded it as I waited anxiously for her answer, which she at last gave me. Looking at me, with her face covered with blushes she could not hide, she told me she would be mine. The cloud that had covered the moon vanished in the distance and things were brighter to me than ever they had been since, or will be again. We sat and talked of our future, and our plans we laid, as all lovers do. Oh! those moments were full of bliss indeed, but as all things must come to an end we were obliged to go; with promises to meet soon we parted, I to go to my home and friends, she to her's.

"I called to see her at her home in the city; she always appeared so glad to see me, at all times greeting me with that fascinating manner that had so endeared her to me. One morning last week I arose late. After breakfast I sat down by the fire to read the paper and smoke. I had about completed the paper when a note attracted my eye. I read it. The walls and furniture seemed to dance before my eyes. I pinched myself to see if I was not asleep, but it was too true. I was wide awake. I read it over and over again, the words burning themselves into my brain like red-hot irons. I seized my hat and rushed from the house. It seemed ages before I reached her home. I was obliged to wait before I could see her. Each moment to me seemed a year. She greeted me in her old manner, just as if nothing had happened. I could not speak, but, holding the paper before her, I awaited her denial, as I could not expect anything else, but she gave me a cold little laugh, and forgetting how much I loved her, how my whole life depended on her, she told me that she had only kept my acquaintance as a summer one, making out of the whole thing a fine joke. The notice of her marriage in the paper was but too true. At that moment my heart seemed to break. I have been walking in a dream ever since. Friends, every moment to me is one of agony."

He stopped to catch his breath, at the same time pressing his handkerchief to his lips. There was not a dry eye in the room. We thought he had finished, but he continued: "Let my life be a lesson. Trust not a young woman not well known to you, especially the summer acquaintances, which are more to be feared than any others. I have done my best boys. I will now bid my last good-by." We arose as one man to offer him words of cheer and comfort, but without a word he fell to the floor. We raised his head to give him air, but the life, for which he cared so little, had left him forever. A small, empty vial, labelled poison, concealed in his handkerchief, told us all. A more sorrowful gathering than that one of '90 never met before. We, I do not think, will ever meet together again; but, wherever I go in life, I will never have erased from my memory poor Frank and his shattered life.

You now have my reason for not caring to joke about this topic. Frank might have been with us now if some one had warned him in time, the laugh as we all may be in a like position, and then each one is supposed to be his own master. But few indeed, can stand against the enchantments of the Summer girl.—Horace Bowman.

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