

NELL'S WIDOWER-

The waters of Lake George sparkled like diamonds in the sunlight, one August morning. Black Mountain towered toward the sky in grim majesty, while the hundreds of small islands that rise from the lake were luxuriant in green, velvety grass, waving trees and graceful bushes.

A young man dressed in a navy blue camp suit, with a white cap on his head, like those usually worn at this resort, sat lazily upon one of the boat posts, on the pier at the Lake View House, enjoying the superb landscape stretched before him.

His face was turned toward the lake, therefore he was entirely unconscious that a beautiful girl of seventeen was gliding toward him on tiptoe, evidently bent upon mischief.

Suddenly a handkerchief was thrown over his face, which deft fingers proceeded to fasten behind his ears, while a gleeful voice exclaimed:

There, sir, you are blindfolded prisoner! Not a word now for your life! You are a doomed man, so stand up and come with me—quick, too, or the Fannie will be here before I get you off! Hark! there sounds her whistle at Bolton. She is just starting on her return trip, with that prig on board; but he won't find me. Oh, such a lark! But come, sir! she added, slipping her hand through his arm. I am running away, and I am going to take you along.

The victim seemed to enter at once into the fun, for he started off, after one startled laugh, without an effort at resistance, allowing her to lead him whither she would.

The young girl never paused except to lift a light basket from the ground, where she had placed it before reaching him, but hurried away toward a small dock, made for entering rowboats; and around this dock plenty of comfortable boats were moored.

Approaching one which she had evidently prepared for instant use, she said, gaily:

Now be a good John, and step right in without a word! There, take that seat, and do not speak—or stir, either—until I tell you to, for you have got to do just as I say, as Mary is not here to help you. Oh, my blessed sister! won't she rave when she finds that I have flown away and off her beloved with me! But never mind, she adds, it serves her right. She need not have entered into that matrimonial scheme with Aunt Jane. Just wait until I get this boat on the lake, and I will tell you all about it.

While speaking, the girl had seated herself in the centre of the boat, with her back toward the young man, and seizing two oars, with a fearless and experienced hand, she pushed away from shore.

So intent was she upon her rowing that she never looked around at her prisoner, who had quietly lifted the handkerchief, and was gazing at the back of her golden head and at her lovely profile, when she half turned, with a most curious expression in his splendid dark eyes.

After gazing a few seconds, he replaced the handkerchief, and with a smile resigned himself to the situation in silence.

There, John now I think we are safe, so while I row I will explain. That wise Mary of yours has leagued with Aunt Jane to make a match for me. I am just out of school, so will not be married yet. Auntie has a friend, a young man, rich, handsome, and all that bosh, who wants to be introduced to me. He came to Bolton yesterday, where he is going to stay a couple of weeks. He is coming over on the Fannie to be presented. But their plan won't work, for I won't be introduced. He is a widower. The idea of their picking out a widower for me. I won't have him, I don't like secondhand love. They worked hard to fix my hair and make me look well to meet him; but I slyly interviewed the housekeeper, and made ready for a picnic—cold chicken, cake, nuts and raisins, fruit, all snug in the basket at my feet. Then I spied you and carried you off for company. One don't want to picnic all alone, you know. I am going to the loveliest island, almost a mile away, and there we shall spend the next few hours. Won't they tear?

Poor Mary will have to entertain his royal highness, Mr. Esquivel, herself, since we will both be missing. You don't mind, do you, brother-in-law elect? I told you not to speak, but you may say just yes or no. If you say no, I will give you the biggest piece of chicken and cake in the basket. Speak—do you care?

Not I.

John, you are a trump! But your voice sounds queer. Raise the handkerchief a little to breathe. I don't wish to smother you; but you must not uncover your eyes until I show you an island fit for faries to live on. John the Fannie is at Lake View; now just imagine the fun—Mary running all over, calling, Nellie—Nellie Isler! where are you? and echo alone will answer; then, John, John; do help find Nellie, won't you there is a darling! and no darling will answer. Never mind, we will have a good time without her. Runaways always do. Stolen waters are sweet, you

know. But I never stole a thing but you. Here we are. Easy now. I shall row up close to land, then you unmask, jump out catch hold of the boat, and help unload. Isn't this splendid?

Taking off the handkerchief quickly the young man jumped over the seat to her side. As did so she raised her eyes then recalled so suddenly that she would have fallen overboard had he not caught her.

Surely you are going to spoil our fun by falling into the lake, are you? he exclaimed; then added softly, there don't be frightened; it is all right.

Oh, what shall I do I am frightened. Who are you how came you here?

These words issued from her pale lips with a half sob.

You ask that? Why you brought me yourself, and called me by name—John!

Oh, oh! I have made a fearful mistake. I thought you were a friend of mine—John Brownley. You were dressed in a blue suit just like his, and are just his size. I did not see your face so I have stolen the wrong man.

These last words were uttered with a little hysterical laugh over her own stupidity.

Exactly! I could have told you, but you forbade my speaking and it was to be a lark, you know. But, come let me assist you out.

Oh, no. We must go right back.

What! I go back to be introduced to that widower?

Oh, dear, how stupid that will be. Yet I must go back, for I never saw you before. You were not boarding at Lake View?

No, I rowed over from—from the Mohican House, and was looking around a little, when you carried me off a prisoner, promising chicken, cake and other nice things. Now, after obeying every order, you are turning me adrift hungry. Is that fair?

The young man asked with a quizzical shrug of his shoulders, and as he turned desecingly toward her Nellie saw the handsomest face and hazel eyes she had ever met.

You are in no especial hurry to get back are you? That widower by this time must have joined in the search, and it would be too triumphant to find you so soon. Let us sit down in the boat and talk this thing over. But first let me assure you that I am a respectable gentleman—single, and off on a vacation, such as clerks usually take. My name is John Woodbridge. I felt quite lonely on the pier, and was wishing I knew some one, when you so kindly took charge of me and invited me to your picnic. I think you might let me stay.

But I don't know you.

Yes you do. I just introduced myself. Introduction always made people acquainted. Lake George is not a formal place. Introductions here are sometimes omitted. Miss Isler. You see I know your name. You told it while rowing. Come can't we have our picnic, and forget mistakes in the fun?

He laughed good-naturedly as he spoke.

The laugh was infectious. Smiles dimpled the rosy lips then a gay laugh rippled over the whole face. fun? Yes, it was. Jolly fun? Trying to steal Sister Mary's John and stealing some other Mary's John without knowing it. Oh, dear, it was absurd! But, yes, let us set our table and have our frolic.

We might as well! exclaimed John as he sprang out fastened the boat, and then politely handed ashore lady and basket.

I will not linger to describe that picture. It did not take long to get acquainted. Gay laughs floated out on the breeze, as, seated on the grass, with a table-cloth spread before them on which was heaped the contents of the precious basket, they chatted over the chicken, told jokes over the cake, and after demolishing every good thing, they gathered up the cloth, stored in the basket, and that in the boat, then set off on a ramble over the small island on which they passed a pleasant time.

After exploring every nook and corner, they returned to the vicinity of the boat, and sitting under the shade of the tall oak, they sang several songs, in which their voices blended delightfully.

At length Nellie looked at her watch, and finding it passed three, proposed returning.

Blindfolded? asked John as she announced the time.

No, indeed, what is more, you are not to be rowed, but must work your own passage. I shall play lady this time, I assure you.

So John rowed the lady to Lake View, receiving at parting what he wished—an invitation to call on her and be presented to her relatives.

Nellie was at once questioned about her absence as all had been anxious over her strange disappearance.

Uncle, aunt, sister and John Brownley enjoyed a hearty laugh at her expense, as she told of her mistake and its consequence.

I suppose you managed to entertain his royal highness, Mr. Esquivel, without me, said Nellie.

He never came.

Never came! how did that happen? We do not know; no word was sent and the Fannie did not bring him.

Strange! then I had picnic and fun for nothing.

Yes perhaps he will come to-morrow, said Mary.

May heaven forbid! I shall not see him if he does replied the willful Nellie.

That evening Mr. Isler went to Bolton to inquire after his friend. On his return he informed Nellie that circumstances had summoned him immediately elsewhere, as soon as he arrived.

So Nellie was free to enjoy herself in her own way.

Mr. John Woodbridge helped her in his way also.

He rowed over every day. Moonlight sails on the lake, tramps off after ferns in the woods, and excursions from one island to another, took up a good deal of time. Then lake trout abounded and they must try fishing. Huckleberries were plenty on the shores, so they must go berrying. Then camps around had to be visited, and Huddle Bark had an ice cream and confectionary store, and that must be patronized, and so John and Nellie were constantly together, while the sister devoted herself to her beloved, and uncle and aunt were strangely oblivious to what was transpiring.

Nellie, said John, one day, as we all leave this charming lake to-morrow, let us visit our picnic island.

As the girl acquiesced, they were soon sitting under the oak that had sheltered them on that never to be forgotten day.

By-the-way, Nellie, what ever became of that widower?

He went home, I suppose to New York, said Nellie.

Where will you meet him next week, said John, sadly.

I shall not, I detest the whole batch of widowers. I will have nothing to do with the prig. I told you so that day when I ran off with you, don't remember?

Yes, I remember, Nellie, I then met the only girl I shall only love. Did you know I fell in love then? Darling, I loved you from the first hour. We are going home soon, but we must not part until I know whether you love me a little in return. Do you, Nellie.

Do you a little? No, sir.

Oh, darling, exclaimed the young man, turning pale, as the emphatic No! so unexpectedly fell on his ears, do not tell me that I love in vain. I could not bear it. Will you not try to love me a little, after all these pleasant hours?

No, indeed, has the low reply. I will not try to love you a little; it would be nonsense. Why, John, you ridiculous fellow I love you now, but not a little. No, sir; a great deal—more, I half believe than you deserve.

You darling exclaimed the enraptured lover, as he caught her to his bosom and was about to kiss her willing lips.

But that kiss was not taken.

A sudden thought made him release her and say, hurriedly: Nellie, I have a confession to make before I take the kiss I long for.

Then confess at once your naughty boy, and be forgiven, said Nellie, archly.

Darling I did not give you my full name that day, when we sat in the boat talking over the mistake. I deceived you in a few things, so must explain at once.

John Woodbridge is the first half of my name. That much was true. I am not a clerk, as I led you to suppose, but a rich man in business for myself. But the worst remains to be told. Dear-st, do not despise me, but I am what you detest—a widower!

John! exclaimed poor Nellie, shrinking away from him.

Don't do that, dear, said John, endeavoring to draw her back. I married when only twenty, a young girl whom I truly loved. She was with me only four short months, when she died of pneumonia suddenly. After that I was lonely and sad for eight long years. I did not go into society being devoted to business. I had however two dear friends, who seemed ardently attached to a madcap niece. I had never seen her though often with them, as she was at boarding school. I often expressed the wish that we might become acquainted. A trip to Lake George was planned for all, and here we were to meet. They came, and I followed when business allowed, stopping at Bolton, from which place I was to seek them.

One morning I rode over in my blue camp suit, not expecting to be seen at that time, but to return, dress and appear on the Fannie in regulation style. As I was looking around on the pier, I was taken prisoner.

Oh, John, can it be? Are you really—

Yes, really. I am John Woodbridge Esquivel, that prig of a widower. And I did meet him, after all?

Yes, I explained things that evening to your uncle's satisfaction. I also left Bolton for the Mohican House to be nearer you. Your friends all promised to keep my secret. Nellie, will you forgive and love me still? Come, dear!

John opened his arms as he spoke, and as she glided into their embrace she murmured:

So I'll have to be a second wife, after all I have said.

Yes, dear, but no wife, either first or second, could be more romantically or dearly loved. Do you believe it?

Yes, John, I do believe it.

Then you do not regret that picnic, darling? You never will regret it either; for did you know, my own, that you took a prisoner for life on that bright eventful day? I shall strive to make your life happy that, though we live to be old and feeble, you shall never regret our picnic.

And she never did.

ICE CREAM AND STRAWBERRIES.

They had a strawberry festival at a small church up town last week. It was a great success, and they made a great deal of money for the Ladies' Missionary Society, and were quite elated. The room was crowded, and looked very pretty. They had Chinese lanterns, and green garlands hung all around, lots of flowers and pretty girls in clean white frocks at the flower booth, and an Oriental looking Rebecca in a picturesque costume dispensating pale and emaciated lemonade from a very bowery well, and raking in the nickels with genuine Israelitish shrewdness. There were plenty of beautiful tidies and plush whisk-holders and duster bags and painted milking stools and rolling pins, and they went off with gratifying briskness. All the young men sportively wore at least two button-hole bouquets, and the pretty waitresses, with their coquettish toilets and dainty imitations of caps, were kept flying with trays of ice cream, cake and strawberries till their frizzes came out perfectly straight with the heat and exercise. A number of pleasant matrons, all looking very nice in their new summer silks, were presiding over the refreshments and taking in the money.

At last there was a lull in the rush of business. The crowd was beginning to thin out, the ice cream was pretty well exhausted and there were few calls for more. A gentleman approached one of the matrons who was sitting down to rest and remarked buoyantly:

Delightful occasion! Been a great success, hasn't it?

Yes, said the lady dryly; very great.

Made lots of money, haven't you? went on the cheerful gentleman.

Yes, said the lady bitterly, I may say, we've earned it.

Why, of course, replied her friend. The ladies have done wonders. They always do. Are you tired?

Yes said the lady calmly, I may say I am tired. I got up early this morning and it was a pretty hot morning. I went down in the kitchen and made a cocoanut cake. The materials cost me about 75 cents and it kept me about an hour and a half over the hot range to make it. It sold for a \$1. Then as soon as I could leave home I came over here and have been moving chairs and climbing ladders, and hanging garlands, and fixing dishes and tablecloths, etc., all day. We got our table all fixed and then the girl that was going to be Rebecca came in and said if she couldn't have that corner for the well she wouldn't have any well. We didn't want to offend her, for she was going to give the lemonade, so we moved all our things over here and fixed it all over again. When the girls from the flower table came and said if we had garlands over our table their's didn't look like anything. So I got up on the ladder again and took our garlands down. I am not so young as I once was, nor so light, and it fatigues me to climb ladders. Then we found we hadn't little tables enough, and I went over home to tell the boys to bring ours. I brought back with me for the strawberries my cut glass dish that I wouldn't trust them with, and my best tablecloth. Yes, this is it with the fruit stains all over it that won't come out. I couldn't raise my parasol and I thought I should have a sunstroke, but I didn't. Then I found that the man had sent the ice cream without the spoons that he had promised, and as I had ordered it, I had to go down and see about it. Yes, I know where mine are. They are all in the dish pan. You can't see it from here, but I have seen it. It was nearly full of greasy, lukewarm water, and there is a thick scum of ice cream on the top of it. If I want my spoons I suppose I will have to take them out. I do not mind my hands now after hulling so many strawberries, but I do my dress. I have been cutting cake and digging ice cream all evening and I have split a good deal on it now and it is the only dress I expect to have this summer. I wouldn't have worn it if I

had known I had this to do, but the woman we had engaged disappointed us. The other ladies have had just as much trouble as I have had. You see that one over there with the flushed, harassed face? She's had the worst of it, for she's had to make the change? The girls that are waiting usually bring her the wrong money.

Yes, that one is my daughter. I had to make her cap over three times before she was satisfied with it. You see they're counting the money, that's what makes the treasurer look so worried. She can't make it come out twice alike, and the ladies are all saying they thought it would be a great deal more than that, and they can't see what has become of it. They don't think she has stolen the rest, but she feels as if they did. She's very sensitive. She will probably cry herself to sleep and wake up with the sick headache. She's subject to them. Oh, no; we can't go home for an hour or two yet; we've got to clear up; that's the worst of all. Well, good night. Tell your wife we were sorry she couldn't come and help.

CLOTHING FOR THE DEAD.

With weary fingers and worn, With eyelids heavy and red, A woman sat in unwomanly rags, Plying her needle and thread— Stich! Stich! Stich! In poverty, hunger and dirt, And still with a voice of dolorous pitch She sang the "Song of the Shirt!" Says the New York News: There is less weariness of fingers, less heaviness of eyelids, less of unwomanly rags, less poverty, hunger and dirt—far less—working for the dead than the living.

There are over 1,000 well fed, well-dressed, well-paid young women in this city who earn their living making shrouds for the dead. The "Song of the Shirt" was not written for them. They sing no songs with voices of dolorous pitch and indeed they have very little reason for doing so. Their songs are as merry as the day is long and are sung to the busy hum of sewing machines. Less doleful melodies it would be hard to find.

The shroud makers of New York form a distinct class of bread-winners. They differ from other needle pyers as essentially as silversmiths differ from locksmiths. An experienced shroud-maker may know how to make a dress, but a dress-maker has little or no knowledge of how a shroud should be constructed. This part is emphasized whenever a dress-maker secures employment in a shroud factory. Before she is able to earn the regular wages of her craft she must serve an apprenticeship, the length of which depends solely upon her aptitude to learn the peculiar nack of this strange trade. There are twelve well-known firms in this city engaged in the manufacture of shrouds and it is in their factories that all the work is done. The wages are well maintained, although, fixed by no union, and employment is guaranteed the year through, for the sale of shrouds is not marked by any of the fluctuations which are noted in some other branches of manufacture.

The workshops of shroud-makers are situated as a rule over the warehouses of their employers. Several of these establishments are in the Bowery. The daily production of shrouds will exceed 2,000—more than enough to clothe the dead of New York for a month. These are sold to local undertakers and to the trade in adjoining states and the west. New York is the recognized headquarters for the clothing of the dead as well as of the living. There is nothing about a shroud factory to indicate the character of its product. Even the rows of coffins and enticing varieties of caskets in the ware-rooms below seem to belong to another business altogether. The show cases which are visible from the head of the stairs, with their display of the latest styles in shrouds appear to have been left there, perhaps by some previous tenant, and bear no possible relation to the use the rooms are now being put. It is very difficult to imagine that these light-hearted girls who chat so merrily over their machines, are turning out burial robes by the dozen, but such is the case, and to them the work is no more dolorous than the making of shirts.

If you are curious, come with me to one of the largest factories in the city, within a few blocks of Cooper Union, in the Bowery and see for yourself. As the door to the shop opens the noise is almost deafening. Between the clatter of the machines on the one hand and the chatter of the girls on the other one can hardly hear himself speak. It is 10 o'clock—early for us, perhaps but not for the girls. They have been at work since 8, and one-quarter of their day has already been spent. In the centre of the room is a double row of sewing machines varying in size and power, and all fastened to two long and narrow tables, with little round places cut in the sides, into which the operators snugly fit. At the other end of the room a row of counters forming a

quadrangle. Within this square sit a dozen young women chafing and sewing, while a tall, middle-aged motherly woman sits out of yards upon yards of black white and brown cloth patterns of shrouds. Shrouds with long skirts, shrouds with short skirts shrouds with no skirts at all shrouds for the rich and shrouds for the poor. And such patterns they are.

This elaborate design in white is in with soft ruching around the neck and fleecy ruffles around the waist-bands is modeled after a wedding gown as nearly as it is possible considering the different use it is to be put to. It will grace the funeral of some rich patron of a fashionable undertaker. This plain black garment with a false shirt button and collar which ties behind with a cord, is patterned after an evening suit. It is quiet and eminently respectable. It is intended for a male of middle age and costs quite as much as a suit worn in life. Besides these there are robes of brown and combinations of brown and black some faced with satin, some with silk and others plain even to severity. These form the cheaper grades of goods and are worn by men or women of advanced years. The white robes are intended for the young. Some of these are marvelous pieces of work and, if embroidered by hand would cost a small fortune. This little gown would hardly reach from your hand to your elbow. The tiny kelt band is ruffled and tied together in front with a white satin bow. The little sleeves are covered with embroidery and the skirt is elaborately trimmed with lace. It is a baby shroud and is the smallest size that is made.

The styles in shrouds are continually changing. Every fashion used by the living contributes to the robing of the dead. Each large factory has its special designer, and not even death can still the competition between them.

At one of the counters giving out these patterns to an undersized errand girl stands a plump young woman whose front hair is done up in curl papers, preparatory to a party later on in the day. As she continues her labors no thoughts of dismal character of the goods she is handling cross her mind.

Jennie, she called to one of the fair sewers who sat behind her, when did you see Jim last?

Last week. Is he going to take you there to-night?

No, I'm going with my brother. All right, Miss Brown, this latter remark to the forewoman. I've run out of number sixes. Won't those five do today?

Shrouds go by number not by name. This simplifies matters and saves much unnecessary language. Another pretty girl, who is running an embroidery machine, stops her work a moment to inquire of her nearest neighbor how much she paid for that silk she wore last Sunday at church?

Did you like it was the evasive reply.

I thought it was just lovely. How did you make that pretty collar?

I turned it over like this, illustrating with the skirt of a costly but plain robe intended for some aged person of means. tucked it in like like this and then sewed it over. Mary thought it was to for anything.

Over one of the counters written in an obscure place on the wall, probably so as not to offend the sensibility of any person of mournful tendencies, is pencilled the observation,

"Merrily we jog along."

And on another space equally hidden from the public gaze is inscribed the truthful but slightly inappropriate sentiment,

"This world is but a song."

There is little in a shroud factory of a dismal character other than the robes themselves. Many a gorgeous wedding dress and many a costly party gown has seen far more of the dark side of life than these garments for the dead.

Bless my soul, exclaimed the forewoman, why should my girls be gloomy at their work? Their hours are short. They begin work at 8 and finish at half past five. They have an hour for lunch. They do not work hard. They are well treated, they have employment the year round and make good wages. I have some girls here who have grown up in the trade. They come here as errand girls at \$3 a week. No they earn \$14 and \$15. A girl who would be blue under such circumstances has no business to work at all. Why I have more applications for places as apprentices than I could fill in two years. The work is healthy and I seldom lose a girl excepting when she leaves here to mend clothes for a husband and makes robes for her own baby. How long does it take to learn the trade? That depends. Most girls begin the trade when they are from 14 to 16 years old. They become expert workers when they are about 20. Their wages are all the way from \$10 to \$15 a week, depending on their skill. Some girls are worth more than others. After they have learned the trade they can get work anywhere. There is always room for a good shroud maker. This work is not like any other and must be thoroughly learned. It is more like millinery than dress making, but it isn't much like that either. Just of the same as if you were making a