

THE JUDGE'S LOVE AFFAIR.

Maitre SELLER was a well-served agile gentleman nearly 60. At twenty he thought of nothing but law; at thirty of nothing but pleading; at forty he became a judge; and only at fifty-five did he make the discovery that weighing laws and splitting hairs upon the meaning of words and phrases is scarcely all the pleasure to be found in existence.

At fifty-five he awoke to the consciousness that he had wasted life. He was very clever at every point in the common law of the Unterwald, but he was not wise enough to know that at that age one can scarcely begin life over again.

If apart from the law he had ever a passion, it was a quiet, half-doubting love of fishing; and therefore, when he gave up his judgeship and retired into private life with the respect and even veneration of all who knew him, having angled all his life for clients, and settled the difference of other legal anglers through nearly a score of years, he fell to angling for fish as the one joy of his life.

Indeed, it was this new occupation, amidst nature, trees, flowers and living water, which prompted Maitre Seller to the conclusion that he had made a mistake in life when he brought it down to the grinding law from New Year's day to St. Sylvester's—which is the last day in December.

The old man's heart was desolate. His quiet, resigned old housekeeper (a sad spinster who had thrown herself into the pathetic and tears early in life), Maitre Seller found, now that he saw forest and sky daily, to be quite a wearisome woman, and the consequence was that Maitre Seller would pack up his fishing wallet, with a crust and a flask of white wine for his lunch, and go out from six in the morning until sunset.

One day, having caught trout until he was weary of unhooking them, and the afternoon being close (it was a warm April that year,) he fell asleep under a whispering fir tree and then he slept the sound sleep of innocence for hours.

Then as he awoke, he experienced that wonderful luxury, a gradual regaining of the senses, while a sweet voice was singing in the distance.

When he sat up and rubbed his eyes he found that the sun had set, and that he himself was rather stiffer in the limbs than was comfortable.

The voice came nearer, and through the brake in the glade he saw a mountaineer girl spinning as she came slowly forward, followed by two or three bounding goats.

The girl was about sixteen; her yellow, light, wavy hair was drawn to the back of the head, and there, fell in two long red ribbon-tied plaits, while the black bodice and poppy-colored skirt, completed a far more charming picture than any the old judge had seen in the court through all his legal years.

He sighed lightly. She stopped and looked about; but she knew no fear.

"Don't be afraid," he said, gently. The girl smiled as she saw the pleasant old gentleman, and said:

"Oh, no; and Bruttewart and Mitchlin would butt you if I told them."

The goats looked at the stranger in an undecided way, but apparently resolved to go on munching.

"And who art thou?" "I am Lotte."

"And where does Lotte live?" "I am the daughter of Forester Yeri."

"Ha, ha!" art thou daughter of Forester? It reminds me I have seen him in my court at sessions, and at other times. Is his house far away?"

"But a turn, messire, in the path, and the forester will be glad to see thee, good herr, if he knows thee."

"Why, who have we here?" asked the forester, looking out from the head of the stone steps, which led from the living floor of his forest home to the ground.

"Good even, Yeri; thy daughter has found me. I am Messire Seller, late judge of the canton. Hast thou so soon forgotten me?"

"Ha! 'tis Messire Seller!" cried the forester doffing his hat and hurrying down the steps.

"I fell asleep," said the old judge, looking yet upon Lotte; "and though I am still as active as a roe, I did not wake until the sun had gone down. I am a long way from town, my wallet is empty and so also am I, and, therefore, I am asking thee for some supper, Yeri."

"With right good will," said the forester, holding out his hand, which the judge took; for in and about Switzerland the general equality of riches appears to create an equality of habits; the officer and the private will sit down together, and the great man of the district will not find himself ill at ease when he eats his supper with a small farmer, the latter, meanwhile, being perfectly hospitable, never servile, and rarely uncomfortable, when face to face with a man of superior social rank.

The good wife, Kristine, now coming forth with a welcome, these four people shut out the evening, after entering the forester's house, and Lotte and her mother fell to work preparing supper.

The red-checked coarse white cloth was soon upon the table, the wooden spoons and platters laid, and the big tureen, lively with a pattern of wild flowers, was ready for the soup.

Not much for a meal—but plain soup, the beef which made it eaten with vinegar and oil, black bread and strong cheese, the whole washed down with some blackish, sour country wine—yet the old judge thought he had never eaten such a meal.

To tell the truth at once, the old judge was in love with Lotte, though she was only sixteen, and the old gentleman was by that time fifty-eight, if a day.

"I lay me, good judge, you sleep till late in the morning," said broad-chested Yeri, when they were saying good-night.

"Oh, no," replied the judge, wishing to cut a good figure before Lotte; "I never was more active than I am. I shall be up with the lark, and before any of you."

Nevertheless, though they softly called him three times, he never woke, and in fact did not present himself until the forester's breakfast had been waiting a whole hour.

The forest girl had been out and away for hours, and as he saw her, with the fresh morning color on her face, and holding out to him a bunch of wild flowers, which she had gathered, he decided that a pretty girl looked better at sunrise even than by sunset.

That was the beginning of it.

The prim housekeeper wondered what became of her master, until all capacity of astonishment was lost, while good Yeri and his wife, though they were wonderfully benefitted and honored by the old judge's friendship, were marvelously puzzled to find an answer to the riddle why Maitre Seller came to their hut four or five times in the week.

One day a barrel of rikvir, a capital wine in those parts, would be sent with Maitre Seller's compliments, and, within a week, an admirable present of sausage would be received.

The greatest condemnation of the poor old judge, and the best proof of the honesty of the old couple, Yeri and Kristine, were to be found in the fact that the latter never suspected the real basis of all these civilities on the part of the old gentleman.

As for trout, the good woman Kristine was weary of cooking it, so much of the fish did the good old judge bring to the chalet.

He never said much to Lotte, spoke like a father to her, and certainly never enabled the pretty girl to guess what was in his heart.

This life went to the end of June, when the tall mountain grass was ready for the scythe.

The old judge, however, had never slept at Yeri's except upon that one particular night when first he visited the forester.

He did not know that he had been put in Lotte's room—he supposed it the guests' chamber.

But upon that particular night in June he had made up his mind to speak to Yeri, and then it was found that, judge and orator as he was, he could not plead for himself.

"What ails the old judge, to-night?" thought the forester, "he does not seem himself."

The time went on, and when at last the judge decided that he would defer it until the morning, the forester made the discovery that it was dark and the moon would not be up for two hours; so the judge was invited to stay for the night.

He had no idea that his remaining put the primitive family to any inconvenience, no more than at the moment he learned he took Lotte's room from her.

But in fact the young goat-berdness was carried off to her mother's room for the night, while the forester made himself up a bed of furs, etc., on the ground of the living room.

He thought the girl looked pale and anxious, but he could not detect that she was in deep tribulation.

A little while and the forest hut was quite quiet—not a light to be seen.

Now they have a habit in parts of Switzerland of cutting the high grass by moonlight, the belief being common that the grass so cut makes better hay than that which falls beneath the scythe in sunlight.

The old judge, unable to sleep, was turning over in his mind what he should say on the following day to the forester, when he heard the tinkle of the cow-bell, the lumbering of heavy wagons, and the rattle of talking and singing voices, all which gradually approached.

Not ignorant of the custom of moonlight hay-making, the old judge found the rustle sounds rather soothing than not, when he thought he heard a tapping at the window.

He listened and the sound was repeated.

He knew that the window was ten or twelve feet from the ground, and that it could only be reached either by a ladder or by climbing the vine which grew on the wall about the lattice.

A thief! What thief would tap at a window? What could a thief hope to steal in that poor place, unless—

The poor judge's heart began to beat high. And as though in reply to his thoughts, a soft, pleasant voice called as the tapping was heard again, "Lotte!"

He moved off the bed (for he had laid down in his clothes, too weary thinking over the grand question even to undress), and drawing near the window, he saw by the light of the moon, which had now just topped trees, that a black-haired and extremely handsome youth was clinging to the vine, his bright eyes eagerly fixed upon the window.

The old judge silently opened the lattice; there was a low, bright laugh, and the young man leaped lightly and blithely into the room.

"And whom have we here?" suddenly cried the judge, pouncing upon the intruder.

"The youth uttered a low cry, but offered no resistance.

"What thief in the night are you?"

"So please your worship," said a clear, pleasant voice, "I am no thief, but Wilhelm, only son of the wood-ranger at Kausaneh, and I am come to see my Lotte!"

"The Lotte!"

"So please you, she is my wife!"

"Your wife?"

"Ay, messire; 'twas an Unterwalden wedding. 'Tis our custom here in this canton, and I am but waiting for my appointment as ranger, which I hope to get by the interest of one Messire Seller, an ex-judge, who has been a second father to my Lotte, to tell my father and her's that we are betrothed and that we are ready to marry by sunlight."

"Oh, then, the interest Yeri's daughter has shown in the old judge comes out of the hope that he will help thee to thy rangership?"

"'Tis exactly so, messire. I am no thief, but an honest man, and Lotte's husband by law of the Unterwald."

"How long since?"

"These fair six weeks."

The very time during which she had looked at him so earnestly.

He understood the look then.

"Begone, you man. I think I may promise thee thy wife and place."

Next morning he was very grave, but there was that noble something in his face we are pleased to call resignation.

"Messire Seller, thou art not well," cried the forester.

"Nay, better than yesterday. By the way, I told thee last night I should have something to say to thee. It is this—I want thy consent to a marriage between Lotte, here, and one Wilhelm, only son of the ranger at Kausaneh."

The forester bent his head upon the table as Lotte uttered a cry, and the good wife clasped her hands.

"Never!" said he; "'tis a rare good fortune!"

"No," said the judge, "I'll answer for him."

"Thus, judge?"

"Yes; he will make her a good husband."

"But he has no post; he has nothing."

"I promise you he will have the under-rangership."

"Well, now, messire, when thou pleadest to me, 'tis as thou didst when thou wert a lawyer, and if my girl says aye—"

Lotte looked at the judge meaningly and said:

"I do not hate him, father."

"Then 'tis settled," said Yeri.

So the old judge went home wearily, a sadder and wiser man. The forester, Yeri, wondered why the old judge never came, while the presents were sent as before, and the melancholy housekeeper marvelled that the master gave up fishing.

Seller was quite happy, but never a word said he. Not even once again did he go to the hut in the forest, and he benefitted by the lesson he had learned—that youth is for youth, and that if it is thrown away in the early summertime of life, it is not to be picked up again in the autumn of existence. For no man can retrace his life.

One Minister's Visit.

She lived on Broadway, and the minister had called in on his round of visits to his flock. They had talked about the spiritual needs of the neighborhood, and she had told him how much she had worried over the sinful condition of her dear friends, and how much she had groaned and sorrowed in spirit that her dear friend and sister next door was not in the church; the minister sympathized with her, and prayed for them, and then thought what a dear Christian sister this was; and she said she would go and get a watermelon for the pastor to

carry home to his family. And through the crack in the kitchen door the pastor heard the voice of the "dear sister's" big boy saying:

"Not by a darn sight; I hain't goin' over there. The last time I crawled through that hole in the fence an' hooked a melon she pounded me with a broom, an' threw bricks at me, an' I ain't goin' to try that ere game again, you bet."

And the "dear sister" came back and said she was "so sorry," but her dear husband had carried the melon to a poor family who had no luxuries. He was so charitable, dear man, too much so for his own good.

And the minister said it didn't matter and it was just as well; and went home and wrote a sermon on the subject of hypocrisy.

A Young Woman's Predicament.

THE experience of a Massachusetts young lady who recently climbed a chestnut tree in Berkshire county is worth narrating. Early in October this estimable young lady suborned her younger brother—aged 10—to accompany her on a clandestine chestnutting expedition. A chestnut tree, separated from the road by a narrow but dense belt of trees and bushes, was soon found and the pair zealously searched the ground for fallen nuts.

The young lady—and perhaps we had better call her Miss Y., for the purpose of identification, as the lawyers say—soon grew weary of this occupation, and determined to climb the tree. With the aid of a fence-rail, and the zealous "boosting" of her brother, she succeeded in reaching the lowest branch, from which her progress was easy. Pleased with her success, she soon grew careless and finally ventured out upon a limb until it bent under her weight.

Becoming frightened, she lost her presence of mind and her hold, and suddenly fell. Fortunately she did not fall far, for her skirt caught in a fork of the limb and suspended her between heaven and earth in the attitude of an umbrella which has struggled with a violent gust of wind and experienced a reverse. Her voice, though somewhat smothered by the peculiarities of her situation, could be easily heard by her astonished brother and in accordance with her calm directions that devoted small boy instantly fled for help.

Now, it so happened that each of the young lady's lovers had noticed her as she started from home in company with her brother, and each had independently determined to meet her as if by accident. Thus it fell out that the first person the small boy met as he rushed along the road was the mild lover, who listened to his incoherent tale and hastened to the rescue.

No sooner, however, did he come within sight of the tree than he promptly paused, turned his back upon the object of his adoration, and in a faltering voice explained to the small boy that he thought his sister would not care to have him help her, but would prefer the assistance of a vague servant girl, in search of whom he professed himself ready to start.

The small boy, having no sense of delicacy whatever, called the good young man names, and said he was afraid to climb a tree, but failed to shake his resolution. So the latter started on a run to find his hypothetical servant girl, and unlike Lot's wife, refused to look back though the indignant small boy sent a shower of stones after him.

Meanwhile, the other lover, a bold, bad young man, was approaching the scene of action, "cross-lots," at the top of his speed. His iron nerves did not falter even when he reached the tree that temporarily bore such marvellous fruit. Requesting the young lady to calm herself and trust him to rescue her, he armed her brother with a knife, and instructed him to climb the tree and cut his sister loose.

The small boy, hailing with delight the opportunity to cut something, did as he was bid, and in a few moments, amid the noise of rending garments, the young lady dropped safely into the bold, bad lover's extended arms. Half an hour afterward eleven women, bearing five step-ladders, approached the tree, while the good young man waited behind the bushes to receive his rescued mistress. It is needless to say he was disappointed, and his disappointment was still greater when he was subsequently told that she was to be married at an early day to his bold and bad rival.

A country chap went into Warner's the other day, and inquired: "Dew you retail shirts here?"

"No," replied Warner, "we make 'em all new."

And Charley dropped his carpet sack like it was full of lead, and looked at Warner ten minutes before he picked that carpet sack up and walked out with it.

"Just my luck," said a waiting maid, sadly. "Here I am in a family where every one has a love affair on hand, and leaves letters lying about opened, and I can't read."

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