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When the Artistic Wave Struck Pennington

By UNA HUDSON

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Before Mr. Lionel Farquhar descended upon us, we, of Pennington, were, concerning matters artistic, in a state of dense and utter ignorance. All our lives we'd reveled in red plush chairs for our parlors and "God Bless Our Homes" for our walls, and other cheerful but inartistic things that we afterwards blushed to remember.

Mr. Lionel Farquhar was a slim, dreamy-eyed gentleman who wore clothes that seemed strange to the unsophisticated eyes of the Penningtonites, and who advertised a course of lectures on ART—spelled with three capitals—and the Home—spelled with one capital.

Seats were a dollar, and at the first lecture I believe they were mostly unoccupied. Then somehow the rumor got about that only the elect were attending Mr. Farquhar's lectures, and of course after that everybody who could beg, borrow or steal a dollar, went. The second night he was obliged to put out a "Standing-Room-Only" sign, and the third night we were packed in that hall like sardines in a box.

He stayed a month, and when he did finally leave it was only because, as he told us with tears in his eyes, we now knew as much as he did, and there was no longer anything he could teach us.

Then trouble began in Pennington. For everybody being now soaked and saturated with high art, wanted to sell off their red plush chairs and mottoes, and buy art panels and the sort of furniture that gives you curvature of the spine when you try to sit on it. But what we didn't want we couldn't even give away; much less sell. So it ended in our going on pretty much as we had before the artistic wave struck us.

I didn't so much mind, because mother had let me discard my serviceable old-fashioned bureau for a packing-case dressing table draped in stuff that Mr. Farquhar assured me was entirely correct. And I made cushions of it for all my chairs and a spread for my bed, and saved my pocket money for high art wall paper. So I had a sanctuary to which I could always flee from the horrors below stairs for the soothing of my newly awakened artistic sensibilities.

But poor Alberta Gifford was denied even the meager consolation of a few yards of art denim. For her mother was a hopeless Philistine, and declared that not a solitary thing in the house should be changed.

That would have been hard on anybody, but it was particularly awful for Alberta, for she had been so enthusiastic over Mr. Farquhar's lectures, and he had seemed to take almost a special interest in her. One could not wonder at that, for she has a beautiful face and big, dreamy eyes, and just the figure for the flowing draperies he so much admired.

We quite expected him to marry her, until we learned, entirely by accident, that he already had a wife and three children. Of course he couldn't commit bigamy, even for Alberta—the consequences are apt to be so unpleasant.

I knew from the first that her mother's unyielding attitude in the matter of bureaus and denims would force Alberta to some rash deed; and it did.

She announced her engagement to Basil Wyntoun. I am sure it must have been his lovely name that attracted her. Mrs. Basil Wyntoun would look so stunning on one's cards. He had more money than any other two men in Pennington, but that wouldn't weigh with Alberta. She was too sweet a girl to be swayed by mere worldly considerations. But, spite of his name and his money, it did seem a pity for a girl like Alberta to throw herself away on a man like Basil Wyntoun. You can just imagine the sort he was when Alberta's mother told all over town she was "so glad Alberta was engaged to a sensible man like Mr. Wyntoun." She even went the length of saying she hoped he'd stop what she pleased to term "Alberta's foolishness."

I was to be maid of honor at Alberta's wedding, and I talked things over with the bridesmaids, and among us we decided that somebody really ought to speak to Mr. Wyntoun in Alberta's behalf. She was just the girl to let a man furnish up the house any way he saw fit, and never say a word no matter how it set her teeth on edge.

It was easy enough to decide that somebody ought to speak to Mr. Wyntoun, but when it came to locating the somebody she didn't seem to be there. Finally we drew lots, and it fell to me. I always was unlucky.

It seemed a terrible cheeky thing to do—to go up to a man and tell him in cold blood what sort of furniture he ought to put in his new house. Frankly, I didn't like the undertaking. But one ought to be willing to suffer a little for the sake of art and one's best friend.

Finally I "screwed my courage to the sticking point," or as near the sticking point as I could get it, put on my best clothes for the sake of the moral support they gave me—and went down to Mr. Wyntoun's office.

I sent in my name, and when the boy brought back word that Mr. Wyntoun would see me, I wanted to run. I'd had a sneaking hope all along that he'd send out word that he was "too busy," or something. My knees knocked together, with fright, I suppose, but I remembered art and Alberta, and went in and dropped into the chair he pushed forward for me.

I was horribly embarrassed and uncomfortable, but he was as nice as possible.

"Of course," he said, when I had finally managed to make myself clear, "I've no wish but to make Alberta happy, and if she wants sage-green carpets, and—er—other things, she can have them."

That was dear of him. I no longer wondered that Alberta wanted to marry him, even though he did laugh at art and wear horrible neckties. And when he thanked me—actually thanked me for coming there for meddling in what certainly was no affair of mine, I could almost have married him myself.

Then he suggested something that fairly took my breath away. "I haven't," he said, "the faintest idea how to set about getting the things you mention. Perhaps you could manage it for me?"

"Oh!" I said.

"Perhaps," he went on, "you could furnish the house while we are away, and have it ready as a surprise for Alberta when we get back?"

It was a great responsibility, of course. Still I thought I could do it. The other girls would help me, and we could always fall back upon Mr. Farquhar for advice. We wrote to him, and he selected most of the things and sent them to us.

When we had finished, Alberta's home was a perfect dream. There never had been anything like it before in Pennington, and I don't believe there ever will be again. I knew Alberta would be just wild with joy when she saw it. The night before the day she was expected home I hardly slept a wink for thinking of her surprise and delight.

The next morning I did a perfectly dreadful thing. I did so want to see her in the moment when she first set foot in her new home that I went to the house a little before train time and established myself in a place where I could see and hear, but not be seen—unless I wished.

It was just as I had expected. When Alberta came into her lovely new high-art home she was positively speechless. Then she turned to Mr. Wyntoun and asked, with a little catch in her voice: "Who did it?"

"Why, Miss Burton," he said. "And your bridesmaids helped. Mr. Farquhar, also, I believe. It's all right, isn't it?"

"Y-e-s," Alberta said, slowly. "It's very artistic," she added.

Then she flung out her arms in a funny, passionate little gesture, and caught her husband by the shoulders.

"My dear," she cried, "if we begin by deceiving each other, we'll never be happy together, never in this world. Tell me the honest truth, now. Do you like all this?"

"You know, my dear," Mr. Wyntoun said, "I always like whatever you do."

Now, surely, an answer like that ought to have satisfied any reasonable girl. But it didn't suit Alberta.

"That's not answering my question," she said. "Honest and true, now, do you like all this?"

I felt sorry for poor Mr. Wyntoun. Like our illustrious first president, he evidently "couldn't tell a lie." He got red, and stood first on one foot, then on the other, and opened his mouth and shut it again without saying a word.

But Alberta was inexorable. "Basil!" she said, severely.

And Basil, being cornered, spoke his mind. "I think it's pretty dreadful," he said. Then he looked as though he expected Alberta to slay him on the spot.

But Alberta did nothing of the sort. She fell upon him and kissed him. "Oh," she cried, "I was so afraid you were going to fail me. Don't you know that one of the things I love you for is your liking chromos and red carpets, and lovely easy chairs. For I like them, too; only I haven't had the moral courage to say so."

This from Alberta! But I hadn't time to be disappointed in her, I was so busy listening to what they said next.

"But what will we do with all these things?" Alberta was demanding, tragically.

"Oh, we'll make them over to Miss Burton," Mr. Wyntoun said. And I thought he chuckled faintly.

Now, high art things are lovely to look at—in somebody else's home. But I'd never before tried to imagine what it would be like to try to eat a comforting dish of ham and eggs or a humble slice of gingerbread in a dining-room like the one I had furnished for Alberta. And as for getting into a high art bed with one's hair braided in 12 tight little pigtails so that one's pompadour would be wavy the next day—Oh, it wasn't to be thought of!

I gasped twice, then I stepped from my hiding place. "I hope you won't think me ungrateful," I said. "Really, I'm ever so much obliged. But if it's all the same to you, wouldn't you just as soon give them to the other girls?"

And—would you believe it?—the other girls said just what I had. So in the end we sent the whole outfit to Mr. Farquhar. And now the poor man is in a sanitarium. They say he tried to live up to his high art furniture.

Rich Russian Churches.

The treasures of the various Russian churches are of fabulous value. St. Isaac's cathedral, in St. Petersburg, is said to have cost $50,000,000. Its copper roof is overlaid with pure gold. In the cathedral of Kazan the name of the Almighty blazes in diamonds from a cloud of beaten gold, under which are solid silver doors, 20 feet high.

LIFE.

Let me but live my life from year to year,
With forward face and unreluctant soul,
Not hastening to, nor turning from, the goal:
Not mourning for the things that disappear
In the dim past, nor holding back in fear
From what the future veils; but with a whole
And happy heart, that pays its toll
To Youth and Age, and travels on with cheer:

So let the way wind up the hill or down,
Through rough or smooth, the journey will be joy:
Still seeking what I sought when but a boy,
New friendship, high adventure, and a crown,
I shall grow old, but never lose life's zest,
Because the road's last turn will be the best.

—HENRY VAN DYKE.

LEAN-TO OF GOTHAMITES.

New Yorkers Bound to Prop Against Something When They Stop in the Street to Talk.

"I wonder," said the man from Minnesota, "why so many New York people have the lean-to habit? It makes them look very queer. When in motion their bodies lean backward or forward or sideways like an animated inclined plane, and when they are in repose they flop still worse.

"No matter where you stop to talk to a New York man, he is bound to lean against something. In stores he leans against counters, in saloons he braces himself up against the bar, in hotels the pillars and chairs contribute to his support, in restraurants he leans on the table, and in the street against the walls of projecting buildings. And the women are just as bad as the men. Nobody seems to have spunk enough to stand up straight.

"Perhaps the people here are tired, or it may be that they are seeking a graceful pose. At any rate, they flop on all occasions. The proprietors of some of the shops evidently deprecate the universal tendency to lean against something, and wish to discourage it, for they have distributed signs about the stores warning customers not to lean on the counters, but, so far as I can see, these notices are only a bluff. At any rate, New Yorkers don't heed them; they keep on leaning just the same."

Floating Ocean Life.

A recent British scientific expedition discovered that the Indian ocean floating life is exceedingly abundant at all depths down to about 7,200 feet in seas 15,000 feet deep. By floating life is meant animals which form the food of whales and deep ocean fish and which, up to the present, have been believed to live on or very close to the surface. A variety of enormous squids were fished out, as well as jellyfish, and prawns fully six inches long. Some of these latter were blind, while others had huge eyes, but nearly all of them had phosphorescent organs, which would naturally be due to the fact that they live at a depth where almost total darkness prevails. The blind varieties had enormous feelers or antennae, some of them extending to twice the length of their bodies.

What's the Use?

"Well, it has been a mild winter," remarked the optimist. "We have saved a lot of coal."

"What's the use?" growled the pessimist. "The warm weather has kept the lakes open and all we saved on coal will go next summer to pay the increased price of ice."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Disconcerted the Empress.

The German empress recently had a somewhat disconcerting experience. While staying at one of the imperial hunting castles in Alsace she paid a visit to a village school a few miles from Strasburg. Before leaving she gave the pupils the customary permission to ask any request they pleased, with the promise that she would grant it if in her power to do so. Fully expecting the favor would take the form of a whole holiday or a supply of cakes, she was not a little embarrassed when one of the elder girls stood up and in a somewhat trembling voice asked that the French language might be taught in that school. Her majesty looked thoughtful, but, realizing the necessity of keeping her word, she gave the required permission, to the great delight of the pupils.

In a Berry Bog.

The cranberry season is eagerly awaited by the poorer classes of Cape Cod, whole families journeying to the bog with provisions and cooking utensils for an extended picnic. The work is easily learned, and a child of five can easily pick four measures a day, which means the earning of 40 cents. An adult picker can gather from 30 to 40 measures a day, which is good wages.

SEA GULLS AS PIRATES.

They Will Steal Like Politicians and Commit Murder Like Sea Rovers.

There may be an advantage in birds living in colonies, but I cannot see how any other birds would want to live near a colony of gulls, says a writer in The World To-day. A gull in his own country will steal like a politician and murder like a pirate. They swarm about us like vultures after a battle. The minute our approach drove a murre or cormorant from its nest, the saintly looking scalawags swooped down to eat the eggs and young. While the gulls are freebooters and robbers on the island, it is only when other birds are frightened from their nests that they have a chance to carry on their nefarious trade. Eternal vigilance is the price the latter pay for their eggs and young. Except when they are frightened by approach of some person, their possessions are never left for an instant without a guard. But the fittest manage to survive on the rocks, and these gulls are the most useful birds in the bays and rivers about the waterfronts of our cities. They are valuable as scavengers and should be protected in every way. Three of them are equal to a buzzard. Ten of these gulls are equal to a pig.

TYPEWRITERS CATCH COLD

Machines Soon Get Out of Order If Left in a Chilly Atmosphere.

The employer looked on with a puzzled expression while the new stenographer carried the typewriter across the room and placed it on a chair in the immediate neighborhood of a steam radiator, says the New York Press.

"I'll be ready in just a minute, Mr. L.," she said. "The typewriter got cold while the heat was turned off and it sticks dreadfully."

"Does the cold affect them?" he asked. "That's something new."

"Yes, sir. I find that it does, very much. Some machines regularly take cold if left long in a cold room. It's especially hard on old machines that are pretty well worn, making them very unmanageable sometimes. I've known the cold to remain in an old one until it had been several hours in a warm room, when it gradually became better; but usually a machine yields to three or four minutes of warmth."

KING OF ITALY STINGY?

Royal Couple Live in Accordance with Severe Lessons of Economy.

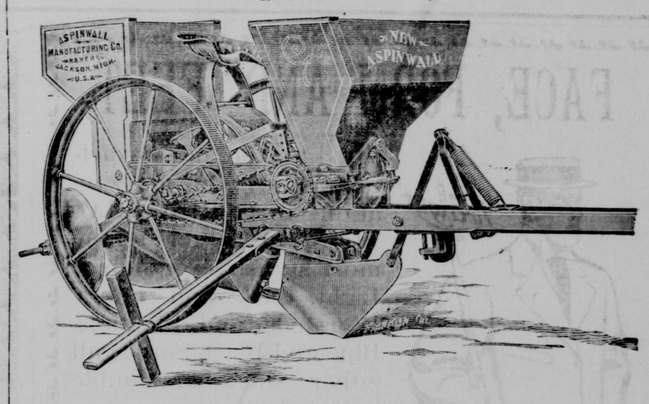
Romans have one criticism to make of their king, Victor Emmanuel III. It is that he does not live like a king. His wife's democratic manners form a strange contrast to the etiquette which still surrounds her mother-in-law, Queen Margherita, while the king himself, when he appears in public, usually does so with a lack of ostentation which causes the admirers of his father, the late King Humbert, to shake their heads in mournful prophecy.

As a matter of fact, Queen Helena learned the severe lesson of economy at the frugal court of her father, Nicholas of Montenegro, while the king had too many shocking examples of prodigality left him by his father and grandfather ever to feel inclined to follow in their footsteps.

Just now, King Emmanuel is being blamed by the Romans for having shirked the first of the two court balls, which he annually holds, at the Quirinal. The censure is unjust, for the court went into mourning on account of the death of King Christian, and the king was not to blame if the first ball had to be postponed. It was later given, but with less than the usual ceremony. The second ball also took plase as usual on the last day of the carnival, but the voices of pessimists continue to be heard.

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