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LIBERIA HERALD.

THE ROMANCE OF FACT.

BY CHARLES HOOTON

——"Such wonders magic art
Can work, when love conspires and plays his part."

That love is fiercer than death and deeper than the grave we have high authority for believing; and every good man's and woman's heart bears living testimony within its own recesses that the authority is to be relied on. So it was in the beginning, has ever been, and will continue to the end. *Love* has done more than hate, and affection achieved what malice never could have prompted.

Amongst the rest of Love's achievements, gentle reader, is one of which probably you never before have heard, although it is matter of local history, and in its affect has been at once the cause of wealth to thousands, of employment to millions, and of comfort and elegance amongst half the nations of the earth.

During the latter part of the sixteenth century—it might be about the year fifteen hundred and eighty—one Master William Lee, the son of a comfortable yeoman who resided upon his own small estate in a village named Woodborough, in the county of Nottingham chanced—as youngmen generally chance—to fall in love with an irresistible maiden of the same place, whose eye hitherto, had never rested on man with aught of heed and whose realm of pleasant dreams had yet preserved itself from the invasion of those conquering images which overclimb the parapets of the affections and, amidst tender tumult, struggle to take the grand citadel of the heart into their own possession, and to keep it for ever after.

*M*aster Lee had been studyiug at Cambridge where he gained his degree of master of arts and with that honour still blooming freshly upon him, he returned to the leafy seclusion of woodborough—to hide his candle of knowledge under the great bushel of surrounding ignorance—to inherit his paternal estate whenever Providence so should will it, and in a word to bury himself, as it were alive during the remainder of his days.

This period he deemed highly favorable to the pursuit of his love for Maud *T*horesby but Maud was very cold and very discreet and remarkably industrious—attentive almost to a miracle. It was matter for admiration to every body except Master William to see her fingers perform such rapid evolutions with the knittingneedles that their course could not be traced with the eye, while that appeared only a labyrinth and confusion of movements, which was in fact the perfection of regularity and order, obscured from sight by its own speed.

Then Maud had a small flock of younglings around her the children of the neighboring hinds whom she gratuitously instructed in the same useful art and these also; to Master William's additional annoyance, contributed not a little to keep Maud engaged otherwise than he would have had her. Between the two, her own devoted love of knitting and her supposed duty towards her voluntarily selected pupils Maud appeared to be absolutely separated from Master William even when in his presence. So far to detach her from her work as to obtain an hour's ramble in the fields and woods was the work of as much and as powerful oratory as in, earlier times, would have been considered needful to convince a Senate, and even when persuasion had effected its end, and Maud's pretty feet pressed down the elastic grass as she walked too listlessly beside Master Lee, her principal thought appeared to be, "How long by the clock would it take them to get back again?"

"By my word Dame Maud:" exclaimed William though thou'rt a lady born Time seemeth thy tyrant and the sun thy ruling necessity. Canst thou see nothing in these fields pleasanter to look on than that endless woollen thread?,'

"*I* grant thee it is much pleasanter, Master Lee," said Maud "but not so useful; an, sad prayers should I say at night if my daywork be not done and done bravely also."

"True and savering of a good conscience rojoined William, "but thou sparest too little time for other things"

"What other things Master *W*illiam? *T*here are no other things that I wot of, worth an hour's expenditure and it is no task of mine to learn clerkcraft like thee."

"But thou art made beautiful, Maud and mete learn to show some favor to them that think so; or else thou'lt go on knitting and knitting till by'r lady! the time may come that thou'lt never thyself be knit to anybody!"

"An, thou talkest so wildly Master *W*illiam, I shall hold my time worse than misspent and *go* back without more parley to my needles."

"*T*hen I tell thee truly, Dame Maud that if thy needles are to swallow like levithan all thy *time* and occupy all thy thoughts, and leave not sixty minutes change, by the dial for thyself—"

"What wilt thou do brave William? Wilt thou handle the wires thyself, my pretty coxcomb and make up for all the wasted time thou hast caused in idle prate and dilly-dally-ing foolishness? Wilt be here enough to earn me as much as thou hast lost me, or wilt make hose out of paper with a pair of scissors?

"*I* will spoil thy knitting" rojoined *M*aster Lee, in a firm deep-meaning voice; I will bring down ruin *upon* all that follow thy handicraft!"

Maud started suddenly from his side and turned pale, as she heard those soleman words for she comprehended not their full and true intent, but seemed, in some undefined manner, some mysterious way, inexplicable to herself, to be impressed with the idea that her would be lover did meditate violence and mischief to all the practisers of the knitting art, who might ever come within his reach.

"Fear thee nothing Maud," said William, smiling, I threaten no laying on of hands or cudgels, but only to spoil thy knitting by making it not worth thy while to waste thy time so any longer."

"*W*aste time in knitting!—waste!-waste!" exclaimed Maud; "verily, Master Lee, either thy cobwebs in the college or this fond stuff thou call'st love, has loosened a tile of thy head, and laid thee open to be moonstruck."

"Not so good Maud *T*horesby. I am sane, and calm, and sensible as thou art. But I fain would strike a bargain with thee, before we part this afternoon. *T*hou knowest I have loved thee long in honourable fashion, and have one of the prettiest homesteads in woodborough to mine inheritance. My father, alas! is not like to be immortal, and as yet, *I* am but in the green and pithy texture of my manhood. *I* would like to see thy slender fingers practising a more gentle craft than this rude iron and woollen work—touching a picture of flowers, or asking harmony from some lady's proper instrument. And besides, thou art too much devoted to this boor's work. *T*he bargain I would make with thee is this. 'If, in two years to come, I can devise, out of my brain a cunning engine to weave more hose in one day than all thy dexterity can produce in a week, wilt thou have me to thy husband?"

"Oh pray you Master Lee, speak no more folly this day, for I fear me thou art going raging mad. Prithee divert thyself by whittling a walking stick out of the rough black-thorn in thy hand, or else go and gather birds nests, and teach ravens to cry Ralph, Ralph! But do not trouble me with *thy* fantastical fool dreams about husbands. I'll none of your husbands not I. Especially husbands that can devise such jugglerics as engines with more skill than men and women. *T*hey are devil's devices and I much dread that thou hast kept strange company in the gloom and mystery of college."

"Then thou refusest me *M*aud Thoresby?

"It were hard indeed, replied Maud archly, "[illegible] what I will, or what I will not do, two years is along time, and even now I sometimes know not my own mind for a week together."

"Thank thee for that speech," said William; "half a pitcher full is better than a dry bottom, and there is hope in doubts if none in flat denials. I shall at once about my engine and trouble thee no more Maud, until it is done, than just to ask at the door how thy health is or perchance listen behind the orchard sometimes to hear if *I* can overhear thee singing."

These last words were spoken in amournful tone that touched the daughter of Thoresby's heart more nearly than all else that Master Lee had said.

"Then thy project is to return to Cambridge to do it?" asked Maud with a sigh.

"Not so, sweet Maud," rejoined William "I have a workshop in my father's house where I often disport myself in the practice of mechanical inventions. They delight me more than the Latin of the Fathers or that species of wit called poesie in the which I am no adept."

"*I* bethought me that was thy meaning added, Maud referring to her half intentional misapprehension of his return to Cambridge inasmuch as thou seem'st to speak as though about to take thy leave for two years.

"Only to retire into my workshop and avoid future offence by wasting thy time and hindering the knitting of which thou art so fond."

"Fairly spoken Master Lee and a praiseworthy purpose. But not the most dexterous can ply the needles at all times; and knitting neither prevents us from using our eyes for other purposes, nor hinders other people from looking at us if they so please. Now *I* can work in the dark as well as in daylight; besides, dost purpose to quit thy devotions at church? *I* hope not, I would not omit going to church for all the engines that either thou or satan could devise."

"Nor *I* good Maud for our seats are in perfect view one of the other."

"*S*hame on thee Master Lee! So that is thy devotion is it? that is thy—"

And by'r lady! very sincere devotion too, May *I* pay it three times o'Sunday and as often in the week as Maud Thoresby goes to prayers!"

Oh fie, fie, *M*aster William! If this loseness comes of going to college and devising engines better hadst thou stayed at *W*oodborough and hobbled behind a plough all the days of thy life! There, go now; take leave of me and let me never hear nor see thee again, untill thou art rightly sober minded and can'st talk with becoming propriety of holy things."

*T*he two years wore away, but Master William Lee did not go to demand the hand of *M*aud *T*horesby, for the device of the knitting engine still remained in a sore state of embryotic embarrassment although the yet distant light of its completion and birth was visible—if to no other eyes—at least to those of its far-seeing inventor. He knew if could be perfected although at present he did not know how But he thought of Maud and again devised, and tried and schemed and schemed again—only again and again to fail.

The worst of it was, that *M*aud had now arrived at the age of twenty; and become such a remarkably perfect rustic beauty that she was in a manner besieged by lovers of one grade or other, so that, though she had resigned herself to none, yet, all combined, they distracted her mind from the toiling and seldom seen Master William; and he and his knitting machine rapidly dimmed off together into the mists of the forgetting and forgotten past

"*I*n sooth a brave conceit of Master *L*ee's" whispered a wealthy gallant to the fair Maud one day, as he gathered tempting apples for her in her father's orchard "fine as is Mistress Maud should wait for such a mechanical clerk as he; and deny all matches, how high soever because he has not finished his ridiculous engine! Thou mayst wait thy life long, fair lady and go to thy grave as thou came out of the cradle, if this unfinished dream and bauble of a scheming dolt is to stand between thee and marriage. I should scorn the arrogance of the knave if he had *a*sked a sister of mine such a monstrous pledge. His devices will most likely bring himself to ruin: as such like cunning always does, and should the unnatural fools that rashly engage therein. And then, Mistress Maud, what wilt thou have gained by thy heartaches and thy hopes deferred, and thy waiting."

I protest thy speech is unpleasant to me, replied *M*aud "and not becoming a worthy gentleman. *M*aster William is no dolt but a learned clerk, and one that carries more wit than all the gentles in woodborough were they kneaded together. No favour of mine can be won by speaking slightingly of *M*aster Lee."

Nay *I* cry thee pardon! Speak frothily of *M*aster Lee's ability? His asking of pledges and vows, his hanging thy happiness on the idle chance of his skill producing a knitting engine—a thing unheard of in the the world before—it is that, *M*istress Thoresby with respect be it *spoken*, that I raise this protestation against."

Like many other beauties *M*aud Thoresby was almost all outside: she could see ability but could not appreciate it, and especially when as in the present case it happened apparently to stand somewhat in opposition to that first grand object which alone the shallow multitude can value—living and making a show in the little time world, of which their own existences from so small a divisible proportion.

So it is not to be marvelled at, that within three months from the occurrence of this little colloquy Master *W*illiam Lee beheld one fine Sunday morning, as he was going to church to hear the sermon and see *M*istress *M*aud Thoresby kneeling in her seat—it is no matter for wonder, be it again said, that instead, he should behold the said flighty young lady walking up the pathway before him, arm-in-arm with the gay gallamt his rival, *M*aster Hugh Monks the richest yeoman in woodborough.

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B. Liberia Herald

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