

A WOODLAND NYMPH.

As over the lea I walked one day,
I chanced to meet, upon my way,
A little maid, who, to me did say:
"Good master, lend your aid!"

"Ah, now, my pretty little maid,
To whom would you have me lend my aid?"
And, looking up at me, she said,
"Good master, follow me!"

I followed on where'er she led,
Through reedy fen and juniper bed:
Where the wildwood flowers are all in red,
I followed this little maid.

Over height, and hollow, and level plain,
She travelled on, till I would fain
Have turned around, and come back again,
From following this little maid.

She grew not weary; but, 'ere I was fast,
That I was forced to say at last,
"My little maid, I'm afraid thou hast
Forgotten that I follow."

At this a sound burst on my ear:
'Twas the sound of singing, sweet and clear.
'Tis the home of the fairies we hear,"
Said I to the little maid.

"Ah, yes, good master, where now we stand
Is Fairyland;
And the praise of this gaily singing band
Is at my command,
For I am Queen of Fairyland."

Then round me rose at once apace,
Forms inconceivable—the fairy race,
Carolling with becoming grace,
Allegiance to their Queen.

And now, my pretty little maid,
Who had been clad in simplest plaid,
In gorgeous vesture was arrayed,
In loveliest colours blended.

"Good master," said she, drawing near,
"You wonder why I led you here;
Follow, and soon you shall appear
As champion of the fairies."

Where'er the Queen of the fairies led,
I did not follow; but, instead,
A stinging slap on my poor head
Awoke me to my senses.

And my arms encircled my own true queen,
Who was smiling at me with joy serene;
And not mistrusting that I had been
In the exciting fancies of a foolish dream,
Guilty of grave offences.

Kemptville.

F. N. DEVEREUX.

WANTING A WIFE.

Jack Lincoln was as fine a young fellow as ever stood in shoe-leather. He was at least six feet in height, whilst his massive chest and sinewy arms stood out in grand proportions. He had a handsome face—a determined face, and a moustache that, however, did not conceal a fine set of teeth and smiling lips.

When Jack Lincoln looked at you with those clear blue eyes of his, you would at once say they belonged to a true man.

Jack was an orphan, but he had been brought up by a relative, sent to Eton, and from thence to Oxford, where we find him on a fine morning after the "Long" domiciled in his room at All Saints.

Now Jack was not what is usually termed a reading man; on the contrary, though he pursued his studies diligently, yet his abundant animal spirits were forced to vent themselves in out-door exercise.

Of boating, cricket, and riding, he was passionately fond, as most Englishmen are; and this love of sport naturally threw him among a set of men with similar tastes.

On the morning after his return to Oxford Jack was alone in his chambers at All Saints.

He had not seen any of his old chums yet, and he was yawning over the paper when there came a knock at the door, and his intimate friend, Tom Parsons, entered the room.

"Halloa!" cried Tom, "so you are back again. How have you enjoyed yourself, eh, since you left the arms of Alma Maters?"

"Pretty well," replied Jack, returning his friend's hearty shake of the hand.

"That's right," said Tom, throwing himself into an arm-chair, and lighting a well-coloured pipe which he drew from his pocket; and after puffing away for a few seconds, he said:

"What's the latest?"

"In what way—boating or cricket?" asked Jack.

"Boating, of course."

"Nothing new. I went down to the North and saw some very good form on the Tyne; but I flatter myself we have as good here; and I wouldn't mind betting a hundred on our chance against any of them, only I'm so hard up that it's out of the question."

"How's that? did the nuns fork out?" asked Tom Parsons, looking at his friend's face, which wore an unusually anxious look.

"The nuns, as you call him, my boy, did not; and what is more, I think he will not hand out any more. You humble servant is stuck in the mud, my boy; clean broke, and that by an accident which no one could foresee but one little urchin, and I wish he were dead."

"Who; the nuns?"

"Young Cupid, the god of love, or money as it appears in this case."

"How? I don't understand you," cried Tom, more and more bewildered at his friend's manner.

"Eh, you don't; well I'll explain. First, before the commencement of the 'Long,' my worthy uncle—who, you must know, is on the shady side of 50—took it into his head to take to himself a wife, and a pretty one, too!"

"Whew!" whistled Tom; "and of course,

his affection is lost to you; and what is worse, his money, his hoarded coin! I pity you!"

"The first loss I could have put up with, but the second, no," continued Jack; "and to make matters still worse, my beloved aunt is likely to present her better-half with a son and heir, which new arrival would definitely give me my *quintus*! Oh, it is cruel!"

"Right down wicked," returned Tom. "Has he no conscience, the hard-hearted old fellow, to deprive you of your just expectations?"

"Yes; I have no expectations. He said to me the day I left—Look here, boy; you must know now that I shall have a family to provide for; and, therefore, I am compelled to reduce your allowance. You will have three hundred a year until you have completed your education, and after that you will have to shift for yourself. Of course I will give you a start, but I shall most probably have children, you know. And he looked so pleased that I could have kicked him."

"And serve him right! What sort of a woman is the aunt?" asked Tom.

"Oh, she is a regular artful one; declares in one's presence to the old man that she adores him, flatters him up, and he swallows it all, and is trying to make himself look as juvenile as possible. But there is more in the background. She has a brother, and this fellow is sent by my uncle to Oxford; he is at our Hall. I hate him. And he is a tremendous big fellow, dark as an Italian, and not at all like his sister, who is a fair woman, with a pink-and-white complexion; a regular doll."

"How did the nuns pick them up?"

"At the seaside. I don't know what family they are, though Bob Vavasour—that the fellow's name—does boast a good deal about his grand connections."

"Well, Jack, I'm glad you have told me all about this, for I've got a splendid idea which will easily set you up. There is old Hardbake, the millionaire, in Oxford at the present moment. He has only one daughter—a fine girl, Jessie by name; you shall marry her and all her money!"

"How, my boy? You don't suppose old Hardbake will give me his daughter when I haven't a sou in the world? It's preposterous."

"No, it is not; you just listen to me. Jessie is a girl passionately fond of sport, and, what is more, a young lady who will have her own way. Now, if you can make an impression I don't see why you should not marry her and her money."

"What! become a fortune-hunter?" cried Jack, jumping up with great indignation.

"Take it coolly, my boy; you need not come the virtuous so very much, although I admire you for it. Better men than you or I have married for money. Now, it is just as easy to fall in love with a girl with money, as with a girl without; and, if you give me the alternative, I say the girl with money is preferable, and she may often make the best wife, for, naturally, being used to money, she is not so extravagant, and cares much less about it."

This logic, which Tom Parsons vented with the greatest possible coolness, only served to make Jack hesitate to take his advice.

He loathed anything that was sordid, and had only uttered his opinion about his uncle's unforeseen marriage in a fit of spleen.

"Well, Tom," he replied, "I don't see how I am to answer your proposal. Here I am in a fix. I am in debt and difficulties, and if I should finish by falling in love, why, that would be an accumulation of misfortunes; and it is said the latter never come singly."

"Stuff and nonsense, old fellow. We'll make all the running with the charming Jessie, and I'll back you against any fellow to win. Now we'll be off, and I'll introduce you to the prettiest girl in Oxford."

To this Jack Lincoln consented, nothing loth to get away from his own thoughts.

So the two undergraduates donned their wigs and gowns, and sauntering went their way to the residence of Alderman Hardbake.

Everything in the mansion showed the princely wealth of the owner, and when Jack beheld all the costly possessions belonging to the lucky merchant, he could not help whispering to his friend:

"Tom, he'll never consent to give me his daughter. I'll tell you what we'd better turn back."

To this his friend only vouchsafed the simple reply of:

"Nonsense!"

The Alderman was in flat contradistinction to his surroundings.

His manner was blunt in the extreme. His dress was as plain as his speech, and that was straight to the point.

Jack Lincoln and his friend were ushered into his presence.

"Allow me, Mr. Hardbake, to have the pleasure of presenting my friend, Mr. Lincoln, to you; the finest oarsman on the river," said Tom.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Lincoln; hope you'll often give me a look in. Now, let me see; of course you want to see my beauty?"

Tom bowed, whilst the old man's eyes twinkled with paternal pride.

"Then you'll find her in the conservatory or the drawing-room with her friend, Laura Joyce. She is always ready to welcome such specimens of Christianity as yourself, Mr. Lincoln. I think that girl of mine ought to marry a sailor."

And Mr. Hardbake laughed, subsiding into his chair over the *Times*, as the two friends ascended the stairs to the drawing-room.

They entered, and found a young girl reading a book very attentively.

Jack thought this was Jessie; but the lady proved to be her friend, Laura Joyce.

"How do you do, Miss Joyce?" said Tom, introducing his friend.

"Ah! Mr. Parsons, so you are back again in the old city," said Miss Joyce, who was a brilliant brunette with eyes that spoke a language of their own.

"Yes; Jessie is in the conservatory," she said, in answer to Tom's inquiry. "Come; we will go to her."

They passed into the conservatory, and found the young lady with her back toward them, leaning over a stand of white camellias, whilst, by her side, stood a tall, dark young man with a black moustache, which he was caressing, as if he were proud of its possession.

Now, the position in which this couple stood did not please our hero, but when he beheld the stranger he whispered hastily to Tom Parsons—

"Why, this is Bob Vavasour! This is a pretty pickle! His sister has cut me out of a fortune, and now the brother is likely to cut me out of a wife in prospect."

"The dickens it is!" muttered Tom, in reply. Then turning to the lady—

"Good morning, Miss Hardbake. I must say you look charming, although I only saw the back of you."

Jessie Hardbake started, and hastily drew away from Vavasour.

Tom introduced her to Jack; and then Jessie followed up by presenting Vavasour.

Both Jack and Tom bowed stiffly to that gentleman, who returned the compliment with studied politeness, which was a little overdone in the effort to appear cold and gentlemanly.

"I have had the pleasure of Mr. Lincoln's acquaintance," he said, "and am happy to meet him again in such a charming presence." He bowed to his hostess.

Jessie was a petite blonde, with beautiful wavy hair parted on the side of the forehead, which gave her rather a boyish look, while her roguish blue eyes danced with youthful glee whenever any subject aroused her mirth, or fell in pensive languor when listening to a more serious incident.

Jack Lincoln had been heart-whole up to the present, but he was at once fascinated by the lively Jessie, whose nature ran from grave to gay, from lively to severe, asking *naïve* questions with a simple childishness that a casual observer would have ascribed to coquetry; but there was nothing of coquetry in Jessie. She was a simple, true-hearted English girl, fond of fun, and having nothing to conceal: therefore, said what she meant, nor feared a misconstruction placed upon her actions or her words.

Conversation flowed rapidly, and somehow Jack Lincoln was engaged in an animated talk with Jessie while Tom Parsons monopolized the attention of the fair Laura Joyce.

Mr. Vavasour was thus left out in the cold, yet his self-possession did not forsake him, and he stood twitching his moustache for some minutes, and then said—

"I shall wish you good morning, Miss Hardbake, as you are engaged."

Jessie turned, and laughed merrily.

"Going?" she said; "well, I hope I shall see you again, Mr. Vavasour. We are not so far apart now but we shall be able to meet. Good-bye."

Vavasour departed.

A strange thrill shot through Jack Lincoln on hearing Jessie's words.

"So they have met before," he thought, and somehow he did not speak with his previous vivacity, but remained quieter until he and his friend took their leave.

"Well, what do you think of her?" asked Tom, when they were in the street.

"Think of her? why, that she is a very nice girl. How could I think otherwise?"

"Oh, is that all? Don't you think as if an arrow were sticking in your heart?" laughed Tom.

"Oh, but think of the money. Don't play the high and mighty, or this Vavasour will be cutting you out."

"Ah, will he, by heaven?" cried Tom, fetching a deep breath. "I should like to see him. I wonder how he became acquainted with Miss Hardbake?"

"That I can't say; but I see you will have to run him hard for the heiress. He looks a determined fellow, and one not likely to give up the object he sets his mind upon."

Lincoln agreed to this, and the two friends returned to their rooms at All Saints.

In the meantime the fair Jessie and her friend Laura were not slow to criticize the merits of their new acquaintances.

"I tell you what it is, Laura," said Jessie; "I won't marry any man who can't protect me. Now I like Vavasour and Lincoln, but I don't know how it will be between them if they should propose. Lincoln is the nephew—as Tom Parsons said—of the rich Mr. Lincoln; therefore, on the score of money, my father can have no objection to him."

"And Vavasour?" asked Laura.

"Well, I don't exactly know his means, but we shall see in time."

And so the conversation ended.

A short time after this Mr. Hardbake gave a ball, to which both Lincoln and Parsons were invited.

It was an event eagerly looked forward to by Lincoln, for he had been a constant visitor at

the Alderman's, and had made a great progress in the affections of Jessie.

Still, he had not proposed, but, on the evening of this ball, he resolved to open his heart to Jessie and hear his fate from her lips.

Accordingly, when the two friends entered the ball-room Jack at once sought out Jessie, and found her seated by the side of Vavasour.

"May I see your programme, Miss Hardbake," asked Jack, with all the familiarity of a friend.

Jessie handed it to him with a smile.

Jack looked down it, saw Vavasour's name in several places engaged for a dance, and only three vacancies, which did not please him.

"I have kept the vacancies for you, Mr. Lincoln," said Jessie; "but you know that time waits for no man—you are late, sir."

The spirit of contradiction had entered Jack's breast. He put his name down for the vacancies, and, with a bow, handed Jessie back the programme and left her.

Vavasour could not repress a smile.

Jessie bit her lips, but nerving herself to an effort, she opened the ball with Vavasour.

Jack Lincoln did not dance much. He was very gloomily inclined.

"The least she might have done was to have spared me the dance before supper," he thought, as he retired to the smoking-room, and joined the Alderman at a game of whist.

Presently Parsons came in.

"Halloa! Jack," he said, "what does this mean? Are you mad? Have you and Jessie quarrelled? You'll offend her, and then goodbye to your hopes. Vavasour is making great play during your absence. Come into the ball-room."

Borne by persuasion, half by force, Jack Lincoln was led into the ball-room.

His time to dance had not come yet; but when they looked for Jessie she was nowhere to be seen.

Jack strolled moodily into the conservatory, and, little dreaming that he should interrupt a tête-à-tête, he stumbled full upon Vavasour and Jessie, who, seated by his side, were evidently deep in converse.

Jack had time to withdraw before he was observed, but not before he heard the words—

"You must ask papa."

"So, conditionally, she has accepted him," he thought, bitterly. "Well, I will show her a fair front, and not flinch under the ordeal."

Through the entire evening he was apparently as gay and light-hearted as the rest of the company. But at supper-time he drank a good deal of champagne, and only once met the reproachful eyes of Jessie.

He turned away from her gaze, and commenced a desperate flirtation with the lady next to him.

When Jack Linton and his friend walked home in the early morning through the silent streets of Oxford, Parsons broke out savagely—

"You are—pardon my frankness, Master Jack—a consummate blockhead. You have let this fellow cut in and cut you out!"

"Can't be helped," said Jack. "Look here. She doesn't love me. Vavasour has proposed, and she referred him to her father, and now I'm going to give it up. Emigration is the word. I think I'll do it in the colonies."

"Stuff! If you can't 'do,' as you call it, at home, you won't do anywhere. Look here; you are too easy in laying siege to the heart of the little heiress. Storm her, Jack. Go and propose to-morrow morning, and don't take 'No' for an answer."

Jack blew a cloud from his mouth reflectively, then said—

"Come into Charlie Bruce's rooms. I'll see what is to be done to-morrow, so drop the subject at present."

To this Tom agreed.

Charlie Bruce was known among Jack Lincoln's set as the general referee on all matters of sport, and his decision was never known to be disputed.

The two friends found Charlie Bruce in his rooms with several men, and amongst them Mr. Robert Vavasour.

Charlie Bruce gave them his usual welcome, and broke out—

"Here is the new man. Vavasour says he can pull three miles with any one for fifty. Now that's something for one who has not been in training."

"Not at all," chimed in Vavasour, who felt particularly elated. "I say that the art of rowing does not depend upon mere bodily strength—it is the will, and with a strong will a man may do anything. I wager to do it without training."

And Vavasour looked as if he had the will.

"I'll take your wager," said Jack, quietly.

It was agreed that the race should take place within a week, and after this the two friends retired to their rooms.

The fact was that he was desperately in love with Jessie, and now he saw her about to accept his rival he was more in love with her than ever, and he blamed his folly in not opening his mind to her sooner.

At length, however, Jack fell asleep, and when the bell rang for chapel, it appeared to him as if he had only rested a few minutes. So he resolved to take another nap.

He slept till noon, when he was aroused by Parsons, who looked as fresh as a daisy.

"Hulloa, sluggard! wake up!" cried Tom. "I've seen that dearest girl in the world this morning, and told her about your match with Vavasour. She was all excitement about it, and even expressed a hope that you might win."