

moose," says she. "It would be cruel an' brutal."

"My land!" says I, an' a- I was fadin' away I heard Frank exclaim, in', 'Ben's a droll fellow, my lord."

If droll's the same as mad, I was that all right. Here I'd been took rom my wood-cuttin' an' set to shovin' a heftv canoe up stream for three solid day- jest for nothin', not realizin' she'd got what she'd come for! But round the fire that night, when I said as much, she hit me so hard with one of those stoney glances of hers that I darsent let out another kick.

The next mornin' early we struck for home. Joe had to keep his canoe along- side all the way down, so's Nord an' Frank could rub noses. She still wore her skirt an' simper an umbrella, an' didn't once offer to take my place in the starn. The baron was in an infernal hurry, always shoutin' "Faster—faster!" an' Frank said as how he had important business to ransack in London an' we must step lively so as not to incon- venience his lordship. "The sooner it's over the better," says I, for their spoon- in' an' goin's on made me fair sick.

We finally tore into Plaster Rock, the place where the trains start from. One was leavin' in an hour, an' with it went Frank an' Nord—on their honeymoon! Yes sir, they were hitched up solid, with me givin' her away an' Joe supportin' the groom. I might have expected it; but knowin' the happy bride as I did I couldn't git over a feelin' that I'd ett too many flapjacks an' was goin' to wake up with a yell. They got clear away fore I did though.

An' that an't all, sir. Erbout the same hour of the day followin', when I was loafin' on the steps of the post- office an' drinkin' in freedom in big gulps, sort of gittin' steadied up after the nerve-strain I'd been subject to, the postman's rig from the Forks walloped into the village, with the horses in a lather an' Pete cussin' awful. Off the hind seat jumped a long, lean dude in huntin' togs, a mustache like a cow's horns an' an eye that made yer wilt.

"Have they found the knaves yet?" he exploded.

"I weren't aware yer lost 'em," I says meekly. "But yer kin purchase a new deck in the general store opposite."

"D—n yer impudence!" says he, rude as a king.

John Braithwaite had him in charge, an' he steps up an' explains that his sport is the Baron de Nordenfelt an' that his vallet was elopin' with his pocket-book, watch, cuff-links and sundry other things, an' had I seen him?

The air cleared right off at this, an' I roared 'til I nigh fell off the steps, thinkin' how Frank had caught the wrong fish—meanin' the bogus lord—an' what she'd do when she woke up an' found herself hitched to a ordinary man after all. No wonder she were fooled, seein' as how he had all the trappin's on that goes to make a lord. Could you tell one from common folks if he was togged out like me an' you be? I reckon not.

Anyway, when I seen John was gittin' mad, I told how the feller had just left on his weddin' tower, bound for London. The new baron pranced into the post- office to telegraph to the perlice, while I let John an' Pete an' most of the village who'd 'cumulated 'round, into the joke on Frank.

"I guess it'll come harder on the valley," says John.

"Maybe you're right," says I, preferin' valleys to barrens myself. Queer, ain't it, how them English tack our names onto ourselves?

Then the denuded lord come out, tug- gin' at his mustache an' scowlin' over our heads.

"He'll be seized when he lands at Liverpool, an' the law'll take its course," he growls.

"I wouldn't be too hard on him," says I soothingly, "for he's let himself in for Frank Boots, an' that ought ter be punishment enough for any feller."

Weren't I right, sir?

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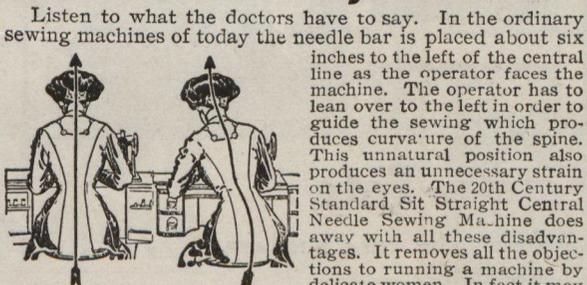
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