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THE Lady of the Night

OR

Amelia Makes a Success

CHAPTER III
THE BOUNDER.

He looked her up and down, and his smile grew more gallant, and therefore more insolent. The face of her unaccountable shoes had come undone; she had removed her gloves to fix it up, and had slipped them in her pocket, and in her surprise at seeing a stranger on the water had forgotten to put them on again. This gentle bouncer could not imagine a gloveless lady, and jumped to the fatuous conclusion that he was talking to one of the farmer's daughters.

"I am usually pretty lucky," he said boastfully, "but I am new to this river. Suppose you have a cast or two, and show me the meadows overhead—I mean the proper way." He added condescendingly.

Nora hesitated, but the trout were rising exasperatingly; and, after all, what did it matter that the man was probably a shopman from Nelsworthy, one of the bigger towns? Probably he did not even know that he was offensive; it would be doing him a good turn to give him a wrinkle. So she took the brand new rod and made a throw or two.

"Your cast is too short," she said. "You want a longer gut," she explained, and she saw that he did not understand her. "And the fly is too big; that it is not a real one. There is a big fish under that opposite bank; if you miss twice, I'll try for him, if you'll stand a little farther off."

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He drew back a yard or two, and with his hands thrust into his pockets, stared at her face with what he considered a captivating smile. The cast was so short that Nora had to stand on the brink of the still swollen river. She threw the fly lightly over the trout, it rose presently and, of course, she looked at it. A real sportsman would have been filled with admiration at the way in which she played her fish; but the young man only saw his opportunity for an act of gallantry, and, pretending that he thought she was in danger of slipping into the river, he sprang forward and put his arm round her waist.

Nora uttered a cry, not one of alarm, but of amazement and indignation. Still holding her fish, she turned her crimson face and blazing eyes upon him.

"You're all right; I have got you quite firmly," he said with a stammer, pressing her still more closely to him. Nora did not struggle; she was still too much amazed to move; and, indeed, almost before she could move or speak, there was a thud from behind, something leapt on the young man's back; he released Nora, lost his footing, and fell into the river.

The romantic rescuer was none other than the faithful Bob, who, sniffing his mistress's footsteps, had followed her and arrived at the psychological moment. He stood, with his feet planted on the very brink of the stream, glaring savagely at his floundering victim, and evidently longing for a closer acquaintance with him. The man was in no danger, for the river was not very deep at this part, and Nora's indignation gave place to her sense of the ridiculous. Indeed, she would-be gallant out a ludicrous figure floundering in the stream, and gasping for breath; but presently she saw that he was really frightened, and with difficulty suppressing her laughter, she called to him.

"You're all right; you're in no danger. You can stand there if you'd only try."

Thus encouraged, he found his feet, but he eyed Bob as if he were afraid to come ashore. Nora said a word or two to the dog, and he subsided on his haunches, but still continued to growl. The wretched young man waded to shore, and stood wet, muddy, and shivering. He was very angry as well as discomfited, and presently, as he wiped the water from his face, he stammered angrily.

"That's a head of a dog of yours—I might have been drowned. He ought to be shot."

Nora laughed in his face. "Shoot Bob for doing his duty!" she said. "He never allows any one to touch me. You have behaved very foolishly, and you deserved your ducking."

"I don't know about that," he said. "I thought you were going to slip into the water."

"That is not true," said Nora contemptuously. "I was never near slipping. However, it doesn't matter. You are wet through. You had better go

MOST OF THE AILMENTS THAT MAY ATTACK YOUR BABY

arise from improper feeding, and it is important that mothers should understand that baby will thrive best if fed in the natural way—at the breast. This will not be so difficult of accomplishment if the prospective mother includes in her daily food a bowlful of Neave's Health Diet. But there are very many cases when the baby cannot be breast-fed, and then an important decision has to be made—Which food shall we give our baby?"

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home—and have a hot bath," she added, her face screwed up with laughter.

He glared at her angrily, with the impotent fury of a man whose little effort at gallantry had gone cruelly awry.

"I suppose you will make a song of this," he said. "You'll tell the people up at your farm how you've played a trick on a gentleman—"

"What gentleman?" asked Nora, looking round, with the air of one desiring information.

His vacant face grew dark, and he scowled at her.

"Oh! you take it like that, do you?" he said. "It's evident you don't know whom you are talking to."

"I don't know, and I don't want to know," said Nora, with an indifference which must have been exasperating. "I suppose, judging by the way in which you throw a fly, that you must be one of the shopmen from Nelsworthy?"

He glared at her, as if too astounded and indignant to speak, but at last he stammered—

"Shopman! Nelsworthy!"

Nora shrugged her shoulders. "Don't trouble to tell me," she said. "You had better go home."

She called to Bob, who was sniffing about the young man's drenched legs and growling threateningly and turning away. As she did so, Elliot Graham came riding towards them. He was coming at a gallop, and he pulled up so nimbly and cleverly that, even at that moment, Nora accorded him admiration. His look from her to the dripping youth and, naturally enough, said—

"What is the matter?"

"This gentleman has fallen into the river," explained Nora demurely, but with her eyes dancing and a suspicious twitch of her lips.

"Oh!" said Elliot, "how did he manage that?"

"Bob managed it for him," said Nora as demurely as before. "Bob thought—but it doesn't matter."

"It matters a very good deal," said the unfortunate young man. "I came here fishing, I make myself—pleasant—"

By this time Nora was in high good humour; perhaps the presence of Elliot Graham tended to her exhilaration.

"I don't remember your making yourself pleasant," she said. "But it is of no consequence. Please do go home and get dry."

"That's all very well," he said sullenly. "I should like to know who you are," she said, almost good-naturedly.

Elliot Graham, who had dumfounded, and was still looking from one to the other gravely, cut in here.

"This lady is Miss Ryall of the Grange," he said. "You seem to have been fishing the Ryall water—and without permission."

The young man looked disconcerted for a moment, then he raised his still dripping head with an air of hauteur.

"I am Mr. Ferrand," he said. "I thought this was our water. I apologise."

"That's the nicest thing you have yet said," remarked Nora. "The Ferrand's water does not begin until you get about half a mile lower down. You had better fish there, for the future: it's not so deep as this."

Mr. Ferrand buttoned his coat round his shivering figure, raised his limp cap, and turned away. The other two watched his retreating figure in silence for a moment or two, then Elliot said—

"How did it happen? I was at the top of the hill, and saw him—I thought I saw him—"

Nora grew red. "Oh, he thought I was falling, or pretended that he did, and—"

With a face as red as her own, and with an ominous light in his eyes, Elliot was for springing on his horse and going after Mr. Ferrand, but Nora stayed him with a touch of her hand.

"He is not worth it," she said quietly, fully comprehending his intention. "Why, look, he has left his rod and basket! And the fish rising like mad, too!"

She took up the rod, and skillfully landed a couple of trout.

"That will be enough for breakfast," she said, "unless you care to have some?"

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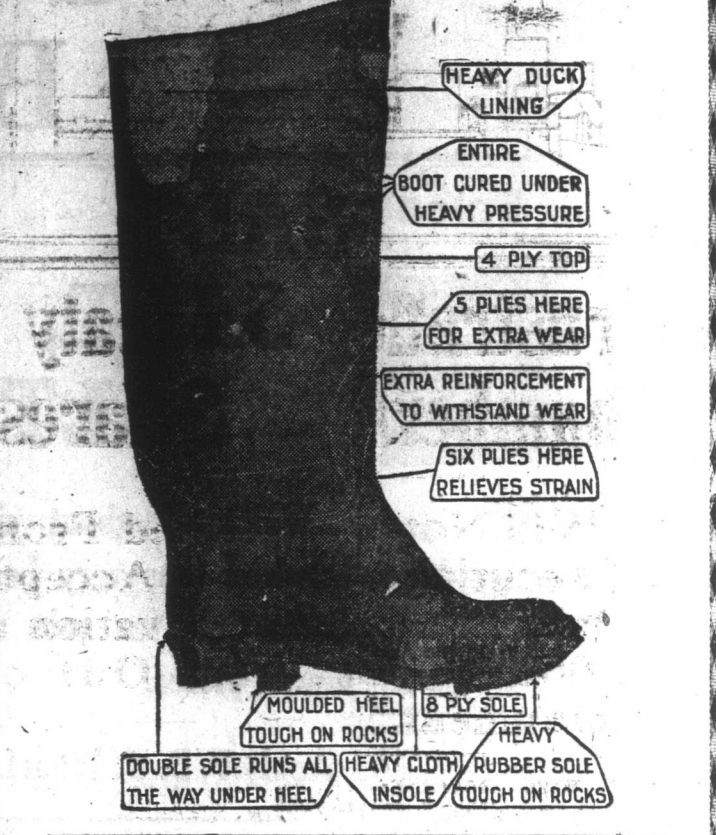
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