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A Betrothal

Story of a Dancing Mania

By F. A. MITCHEL

In medieval times on the coast of Denmark, overlooking the North sea, was a village the people of which made their living by fishing. Martin Aarbus, who followed in the footsteps of his father in getting a living by his nets, wood and won Maria Stahr, who was conceded to be the prettiest girl in the village.



"WE NEED SOME ONE," SAID MARTIN, "TO PUT SPIRIT INTO US."

Since the gathering could not take place at Maria's home on account of her father's opposition, the guests were invited to meet at the house of Martin's parents. While the festivities attending the betrothal were in progress old Stahr was at home grinding his teeth, though his wife was present at the betrothal.

You would suppose from her lugubrious appearance that I was going to do her harm.

A shiver passed through the assemblage at this harsh remark of Martin's concerning his betrothed, so unlike him, for throughout all old Stahr's opposition Martin had been singularly tender with his beloved. As for Maria, she cast an indignant glance at him and, advancing to the stranger, put her hand on his arm and, leading him from one to another of her guests, introduced him. Martin watched them with flashing eyes, and it was apparent that a turmoil had been stirred within him.

It was evident that there was something in the coming of this stranger that made a great change in the spirit of the assemblage and especially in the pair whose betrothal they had come together to celebrate. In a twinkling he seemed to have irritated Martin and insinuated himself into Maria's good graces. Presently it began to appear that he had enthralled her. The sad look she had worn before was now changed to merriment. She chatted briskly with her companion and laughed gleefully at everything he said.

Meanwhile Maria had kept her eyes fixed on him, spellbound. Martin, who was watching her, now and again half drew a short dirk he carried in his belt, as if about to plunge it in the stranger's heart. But every time he did so something in the knife unnerved him, and he let the knife slide back into its scabbard.

When the song ceased Maria's mother made another attempt to change the conditions. She asked the stranger if he would not play for the company to dance. Immediately he struck a chord that shot a current of exhilaration through every one present. He struck another, and all began to sway. A third drew men and women together in couples. Then began the merriest music that had ever been heard in that quiet village.

First the younger persons present went spinning over the floor, then those who were older, till all were whirling. Children, youths, married persons and white haired old men and women were dancing merrily, while shouts of laughter accompanied the spirited music to which they moved.

The longer they danced the wilder grew their antics. Most of them wore wooden shoes, and the clatter was deafening. She asked the stranger if he would not play for the company to dance. Immediately he struck a chord that shot a current of exhilaration through every one present.

Finally there was a clap of thunder, and a sudden silence fell on all the village. Persons stood looking at one another, wondering why they had been dancing now that they had no desire to dance. In the house where the betrothal was celebrated all the candles went out. They were at once relighted, and everybody began to look for everybody else. Martin was there, pale and haggard. He had been dancing more wildly than any one else and showed the effect more than others.

Then cries arose: "Where's the stranger who bewitched us?"

"Where's Maria?" A search revealed neither of them. A girl said when the clap of thunder came she had seen the stranger and Maria whirl up in the air and disappear above the house-tops. One gave one story; another gave another. Martin seemed paralyzed. He was thinking what old Stahr had said on one occasion, "Before you shall possess my daughter I will give her to the devil."

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FEEDING THE CALF.

Little and Often is a Safe Rule to Follow in This Matter. Great care should be taken not to feed roughage to the new born calf, and as it grows see that it eats only the choicest and finest of forage and that the quantity taken is small.

Worms in Horses.

Horses do not suffer from stomach worms, but from intestinal worms. As often advised, give a tablespoonful night and morning of a mixture of equal parts of salt, dried sulphate of iron and sulphur in the feed.

Plains of Argentina.

The roads of the plains of Argentina have deeper dust in summer and deeper mud in winter than those of any other part of the world, consequently the wagons used on them have wheels that are from six to fifteen feet in diameter.

Chilly Text.

Mother—Tommy, what was the golden text at Sunday school today? Tommy (who lives in Alaska)—Let me see. Oh, yes! "Many are cold, but few are frozen."—Judge.

A wise man contents himself with doing as much good as his situation allows him to do.—Lord Bolingbroke.

Wise and experienced mothers know when their children are troubled with worms and lose no time in applying Miller's Worm Powders, the most effective vermifuge that can be used. It is absolute in clearing the system of the worms used on them have wheels that are from six to fifteen feet in diameter.

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SOCIETIES

Court Lorne, No. 17 C.O.F. Regular meetings the Second and Fourth Mondays of each month at 8 o'clock. Court Room over Stapleford's store, Main Street, Watford. B. Smith, C.R.F. H. Hume R. Sec., I. H. Collier, F. Sec.

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Children FOR FLETCHER CASTOR