

A LIFE'S ENIGMA - A NORWEGIAN MYSTERY

BY HONORABLE ROSSIGNOL

(Continued)

Where should he go? To the new empty house he had bought and furnished for Asta? Or should he go some where further away? It mattered nothing for wherever he thought of going, he saw Asta standing there. It is said that when folks are dying, the last object they see is pictured upon their eyes; so, too, when a man awakes to consciousness after doing a wicked deed the first object he sees is pictured upon his eyes, and he can never get rid of it. Thus, when Botolf saw Asta, she no longer appeared to him as she had upon the mountain slope so short a time before, but she seemed to him a little innocent girl - in fact, to be Agnes. Even the picture he retained of her figure while she was sinking down the steep, was that of Agnes, with her little hands uplifted. In whatever direction he turned his thoughts and remembrances of the suffering woman he had so suspected they were met by this innocent child, who he had just heard repeating the Lord's Prayer. In every scene of his life with Asta - from the night of the shipwreck to this Sunday morning - the child's face appeared. The thought of this mysterious transformation preyed upon him, both in mind and body, that in the course of a few days he became unable to take his necessary food, and a little while after was compelled to keep his bed.

Soon every one could see he was approaching death. He whose mind is burdened by some great life enigma acquires a peculiar manner, through which he himself becomes an enigma to others. Even from the day Botolf and Asta first came to live in that parish, his gloomy taciturnity, his habitually morose and stern face, had been the subject of frequent gossip among the neighbors; and now, when Asta all once disappeared, the talk increased until the most incredible things said were believed. Nobody could throw any light upon the matter; for none of all those who lived upon the mountain-side, or on the shore beneath, or who were accustomed to go there, had happened to be looking toward the steep just when Asta hung herself over. Neither did her corpse ever drift to land, itself to give evidence.

Even while Botolf was yet alive, therefore, no end of strange spiritualistic stories were told about him. He became painful to see, as he lay there with his long sunken face, red lips and kept him, grew tingled together, and large eyes looking up like some dark star in a deep mountain hollow. He seemed to have no wish either to live or to die; and no folk said there was any fight for his soul going on between God and the devil. Some said they had even seen the evil one surrounded by flames, climb up the divisions of the dying man's chamber to call to him. They had seen the evil one, they said, in the form of a black dog, go sniffing round the house. Others who had roved past had seen the whole place on fire; while others again had heard a company of devils shouting, barking and laughing, come up from the pass slowly toward the house, enter through the closed doors, rush furiously through all the rooms, and then go once more beneath the waves with the same awful roar as they made in coming out. Botolf's servants, men as well as women, left immediately, and told all these tales to everybody. Had any one dared go near the place; and if an old peasant and his wife, to whom the sick man had shown some kindness, had not taken care of him, he would have lain utterly forgotten. Even this old woman herself was in terror when she was with him; and she used to burn straw under his bed to keep off the evil one; but though the sick man was nearly scorched up, he still kept alive.

He lay in terrible suffering, and the old woman thought at last that he must be waiting to see some one. So she asked him whether she should send for the clergyman. He shook his head. Was there any one else he would like to see? That he made no answer. The next day while he was lying as usual, he distinctly pronounced the name "Agnes." Certainly, this was not in reply to the old woman's question of the day before; but she fancied it was, and she rose gladly went to her husband and bade him harness the horse with all speed, and drive over to the parsonage to fetch Agnes. When he reached there, everybody thought there must be some mistake, and that it was the clergyman who was sent for; but the old man insisted it was the little girl. She herself was indoors and heard the message, which frightened her greatly; for she, among the rest, had heard the tales about the devil and about the company of devils rushing up out of the sea. But she had also heard that there was some one whom the sick man was waiting to see, and must see or he could die; and she did not know any wise strange that that one should be herself, whom his wife had so often fetched over to the house before. Agnes's sisters told her, too, that she must always try to do what God's will was, and that if she prayed nicely to God, nothing could do her any harm. She believed this, and let her dress her to go.

It was a cold, clear evening, wherein she could see long, dark shadows falling over the hills, and the harness-bells sounding far off in the forest. On the whole, she felt it was rather dreadful, and she said saying her prayers, with her hands joined together inside her muff. She did not see the devil anywhere, neither did she hear any company of devils rushing up out of the sea; but she saw many stars above her, and light shining straight before her upon the mountain peak. Up around Botolf's house all seemed strangely quiet; but the old peasant woman came out at once and carried Agnes indoors, took off her travelling dress, and let her warm herself at the fire. Meanwhile the old woman told her that she need not be anywise afraid of the sick man, but must go in to him with good courage, and say the Lord's Prayer to him. Then, when Agnes had got warm, the old woman took her hand and led her into the sick room. Botolf lay there with long beard and hollow eyes, and he gazed at her intently; but she did not think he looked dreadful, and she was not afraid.

"Do you forgive me?" he whispered. She supposed she ought to say "yes," and she said "yes" accordingly. Then he smiled, and tried to raise himself in the bed, but his strength failed, and he remained lying. She began at once to say the Lord's Prayer; but he made a movement as though to bid her pause, and pointed to his breast. So she laid both her hands there; this was what she thought he intended her to do; and she directly laid one of his clammy, ice-cold, long hair upon her little warm ones, and then closed his eyes. When she should be did not say anything after she had finished the prayer she did not venture to remove her hands; but just began to say it again. When she had said it for the third time, the old woman came in, looked, and said: "You can leave off now, my dear - he's gone!"

50 B BLS New Shod. For sale by JAMES PATTERSON, 19 South Market Wharf.

Anchor Line Atlantic Service! THE BEST ROUTE FOR EMIGRANTS To New Brunswick.

Table with columns for destination (Alaska, California, India, etc.) and ship names (Alaska, California, India, etc.).

INDIA, 2300 tons. From London, Tuesday, March 2nd, for Halifax and St. John, N. B., and this favorite steamship will have capacity for a very large cargo.

INTERNATIONAL STEAMSHIP COY. Steamers and Railway for Portland and Decatur.

STOVE WAREHOUSES. Corner Canterbury & Church Sts.

NOTICE. I have given that at the next Session of the Local Legislature of New Brunswick, application will be made for an Act of Incorporation for the 'Old Fellows' Building Association of St. John.

FOR THE NEW YEAR! PLUM CAKE, FRUIT CAKE, POUND CAKE, PLAIN and FROSTED.

Ayer's Cathartic Pills. For the relief and cure of all obstructions of the bowels.

For the relief and cure of all obstructions of the bowels, and for the relief of the following complaints, which these Pills rapidly cure: For Dyspepsia, Indigestion, Constipation, Langor and Loss of Appetite, etc.

For the relief and cure of all obstructions of the bowels, and for the relief of the following complaints, which these Pills rapidly cure: For Dyspepsia, Indigestion, Constipation, Langor and Loss of Appetite, etc.

NEW FALL GOODS. Beavers and Pilot Cloths! Overcoats, Tweeds, Coatings, Tailors' Trimmings.

BOOTS, SHOES AND RUBBERS. No. 82 King Street SAINT JOHN, N. B.

Walking Sticks. Choice Walking Sticks. Orange, Holly, Oak, with Steel Spikes, etc.

FOR THE NEW YEAR! PLUM CAKE, FRUIT CAKE, POUND CAKE, PLAIN and FROSTED.

ARCTIC OVER-SHOES. WE have just received another supply of 'Ladies' and Children's' ARCTIC OVER-SHOES.

THE ILLUSTRATED LIBRARY OF POETRY AND SONG! Edited by DR. J. G. HOLLAND.

COAL. New landing from Great Britain, at Disbrow's, 400 TONS Best Newly Mined Old Sydney COAL.

NEW FRUIT! Coffee, Soda, &c. 25 BLS Currants, 30 boxes Val.

OCEAN TO OCEAN! By Rev. G. H. Grant. Fresh supplies of this popular book.

OATMEAL! 100 BLS Oatmeal. 190 bbls Scotch Hill Oatmeal.

HAY, OATS, FEED, &c. NORTH SLIP. ST. JOHN, N. B.

BRIDGE CONTRACT. TENDERS will be received at the Office of Public Works, Fredericton, until THURSDAY, 20th day of January, next, at noon.

FUR CAPS! DIED BEAR SKIN, NATURAL BEAR SKIN, and other FURS.

CHRISTMAS IS NEAR! AND we are prepared to supply our friends with the most beautiful and useful goods.

ASH SIFTERS and BARRELS. BOWES & EVANS.

EXCITING! THE most exciting and interesting book of the day is 'KIT CARSON'.

LANDING. Coal, Potatoes and Apples. NOW landing a cargo of New Zealand, 2000 bushels of Apples.

PAPER and LEATHER BOARD MANUFACTURING CO. THE above Company are prepared to execute orders for Printing Paper.

American Cider. GHOUGH and SWEET. Superior to anything in this Market.

CHAMPAGNE. 110 CASES, extra, Champagne. For sale by ANDREW J. ARMSTRONG.

Feed and Oat Store. 150 BUSH P. E. L. Oats. 200 bbls Heavy Feed.

Railroad Supplies. 70 DOZ 'Jones' Shovel. 10 doz Clay Picks.

TOYS! TOYS! 18 CASES Toys, well assorted, suitable for the holidays.

Ready-Made Clothing. SHIRTS, Homespun Frocks, Horse Blankets, Camp Spreads & Blanketing.

APPLES. 50 BLS No. 1 Bishop Pippin Apples. For sale by W. H. GIBSON.

AGENTS For the sale of the DAILY TRIBUNE. H. Chubb & Co., Prince William Street.

Brandy. Brandy. Brandy. Brandy. Brandy. Brandy. Brandy. Brandy.

Scotch Refined Sugars. 25 Hogsheds BRIGHT Scotch Refined Sugars.

Bay View Hotel. PHOENIX W.M. STREET.

CIGARS! The Largest and Best Selected Stock. In the market, including favorite brands of Havana, German and Canadian Goods.

NEW STORE. ARMSTRONG & McPHERSON, 30 UNION STREET.

ASSURANCE COMY. LONDON and ABERDEEN. ESTABLISHED A. D. 1834.