

## LITERARY.

## HOW THE WAGER WAS WON.

Written for the CANADIAN FARMER by  
NORA SPARKS.

'Twas on a hot sultry day in August, 1882, that I strolled along the mossy banks of the noble Niagara, note book in hand, in order to jot down a few pages undisturbed by ought save the twittering of the feathered race, and the babbling of the brook. Scarcely had I seated myself in that shady, secluded nook, which I flattered myself never knew any other occupant, when by the rustling of the bushes I knew some one was approaching. Cautiously parting the thick branches of the wide-spreading shrub I observed two young gentlemen, engaged in earnest conversation, slowly approach and seat themselves not more than six feet from me. To move was to betray my place of concealment, although to be an eaves-dropper was highly repugnant to me; however as their conversation suddenly turned upon a lady acquaintance my scruples all vanished and I was all attention. I also felt justified in taking down occasional notes of their conversation. One of these gentlemen was Frank Vane, a man I had always considered my enemy, not because he had ever done anything against me—but because (must I tell it?) he would not be my attendant, and would persist in following in the train of my rival. He was a clever little blonde gentleman, just my beau ideal, *mon petit chevalier*; but since it was my misfortune to be discarded I did not die of a broken heart. No indeed! nor did I pine or waste away in the least on his account. I just set to work to help Jack Lyle or anyone else who would do any plotting against the aforesaid gentleman. Jack Lyle was the companion of Frank Vane in the following discourse, which I, most unfortunately for the latter, overheard:

"Well, Lyle, old fellow, without doubt, Clare Weston is a great flirt, but I doubt if she would accompany you to the festival to-night, after promising to accept my escort. Yes, I very much doubt, and I'll give her the benefit of that doubt."

"Nonsense!" replies Lyle, "Don't flatter yourself. Clare'll go with me, I'll wager a ten dollar hat, if I ask her, and leave you to—"

"Done! who'll hold the stakes?" exclaimed Vane.

"As there's no one here, comrade, to do so, I give my word of honor."

"I give my parole too—Lyle."

"Then I suppose, Vane, you expect a companion at the festival to-night?"

"Most certainly I do. Have I not her promise to that effect?"

"So much for her promise," exclaimed Jack Lyle, as he snaps his fingers in the air, then rises and leisurely walks away.

Frank Vane remains a few minutes longer, then departs saying to himself:

"Well, I'm sure of winning, so I'll go regale myself, then return and spend an hour in yonder hammock."

After they had both departed I left my hiding place and was soon at the side of the hammock. Ha! ha! Mr. Vane, I'll engage this for you—you shall have a fall—hope you won't get your neck broken; but of course I want you to be a little bruised. In less time than it takes me to tell it I climbed the tree (hardest thing I ever did), loosened the hammock and replaced the strong, thick rope by a small cord. This reclining couch was suspended about 10 feet from the ground,

but as the soil was rather soft there was no danger of a person breaking bones from such a fall. Having arranged that the next thing was to find Jack Lyle and put him on his guard, for I did not want that individual to spoil all by making use of the hammock. For this purpose I ran swiftly along the path—running nearly over the gentleman I was in quest of.

"Hallo! O! O! Miss Sparks, don't run over a fellow entirely. What are you after? Some mischief, I'll be bound. Here, my lady, is a seat. I insist on your taking it. Now why that merriment that sparkles in your eye?"

After seating myself on the indicated seat I venture to query: "Have you constituted yourself my father—confessor, Mr. Lyle?"

"Yes, for the time being I have."

"Well at any other time I might dispute your authority, but at present you are the very one I am in search of. I heard your conversation with Mr. Vane, and I offer you my assistance. No, on second thought, I won't offer it—for you will be compelled to take it—or fail in your game. Clare Weston is not foolish enough to throw away the gifted and handsome Frank Vane, for the polite and heartless Jack Lyle. No, not so long as there is the slightest chance of going with Vane will she accept your escort. However I am equally certain that you are second best in her estimation, and hence I bid you take this for your motto, '*Nihil Desperandum*.' Have you a sample of Vane's writing? An old envelope, or in fact almost anything will do for I am an excellent hand at imitation."

"Yes, Miss Nora, I have here an old envelope that Frank addressed to me a few weeks ago. If it will be of any service to you take it, and welcome."

Of course I take possession of it and warn him not to venture near the hammock this evening. And as he promises there is a wonderful quizzical look in his deep blue eyes. But I pay no attention to that and proceed with my directions:

"Be sure and be round at Weston's, Jack, precisely at seven, and I am quite certain Clare'll go with you. Vane said he would be there about that time but I'll try and prevent him—sprain my ankle and require him to take me home or something else."

"Why Nora, you are a regular schemer! Who would have thought those hazel orbs of yours could hide such revenge as this? 'Tis passion strange, indeed."

Being averse to flattery of any kind I bid my companion good-bye, and proceed towards home. On my arrival there I spend as little time as possible over the evening meal, and then engage in a little writing, which, if my readers could have seen, they would not be surprised that I had spent nearly an hour over it. Or perhaps, if they had seen me sitting by my table with the crumpled envelope spread out in view, they would have understood it all. In less than two hours from the time of leaving the hammock I am again by its side, but expecting the arrival of Mr. Vane every minute, I conceal myself a little way from it. Then as I have nothing I can do I soliloquize on the probable success of my plan:

No doubt all will turn out right if I can manage Mr. Vane; possibly he may prove refractory, but then I shall bear in mind that old saying, which I am sure you have heard from your earliest day, namely—"Nothing venture, nothing have." At all events I worked hard enough getting that note

written. Vane's handwriting is not at all common. Let me see; think I'll read it over, lucky I kept a copy:

DEAR MISS WESTON:—Shall not be alone to-night, business having unavoidably called me away. In order that you should not be debarred from the pleasure, I have requested J. Lyle to call for you. Accompany him and enjoy yourself. Yours, &c., F. VANE.

"I know it is real mean to do that, but I suppose all is fair in 'love and war.' I do wonder what she thinks of the note. She must have it by this time." My meditation is cut short by the appearance of the Honorable Frank Vane, who is walking majestically along, as if he had all the country under his control, or at least as if he felt like an Edgar of Ravenswood. He grasps a branch of the nearest tree and gracefully lifts himself into the hammock. My heart almost stops beating at this period—but a crack and a thud recalls me to realities. I slip from my place of concealment, and gain his side in a second, looking as sober as a bishop—though ready to die for laughter.

"Are you much hurt, Mr. Vane?"

"Not at all—thanks—slightly, I do believe, Miss Sparks. I'll be over it directly," he manages to stammer.

I bring him some water in his new silk hat ere he has time to prevent me, and he looks somewhat relieved when he sees that it is not entirely soiled.

"I declare, Miss Sparks, I feel dreadfully stiff; I have an engagement with Miss Weston to-night, or I believe I'd go home."

"Give it up by all means, Mr. Vane. You are not at all able to go, and I, as your physician, forbid it."

"Does it not strike you as peculiar, Miss Sparks, that that rope should have broken loose?"

"Not at all. See, here is the thick rope; it has not been properly fastened to the tree (I had while examining it dexterously loosened the cord and slipped in my pocket).

"Many thanks, for your kindness, I must now, indeed, leave you."

"Then Mr. Vane, I'm to understand that you ignore my commands. So be it, I'm going your way."

We walk along very slowly, for I must hinder him at least half an hour longer or the game is lost. When we are about half way across a boggy strip of land I slip to the ground and Vane exclaims:

"Why, how thoughtless of me! I should have offered you my arm—Have you hurt yourself?"

"I—I—think, Mr. Vane, I've sprained my ankle but as you are in haste, I won't trouble you to remain."

"Have you, then, such a detestable opinion of me as that. Think you I would leave a lady unable to walk in such a place as this? Let me carry you."

As he says this I burst out laughing, for I am not very light (260 lbs). Sobering down, however, in an instant I tell him how impossible such a procedure would be, for I can't bear the least movement of the injured member.

"But I'll be very careful."

"O, dear, no, Mr. Vane, I'll be able to go by-and-by. I would not for worlds detain you. Go! I will follow presently."

My companion seats himself on the grass beside me and opens a volume of Spencer and says:

"Shall I read to you?"

"Thank you, yes," I reply, and for fully three-quarters of an hour his deep, mellow tones break the stillness of the air. At the expiration of that time he closes the book and asks me if I am able to proceed; of course I signify my ability, and in a short time we reach my own door, where, after

bidding Mr. Vane adieu, I remain, waiting to hear the result of my afternoon's work. It is long in forth-coming, for the very next day Jack Lyle drops in with the nattiest hat on I had seen in some time, and exclaims:

"I've won the wager, thanks to your ingenuity, Nora."

An additional inducement to new subscribers, is that each one, even at the reduced Club Rates, will get our Niagara Falls Chromo, 22 x 28 in. See page 121.

## SKINNY MEN.

"Wells' Health Renewer" restores health and vigor, cures Dyspepsia, Impotence, Sexual Debility. \$1.

A little fellow asked his mother if silks grew. He had probably heard of the gros grain silk.—*Philadelphia Bulletin*.

DR. R. V. PIERCE, Buffalo, N. Y.: Dear Sir—I have advised many ladies to try your "Favorite Prescription" and never saw it fail to do more than you advertise. Yours truly, Mrs. A. M. Rankin, 141 Bates St., Indianapolis, Ind.

A Kentucky editor is in a dilemma. It is not how to dispose of his edition, but whether the profits on the sale of his old exchanges will pay for the next issue.

Mrs. A. NELSON, Brantford, writes: "I was a sufferer from Chronic Dyspepsia for eleven years. Always after eating, an intense burning sensation in the stomach, at times very distressing, causing a drooping and languid feeling, which would last for several hours after eating. I was recommended by Mr. Popplewell, Chemist, of our city, to try Dr. Norrop & Lyman's Vegetable Discovery and Dyspeptic Cure, and I am thankful to say that I have not been better for years; that burning sensation and languid feeling has all gone, and food does not lie heavy on my stomach. Others of my family have used it with best results."

Why ought wicket people to go carriage driving often? Because it freudemonishes them to keep to the right.—*Philadelphia Item*.

JOHN HAYS, Credit P. O., says: "His shoulder was so lame for nine months that he could not raise his hand to his head, but by the use of Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil the pain and lameness disappeared, and although three months has elapsed, he has not had an attack of it since."

Four brothers named Burnett recently married four sisters named Berry. This happened in Tennessee, where the berry crop is usually choice and plentiful.

## A WELL "CURED" EDITOR.

At No. 80 King Street East, Toronto, Ont., are the editorial rooms of the *Sunday School Manual*, edited by Mr. Withrow, of 240 Jarvis street, in the same city. Conversing recently with several gentlemen, one of them the representative of the largest advertisers in the world, Mr. Withrow remarked: "As to advertising, I consider St. Jacobs Oil the best advertised article by far. It is a splendid remedy too. Besides the many cases of rheumatism it has cured right amongst us, it has rendered me most efficient service in curing a severe soreness of the chest and an obstinate headache. It does its work satisfactorily."