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GREAT AUK'S EGG?

By Margaret Manning.

Professor Ferdinand Brinckhofen wandered into the kitchen of his summer bungalow, on the Maine shore. His wife was washing the dinner dishes.

"Ellen, my dear," he said, "Doctor Cavendish, of the Natural History museum, will be here this afternoon. Can you get up a meal for him? He has to start back to-morrow morning."

"I suppose so, Ferdinand," answered his wife, a little tartly. "You know, of course, that we haven't much in the house to offer a guest. However, I'll do my best, and if he will be satisfied with it he's welcome. Why is he coming all this distance just to spend the night with us?"

Professor Brinckhofen put his arm round his wife's waist and kissed her.

"I know you're busy, Ellen," he said. "Next summer we'll get a maid." And he wandered out, while his wife went on washing. She dried the last plate and set it aside.

"I wonder just why Doctor Cavendish is coming here for one night," she said to herself.

Professor Brinckhofen engaged a rowboat and pulled round to the railroad terminal, where he arrived just in time to greet Doctor Cavendish as his visitor stepped out of his car.

"Well, what did you think of my letter?" he asked, after the customary greetings had been interchanged.

Doctor Cavendish took his friend by the arm. "My dear old enthusiast," he answered, "to be frank with you, I am sceptical—wholly sceptical. It sounds too good to be true."

"If you had told me that you had discovered a buried Indian village or a dozen asteroids I would have accepted your word without question. But a great auk's egg—no, my friend. You have probably mistaken the egg of a crested grebe or tufted puffin for that of the auk."

"But the great auk did range as far south as Maine in the last century," cried the professor.

"And the last specimen was shot in 1844."

"No Cavendish, in 1912, I tell you, it was an auk. I shot the brooding bird, but it fell into the water and drifted out to sea before I could get a boat. But the egg—it was an auk's egg, and it was warm. I took it home and I'm incubating it."

"What does Mrs. Brinckhofen think of it?"

"She doesn't know anything about it, of course. I don't believe in telling my wife a professional secret. And the joke of it is—she nudged Cavendish in the ribs—"it's incubating with a clutch of eggs that she set out last week under one of our hens. It couldn't be safer anywhere."

"Show me!" said Cavendish sceptically, and they entered the rowboat and a few minutes later, rounded the point of land behind which the Brinckhofen had their bungalow.

"There was where I shot her," said the professor, pointing to the high, towering cliff. "I didn't mean to, either, but I was so excited that I couldn't bear to think of her getting away. Now, before we do anything else we'll go straight to the clutch."

They climbed the hill and entered the little garden of the bungalow. In one corner was the hen house and



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in the centre, seated upon a clutch of eggs surrounded with straw, was a grey hen, which looked at them with malignant eyes and half opened her beak as though to protect her treasure.

"Shoot!" said Professor Brinckhofen, and the hen slowly rose and retired a few paces, where it crouched with flapping wings and an irate expression. Professor Brinckhofen plunged his hand into the clutch and drew out the precious egg. It was a little larger than that of a goose.

"Good heavens, Brinckhofen, it is!" It is!" yelled Doctor Cavendish, and, carefully replacing it, he seized his friend round the waist, and the two greybeards executed a dance.

Mrs. Brinckhofen watched them out of the kitchen window.

"I suppose that is Doctor Cavendish," she said pityingly. "I wonder why they are dancing in the hen house."

She sat down and meditated upon the subject until the men came in. Then she welcomed Dr. Cavendish with smiles.

"Come Cavendish, I want to show you my laboratory," said Brinckhofen, dragging his friend away as soon as he decently could. They went into the professor's little bare room and began discussing the great discovery.

"Of course, it goes to the museum, Brinckhofen," said Cavendish. "It will be worth a thousand dollars to you."

"A thousand dollars!" exclaimed the professor. "You are joking Cavendish. Why, the egg alone would bring that at auction."

"Yes, yes, I'm speaking about the egg," said Doctor Cavendish irritably. "What are you speaking about?"

"Why, the auk, of course. Don't you know that I put it there so that it would hatch? Why, we will have a real live bird, Cavendish. I shall sell it to the Zoological Society, and I'll patch up the egg after it has hatched out, and I'll let you have that for a thousand. And the bird will lay more eggs, and I'll get a thousand apiece for those, too, and—"

"I say," interposed Cavendish, "remember, it isn't hatched yet. If I were you I would tell Mrs. Brinckhofen about it."

"Tell Mrs. Brinckhofen! Why she'd tell the neighbors and they'd steal it or do something to it! Never trust a woman. No, it is safest just where it is."

They argued with some lack of equanimity until dinner time, when Mrs. Brinckhofen ejected them into the dining-room.

"Hum! I'm hungry as a bear," said Doctor Cavendish, pulling his napkin across his knees. "What have we here? Scrambled eggs? Fine!"

"I don't know whether you like scrambled goose eggs," said Mrs. Brinckhofen. "They say they're very nice. I found one under our biddy—it must have been laid by one of Mr. Giles' geese, for it wasn't there last time I looked. So I thought that as we hadn't many eggs I'd try what it tasted like."

"Woman!" gasped the professor, springing to his feet, "do you mean to say you—scrambled that egg?"

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Brinckhofen sweetly.

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Soldier Son of English Clergyman Tells of Experiences During Siege of the Belgian Port

M. R. Guy Henry Martin Thompson, youngest son of the Rev. W. R. Thompson, of Houghton, Ellesmere-road, Shrewsbury, tells a thrilling story of the days and nights he spent in the trenches with the Naval Brigade on the eve of the fall of Antwerp. He says:

Having reached Antwerp, we were ordered at once into the trenches, and remained standing there till morning, waiting for the first German to appear. We were not attacked until the following night. During the daytime we all worked hard, putting a roof to our trench.

Germans Sighted.

At five o'clock we were informed by telephone that a German patrol had been sighted in the vicinity, and at nine o'clock heavy rifle fire was heard on our left. Shortly afterwards we were attacked. I cannot say that I experienced the least discomfort under fire, though several bullets whizzed unpleasantly close, a piece of shrapnel shell piercing the trench wall 6 ft. thick, knocking my cap from my head, a cigarette from between my lips, and entering the other wall of the trench, from whence I dug it out.

That night the only signs we had of the Germans were the flashes from their rifles.

Must Have Lost Heavily.

The Germans must have lost heavily, though they attacked again and again, but were finally compelled to retreat, being also shelled by the forts.

The next day a German aeroplane flew over our heads. The Belgians opened fire, but the machine was too high. Shortly afterwards the German artillery got our range, and shells came pretty thick, the enemy again advancing in strong force.

We remained in the trenches on Thursday evening till seven o'clock, the forts having been put out of action. When we retreated we seemed to be surrounded by Germans, the rifle fire sweeping in on all sides like a rain of death. We managed to gain a road beyond the line of fire.

Nearly Wiped Out.

Again we were nearly wiped out, for we were led within 200 yards of the German trenches by two spies dressed in Belgian uniforms. However, we got clear away, and reached Antwerp by a circular route.

Words cannot describe the terrible scenes which met our eyes as we marched with our ammunition through the streets, which were lit up as bright as day by the American petrol tanks which had been set on fire by the Belgians.

As we passed the station, which was a blazing heap of ruins, we remembered that our kit-bags had been left there. After three days in the trenches, without any sleep, we marched thirty-seven miles to St. Nicholas, where we were able to get a train for Ostend.

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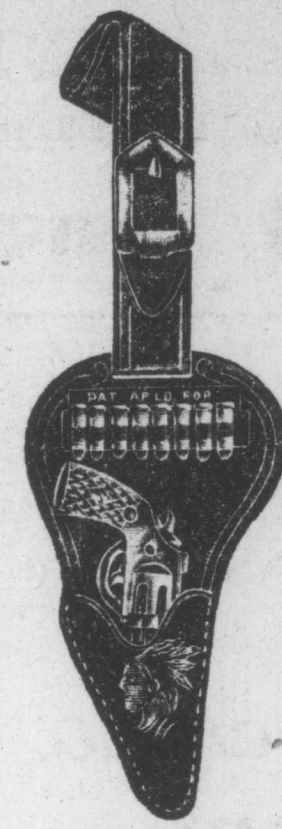
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(SGD.) MOSES BURTON.

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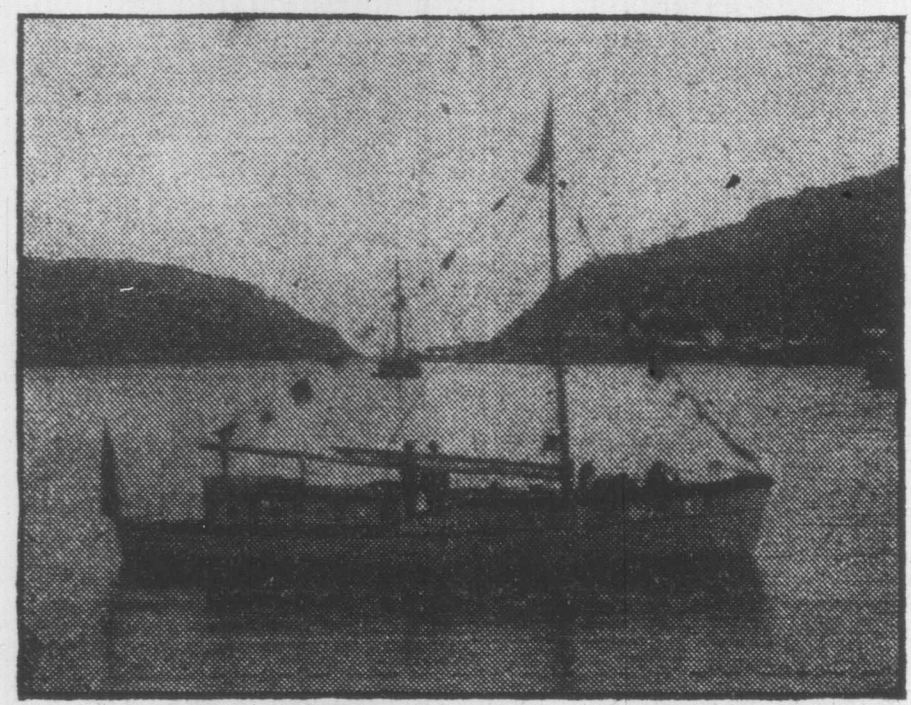
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