

The IDYL of TWIN FIRES

WALTER PRICHARD EATON

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SYNOPSIS.

I grew tired of my work as a college instructor and buy a New England farm on which I might be able to make a career out of it. I found a carpenter and a farmer, Harold Elder, the carpenter, estimates the repairs and changes necessary on the house. Mike comes along, a young fellow, who is the son of the farmer. I like him very much. I surprise him when he is in the house and I find out that he is a carpenter. I surprise him when he is in the house and I find out that he is a carpenter. I surprise him when he is in the house and I find out that he is a carpenter.

Here's a question for young folks who are keeping company: If a fellow—who is susceptible to the influences of moonlight, soft music, the smell of lilacs, the sly squeeze of a girl's hand in the dark, the perfume of her hair, the curve of her throat—should up and kiss her, even against his own better judgment as a bachelor, is it a sure sign that he is in love and ready for the parson, the ring and the license? You'll enjoy the little scene by the pool which is described in this installment.

CHAPTER XI.—Continued.

John and Stella have been up to see the pool for the last time before she leaves. They are walking hand in hand through the woods. They halt to wait for the thrush to sing.

And then, as we waited, our eyes meeting, suddenly he sang, far off across the tamarisks, one perfect call, and silence again. Her face was a glimmering radiance in the dusk. Her hand was warm in mine. Slowly my face sank toward hers, and our lips met—met for an instant when we were not masters of ourselves, when the bird sang and the whispering pines wrought their pagan spell upon us.

Another instant, and she stood away from me, one hand over her mouth, one hand on her panting breast, and fright in her eyes. Then, as suddenly, she laughed. It was hardly a nervous laugh. It welled up with the familiar surge from her throat.

"John Upton," she said, "you are a bad man. That wasn't what the thrush said at all."

"I misunderstood," said I, recovering more slowly, and astounded by her mood.

"I'll not reproach you, since I, a philologist, misunderstood for a second myself," she responded. "Hark!"

There was a sudden sound of steps and crackling twigs in the grove behind us, and Buster emerged up the path, but on our scent. He made a dab with his tongue at my hand, and then fell upon Miss Goodwin. She sank to her knees and began to caress him, very quickly, so that I could not see her face.

"Stella," said I, "Buster has made a friend of you. That's always a great compliment from a dog."

She kept her face buried in his neck.



Har Eyes Looked Frankly into Mine.

An instant longer, and then her eyes lifted to mine. "Yes—John," she said, "and now I must go home to pack my trunk."

"Let me drive you to the station in the morning," said I, as we emerged from the grove, in this sudden strange, calm intimacy, when no word had been spoken, and I, at least, was quite in the dark as to her feelings.

She shook her head. "No, I go too early for you. You—wouldn't try to see me."

For just a second her voice wavered.

She stopped for a last look at Twin Fires. "Nice music, nice moon, nice a little smile, 'nice rose trellis.' Then we walked up the road, and at Bert's door she put out her hand.

"Good-by," she said.

Her eyes looked frankly into mine. There was nothing there but smiling friendship. The fingers did not tremble in my grasp.

"I shall write," she said, controlling my voice with difficulty, "and send you pictures of the garden."

"Yes, do," I said.

She was gone. I walked slowly back to my dwelling, but kept my eyes fixed on the road. I had kept it!

What did it mean? Had I been strong? No. Had she made me keep it? Who could say? All had been so sudden—the kiss, her springing away, her hand, her smiling departure. But she had not reproached me, she had not been righteously angry, nor, still less, absurd. She had thought it, perhaps, but the mood of the place and hour, and the moonlight, that was true, and the moonlight, that was true, and the moonlight, that was true.

Yet how strangely I had kept it! What did it mean? Had I been strong? No. Had she made me keep it? Who could say? All had been so sudden—the kiss, her springing away, her hand, her smiling departure. But she had not reproached me, she had not been righteously angry, nor, still less, absurd. She had thought it, perhaps, but the mood of the place and hour, and the moonlight, that was true, and the moonlight, that was true, and the moonlight, that was true.

Yes, I had kept my resolution—and felt like a fool, a happy, hopeless fool!

CHAPTER XII.

I Go to New York.

I shall not here recount the events on the farm during the weeks which followed Miss Stella's departure. They did not particularly interest me. My whole psychological make-up had been violently shaken, the centers of attention had been shifted, and I was constantly strange to myself.

Which did not matter. The post office appealed to me more than the peas, and I labored harder over my photographs of the sundial beds than over the beds themselves. I got a red filter and a wide-angle lens, spending hours in experiment and covering a plank in front of the south door with printing frames.

I had written to her the day after she had left, but no reply came for a week, and then only a brief little note, telling me it was hot in town and conveying her regards to the roses. I, too, waited a week—though it was hard—and then answered, sending some photographs, one of them a snapshot of a bird on the edge of the bath, one of them of Buster sitting on his hind legs. Again she answered briefly, merely conveying her especial regards to Buster, but ending with a plaintive little postscript about the heat.

A few days later a box came addressed to Buster in my care. I opened it in Buster's presence, indeed literally beneath his nose. On top was a small package, tied with blue ribbon, and labeled "For Buster." It proved to be a dog biscuit, which the recipient at once took to the kennel and began upon. Beneath this was a note, which I opened with eager fingers.

It began:

Darling Buster: Your wagging epistle received and contents noted. The limits of the canine intelligence are probably responsible for your mistake in assigning the term lumen to what you observe in Master John, when it is really lack of occupation. You see, dear Buster, he has got Twin Fires so far under way that he doesn't work as at all the time, so I ought to be at his writing of stories, made up of his own words, and I am defining or inventing for him down here in a very hot, dirty, dusty, smelly town. Tell him mine all the trouble. He has a reaction from his first farming enthusiasm, and doesn't realize that the thing to do is to go to work on the new line, his line. For it is his line, you know, Buster.

Underneath this you'll find something to give him, with my best wishes for sunshine on the dear garden. I'd like you, Buster, only dogs are terribly gormy.

STELLA.

P. S.—That is a nice pool, isn't it?

I sat on the floor with the letter in my lap, smiling happily over it. Then I took the last package out of the box. It was heavy, evidently metal. Removing the papers, I held in my hand an old bronze sundial plate, a round one to fit my column, and upon it, freshly engraved, the ancient motto: HORAS NON NUMERO NISI SERENAS.

My first thought was of its cost. She couldn't afford it, the silly, generous girl! She'd bought it, doubtless, at one of those expensive New York antique shops, and then taken it to an engraver, for further expense. I ought not to accept it. Yet how could I refuse? I couldn't. I hugged it to my heart, and fairly ran to the dictating post. Buster at my heels. Yes, I had no longer any doubts. I wanted her. I should always want her. Twin Fires was incomplete. I was incomplete, life was incomplete, without her. At six I stopped work, amazed to find the plot of a story in my head. Heaven knows how it got there, but there it was, almost as full-blown as Minerva, when she sprang from the head of Jove, though considerably less

glacial. I even had the opening sentence all ready framed—to me always the most difficult part of story or essay, except the closing sentence. Nor did this tale appear to be one I had incubated in the past, and which now popped up above the "threshold" from my subconsciousness. It was a brand new plot, a perfect stranger to me. The phenomenon interested me almost as much as the plot. The tale grew even clearer as I took my bath, and haunted me during supper, so that I was perspiring in my robes to poor Mrs. Pillie and refused to admit Peter that evening with his geography.

"Tomorrow," said I, vaguely, going into my study and locking the door.

I worked that evening, got up at midnight to forage for a glass of milk and a fresh supply of oil for my lamp, and returned to my desk to work till four, when the sun astonished me. The

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"You Mean My Farm," I said.

story was done. Instead of going to bed, I went down in the roof of the young morning, when only the birds were astir, and took my bath in Stella's pool. Then I went to the dew-drenched pea vines and began to pick peas.

Here Mike found me, with nearly half a bushel gathered, when he appeared early to pick for market.

"It's the early bird gets the peas," said I.

"It is shurely," he laughed. "You might say you ain't a tillphouse call to get up—only these ain't tillphouses."

"Mike!" I cried, "a pun before breakfast!"

"Shure, I've had me breakfast," said he.

Which reminded me that I hadn't. I went in the house to get it, reading over and correcting my manuscript as I ate. After breakfast I put on respectable clothes, tucked the manuscript in my pocket, and mounted the seat of my farm wagon, beside Mike. Behind us were almost two bushels of peas and several bunches of tall, juicy, red rhubarb stalks from the old hills we found on the place. Mike had greatly enriched the soil, and grown the plants in barrels.

"Well, I'm a real farmer now," said I.

"Ye are, shurely," Mike replied. "Them's good peas, if they're planted late."

We drove past the golf links and the summer hotel, to the market, where I was already known. I found, and greeted by name as I entered.

"I'll buy anything you'll sell me," said the proprietor, "and I'll try to get it. Funny thing about this town, the way folks won't take the trouble to sell what they raise. Most of the big summer estates have their own gardens, of course, but there's nearly a hundred families that don't, and four boarding houses, and the hotels. Why, the hotels send to New York for vegetables—if you can beat that! Guess all the farmers with any gumption have gone to the cities."

"Well," said I, "I'm not farming for my health, which has always been good. I've got more than a bushel of peas out there."

"Peas?" cried the market man. "Why, I have more demands for peas than I can fill. The folks who could sell me peas won't plant 'em 'cause it's too much trouble to expense to provide the brush. I'll give you eight cents a quart for peas today."

"This is too easy," I whispered to Mike, as we went out to get the baskets.

I sold my rhubarb, also, and came away with a little book in which there was entered to my credit \$4.16 for peas and \$1.06 for rhubarb. I put the book proudly in my pocket, for it represented my first earnings from the farm, and, mounting the farm wagon again, told Mike to drive me to the hotel.

As we pulled up before the veranda, the line of old ladies in rockers focused their eyes upon us.

"Shure!" whispered Mike, "they look like they was hung out to dry!"

I went up the steps and into the office, where the hotel proprietor suavely greeted me, asked after my health, and inquired how my "estate" was getting on.

"You mean my farm," said I.

With some new money in his pockets and prospects bright, it looks like our young friend is about ready to go about that way."

TO BE CONTINUED.

Chicago—Judge K. M. Landis, in the federal court, overruled the petition filed by Otto Cullman, asking that the Chicago Telephone Co. be restrained from paying \$2,532,000 for the automatic telephone system of the Chicago Tunnel Co.

A Tip. There was a very ill thing made better by modeling—Robert Louis Stevenson.

A Distinction. A woman frequently knows what she wants, but cannot make up her mind what it is.—Judge.

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Washington—Arguments were made before the federal reserve board by representatives of banks in southeastern Wisconsin and the northern peninsula of Michigan, supporting their petition for transfer from the Minneapolis to the Chicago federal reserve district. About 100 banks are involved.

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London—Trench rats, the abolition of Tommies, sometimes prove valuable when the Germans are shooting poison gases at the allied trenches, a soldier on furlough said. The rats become uneasy and can be relied on to warn of the approaching gas.

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