

THE ALBERT STAR.

Vol. I.

HILLSBOROUGH, N. B., WEDNESDAY, AUG. 1, 1894.

No. 12

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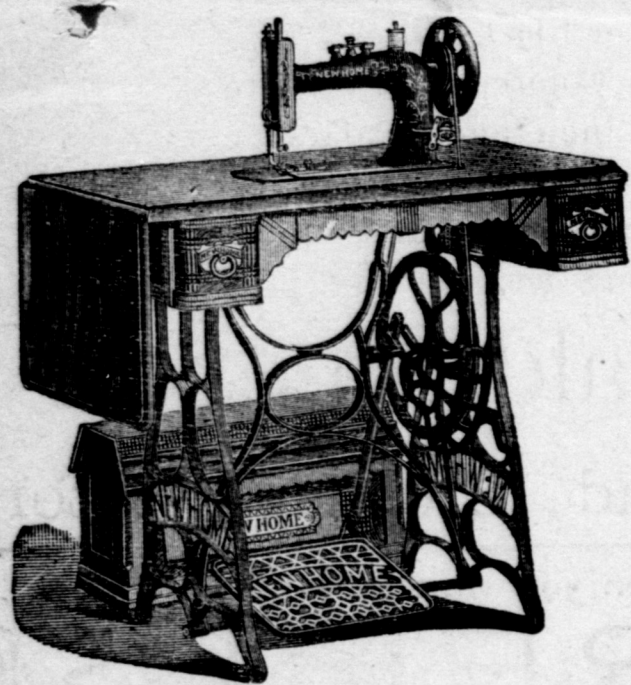
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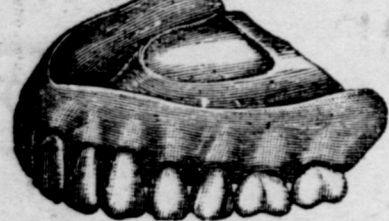
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Albert, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, of each month,
Hillsboro, 13th, 14th, of each month.

THE ALBERT STAR.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 1.

Because the Rose Must Fade.

Because the rose must fade,
Shall I not love the rose?
Because the summer shade
Passes winter blows,
Shall I not rest me there
In the cool air?
Because the sunset sky
Makes music in my soul,
Only to fall and die,
Shall I not take the whole
Of beauty that it gives
While yet it lives?
Because the sweet of youth
Doth vanish all too soon,
Shall I forget, forsooth,
To learn the lingering tune—
My joy to memorize
In those young eyes?
If, like the summer flower
That blooms a fragrant death—
Keen music hath no power
To live beyond its breath,
Then of this food of song,
Let me drink long!
Ah, yes, because the rose
Fades, and the sunset skies
Darken, and winter blows
All bare, and music dies—
Therefore, now is to me
Eternity!

A Ghastly Predicament.

—BY—
N. Norris.

Colonel Byng had been for so many years a widower that he was to all intents and purposes a bachelor. At any rate he both lived and looked like one, dwelling in snug chambers near St. James' street, mixing freely in congenial society, and presenting an aspect of juvenility which might have passed for what it resembled, but for the unfortunate and undeniable fact that he possessed a full-grown son of four or five and twenty. Ned Byng, to be sure, was not thrust forward too conspicuously in the circles which the colonel adorned. It so happened that they had not the same tastes, or the same friends; it suited them best to live independently of one another, and just as certain ladies will keep their daughters in the school-room until concealment is no longer possible, so this sprightly and evergreen chubbier preferred to ignore as far as might be the existence of an industrious young barrister who bore his name, and with whom, for the rest, he was upon excellent terms.

But it is notoriously difficult to keep upon good terms with a man who asks you for money; and Colonel Byng was as much pained as he was surprised when his son visited him one morning, for the purpose of making that wholly inadmissible demand. Such a thing had never occurred before; the colonel hastened to point out, kindly but firmly, that it must never occur again.

"My dear Ned," said he, "you know what my circumstances are, I am very far from being a rich man, whereas you have the small fortune left to you by your mother, which should be amply sufficient to meet all your requirements so long as you remain unmarried. It has not hitherto been necessary for me to make you any allowance, and the very last thing that would tempt me to do so—even if I could afford it—would be such a statement as you have just made. Help you to marry your first love indeed! As if you weren't going to have half a dozen, or maybe a dozen, loves before you settle down! Besides I never heard of the girl. For anything that I know to the contrary she may be as ugly as sin, and as poor as Lazarus, and as vulgar as—well, as a great many of them are in these days."

The quiet-looking young man, with the soft brown eyes, reddened with suppressed indignation at the bare suggestion of such odious possibilities. To speak of Miss Blanche Atherton in the same breath with ugliness or vulgarity was, it appeared, an insult which nothing save complete ignorance could excuse. Nor, for the matter of that, was she poor, her mother being, on the contrary, very well off, indeed. Only Mrs. Atherton, as was not unusual, had demurred to the scheme of marrying her daughter to a suitor who had but a few hundreds a year of his own, and whose professional prospects were as yet somewhat vague. Consequently, it had struck the ingenious youth that his father might be willing to give a little temporary aid. In any case, he hoped that his father would call on Mrs. Atherton, who lived in Queen's Gate, and who had been prepared to receive Colonel Byng's visit.

"My dear fellow," the colonel rejoined, blandly, "I should be grieved to disappoint a lady; but at the same time I don't see what good my undertaking a pilgrimage to Queen's Gate would do to you or me or Mrs. Atherton, either. I can't oblige you by impoverishing myself; why the deuce should I call upon the woman?"

"Only because she will ask you to dinner if you do," the young man responded with demure gravity, "and because she has one of the best cooks in London. Also because she could allow Blanche a thousand a year, if she chose, without ever missing the money, and because she doesn't know quite all the people whom she would like to know. I think she might be willing to do a good deal for any one who, like yourself, could offer her introductions to Duchesses and Marchionesses and other grandees."

"That is a different matter," said the colonel, his features relaxing; "why didn't you put things in that sensible way at first? A woman who possesses a really good cook and who can give away a thousand a year without missing it has every claim upon my humble services. Of course, too, she ought, under the circumstances, to make suitable provision for her daughter. I'll call upon her this afternoon, and see what I can do for you."

What the colonel meant by this was that he would be the last man in the world to oppose an alliance between his son and an adequately gilded young lady; what, on the other hand, Mrs. Atherton had meant when she had refrained from promptly sending Mr. Edward Byng to the right-about was that a son-in-law with aristocratic connections would suit her well enough, but that she was not disposed to pay a heavier price than it was worth for that luxury. Consequently, there was but a poor chance that the high contracting parties would be able to do business, and of this five minutes' conversation sufficed to convince them both. The conversation, however, was a perfectly amicable and agreeable one. Colonel Byng was pleasantly surprised in Mrs. Atherton, whom he found to be a handsome, well-preserved woman of the world, with blonde hair which looked natural and manners which were quite evidently so.

"The long and the short of it is," she remarked, with a good-humored laugh, "that I don't intend to provide your son with an income, and that I don't see why I should. So the match is off. I am sorry for Ned and Blanche; but really it isn't my fault and I daresay it isn't yours. Is there any reason why we should not remain friends?"

"My dear lady, none whatsoever!" the colonel hastened to respond. "For my own part, I can only say that I feel extremely grateful to Ned for having been the means of introducing me to so charming an acquaintance, and, perhaps, if he makes his fortune at the Bar—as why shouldn't he—he may yet be permitted to renew proposals which of course he had no business to make now. But I quite agree with you that, in the meantime, the match must be off."

These two amiable and selfish persons thoroughly understood one another. Mrs. Atherton thought none the worse of Colonel Byng for declining to part with money which he naturally preferred to retain for his own use and behoof, while the colonel asked nothing better than to maintain friendly relations with a lady whose hospitality he was soon privileged to enjoy and who, as he reflected, must eventually bequeath her ample means to her only child. He did not mean to go to any personal expense in the matter; but he was very willing that Ned should be made happy and rich, and he foresaw that Mrs. Atherton would not remain obdurate forever. In the plenitude of his good nature he procured invitations for the widow and her daughter to the houses of certain relatives and friends of his where they might otherwise have found some difficulty in effecting an entrance and he assured his son that the situation called for nothing more than the exercise of a little ordinary patience.

Ned Byng, fortunately, was a very reasonable young man. He had great confidence in his father's acuteness and knowledge of the world; he had the best of reason for believing that Blanche though nominally free, would prove faithful; he thought himself lucky in that he was still allowed to visit at Queen's Gate as freely as of yore, and he saw with much satisfaction the rapidly ripening friendship between his elders.

But if Ned acquiesced contentedly enough in a situation which might easily have been worse, if he deemed it most fortunate that the gay colonel should have taken such a fancy to the Athertons as to dine with them once or twice a week and escort them to the theatre or the opera afterwards, and if upon the strength of these foundations he constructed sundry airy castles, there was somebody else who held different and less optimistic views. Blanche Atherton was little more than a child in years, and her experience had been of the slightest; yet because of her sex, she was in many respects older than her lover, and those innocent blue eyes of hers saw all manner of things which remained invisible to his masculine simplicity. She saw, for example, that her mother, had taken to assuming a certain smiling, self-conscious air when Colonel Byng entered the room; she saw also that the colonel was prone to seek occasions of conversing in an undertone with his hostess; and, as it was very difficult to take that elderly gentleman's measure, she guessed that his assiduous attentions were not prompted by wholly unselfish motives.

As a matter of fact, Mrs. Atherton, who was by no means too old to marry again, possessed a comfortable fortune, whereas the colonel was—or always said he was—dreadfully poor. It was, therefore, quite upon the cards that Miss Blanche might be about to receive a step-father, in lieu of a husband, and if that was what she was about to receive, she could not feel that there was any prospect of her being made truly thankful for the boon.

However, she did not confide her suspicions to Ned, knowing that he would only blurt them out clumsily, and very likely convert a probability into reality. All she did was to draw her mother's attention incidentally to the facts that the colonel dyed his hair and wore false teeth; and perhaps this was not very adroit of her.

"That is the sort of silly thing that girls of your age always think it clever to say about a man who is in the prime of life," Mrs. Atherton rejoined tartly. "I doubt very much whether Colonel Byng is more than a year or two older than I am; anybody can see that the color of his hair is natural, and I am certain that his teeth are as sound as my own."

"They waggle when he laughs, anyhow," Blanche declared obstinately. "Very well, my dear," said Mrs. Atherton, who was seldom out of temper for more than a minute at a time. "Keep your opinion and allow me keep mine. After all it makes no difference to me whether Colonel Byng is young or old."

But it makes a good deal of difference to her, and she had to confess as much when the time came for her to make another and more momentous confession. For the latter Blanche, as has been said, was not altogether unprepared; but Ned Byng was shocked to hear that his father contemplated a second matrimonial alliance, and honestly compelled him to say how supremely ridiculous he thought it of the old man. This was unfortunate, for the colonel did not like to be called either ridiculous or old, and what was even more unfortunate, was that Blanche, who had endeavored to speak dutifully upon the subject to her mother, felt under no sort of obligation to treat her step-father-elect with forbearance. On the contrary, she saw fit to display the feeling of contempt with which she regarded him in so unmistakable a manner that he soon conceived a hasty dislike for her, and resolved that she should be taught to behave herself better as soon as he should have obtained some semblance of legitimated authority over her.

Thus it came to pass that, although the wedding of Colonel Byng and Mrs. Atherton was appointed to take place on the approaching Tuesday in Whitsun week, no date was fixed for the marriage of their respective children—an arrangement which might very well have been brought about had their respective children exercised a little skillful diplomacy.

"My good fellow," the colonel said brusquely to his son, "you are kind enough to tell me that I make myself ridiculous by marrying a lady who is scarcely middle-aged, who is undeniably handsome and who has a matter of £100,000 of her own. I am unable to see why that is ridiculous; but I perfectly understand that you might render me so if you were to espouse her daughter simultaneously. Moreover, she isn't at all a nice girl; I have changed my opinion, about her. Therefore, if you think that her and I are going to deprive ourselves of a part of our income for the sake of making a match of which we both disapprove, I must tell you with regret that you are falling into a very great error."

These very ungenerous sentiments, echoed by Mrs. Atherton, who had fallen completely under the sway of her mature adorer, and who frankly confessed to Blanche that she did not see her way to disobey him. "Of course," she remarked, "my money is my own to do what I like with; but I must be guided to some extent by his wishes, and after all, dear, you might do a great deal better for yourself than you would by marrying a struggling barrister. Ned is all very well in his way, but he doesn't care about going into society, and he isn't half as distinguished as his father in any respect."

"I have never yet been able to discover in what his father's distinction consists," observed Blanche, rather impudently; "you can't walk down Piccadilly without meeting a dozen padded and made-up old men, just like him."

"He is neither padded nor made-up nor old—and you are extremely impertinent, Blanche," returned Mrs. Atherton, with pardonable acerbity.

Well, there was no use in being impertinent, nor was there apparently any available cure for infatuation: Miss Atherton relieved her feelings from time to time by addressing cutting little speeches to the colonel; but that was scarcely the way to ingratiate herself with him, and she could not but acknowledge ruefully that he was master of the situation. The knowledge that he was so enabled him to keep his temper with this rude young woman. He could well afford to bide his time, and it was in a mood of easy serenity that he was dining at his club on Whit-Sunday evening, when one of those vexatious little mishaps occurred to him which play so disproportionately large a part in the histories of nations and individuals.

"Alas! it was only too true that Colonel Byng's beautiful teeth were not his own, save by right of purchase, and he ought never to have ordered hard biscuit with his cheese. It became necessary to leave the club precipitately, and, on reaching home he found, to his dismay, that something had gone very seriously wrong with the elaborate piece of mechanism which had worked so admirably for a number of years. Now this was really a grave matter. He was to be married in the presence of a large circle of friends on the next day but one; it was, therefore, absolutely essential that the requisite repairs should be executed within twenty-four hours—and the morrow was Whit Monday! Do dentists abstain from business on bank holidays? This was the question which presented itself again and again to the anxious colonel's mind during a night of broken rest, and he could only reply that it was extremely vulgar and plebeian of them if they did."

But perhaps dentists, like a good many other people, are willing to incur the stigma of vulgarity if, by doing so, they can obtain temporary release from the daily treadmill. At any rate poor Colonel Byng incurred disappointment after disappointment as he drove wildly through the deserted streets on that pitilessly sunny day, and never

before or since can the fussy interference of Sir John Lubbock have been anathematized with more heartfelt earnestness. Not only was the colonel's own particular dentist out of town, but never another dentist, equal or inferior to that unfeeling absentee, could be run to the earth. What in the world was to be done? To walk up toothless to the altar and mumble out inaudible responses from between a contiguous nose and chin was manifestly impossible; to postpone the ceremony would be almost equally so; the distracted bridegroom, with a court guide at his hand and shivers of apprehension running up his spine, could but persevere in what appeared to be a hopeless quest, and no words can express the relief with which he learnt, on reaching an address in South Kensington, that Mr. Wainwright, surgeon-dentist, had just come in.

The residence of Mr. Wainwright, surgeon-dentist, was situated on a fourth floor flat in one of these huge blocks of "mansions" which have been added of late years to the other architectural charms of London. At any other time the colonel might have been disposed to look askance at an operator who dwelt so far outside the recognized professional radius, but in his present strait he could not afford to be particular he bounded out of the lift into the consultation-room and stated his errand with agitated haste. "I've smashed my teeth. Here they are—just look at them. I want to have them mended at once, please—at once, mind! It's most important—indispensable, in fact, that I should be able to wear them to-morrow."

The jolly looking, red-bearded little man who was thus imperatively addressed opened the case which had been thrust into his hand, made a brief examination of its contents and whistled. "Hullo! hullo!" said he, "this is a bad job! Very sorry, Colonel, but the truth is that your teeth are past mending. Worn 'em too long I should say. Nothing for it but to make a new set."

"My name is Byng, and you can make me a set and be—and I'll thank you to do so," returned to Colonel irascibly. It isn't a question of money; charge what you like, so long as you undertake that the teeth shall be in my head to-morrow morning.

"Bless the man, you are in a hurry! And on Bank Holiday day, of all days in the year! Do you know the amount of labor that is involved in constructing an entire set of teeth?"

No, I do not; and I don't care. Is it or is it not impossible to execute this order? That's what I want to know.

"Well, I won't say it's impossible. Only I shall have to sit up all night to do it, you know, and—"

"Then, my dear sir, sit up all night. I have told you already that it isn't a question of money. Name your own terms."

Mr. Wainwright, a slow smile spreading itself over his rubicund countenance, named his terms, which were certainly somewhat startling. But necessity has no law, and the defrayal of this exorbitant price's bill would be a trifling sacrifice, as compared with the possible loss of a wealthy bride. Two minutes later the patient was reclining in the operating chair, with his feet off the ground and his head tilted back at an uncomfortable angle, while Mr. Wainwright, standing over him, was apparently peering down into the recesses of his inward economy.

"Open your jaws a bit wider," said the latter; "I'll just take a cast of your mouth as soon as I can get the composition ready. H'm—older man than I should have thought by the look of you. Don't fidget about that, or we shall never get on. I'll secure your arms, if you don't mind; they'll keep you quiet."

Colonel Byng minded very much indeed, and began to say that he did; but before the words were out of his lips a broad leather strap had been deftly passed round each of his arms and fastened behind the chair, so that if Mr. Wainwright had wished to cut his throat, no effectual resistance could have been offered to that method of treatment.

"Now, now! don't excite yourself," the dentist said soothingly, in reply to the angry expostulations of his patient. "I saw you were excitable, and that's why I trussed you up; it's a thing I often have to do. Can't do my work satisfactorily with people who wiggle and jump—makes me quite jumpy myself to look at them. Specially in hot weather, like this. Thirsty weather, ain't it, Colonel? I'm going into the next room for half a second to have a dr—hm!—to see whether that composition stuff is ready yet. Just say a hymn to yourself, or something of that kind, to calm your nerves while I'm away. With you presently."

There could no longer be any doubt about it; this wretched man had already been keeping Bank holiday and his offensive familiarity was only too easily to be accounted for. The colonel's first impulse was to use powerful language; his second, and wiser one was to hold his peace. To be the mercy of a drunkard is not pleasant; but to be at the mercy of an exasperated drunkard is considerably less so. The victim, therefore, decided to postpone retaliating steps until he should be in a position of greater freedom and less responsibility, hoping meanwhile for the best.

Presently Mr. Wainwright reappeared. He advanced with laboriously steady steps and brought an unmistakable smell of brandy into the room with him, but he could not be called (Continued on Fourth Page.)

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