

Romance of a Reading Room.

A curious friendship sprang up between two frequenters of the reading room at Cooper Union a year or two ago. Both were in the habit of spending the better part of every evening there, and both had developed a preference for a particular table. At first it was the location, of that table alone which attracted them, but in course of time they became accustomed to each other's company, and although perfect strangers, they felt acquainted, and as though they met by appointment.

One was a stout old Englishman, with a florid, stern face—one of those surly faces that usually go together with an honest and kindly heart. He was a well read mechanic and a bachelor, and having, or

tive one and finally with a bland good evening.

One night as they sat reading, the Dane handed the Englishman a note which read as follows:

'Dear Sir: My heart is full tonight, and I wish to speak to some good man. Will you be my listener? I like you without knowing who you are; but so much the better. Would you mind having a cup of coffee with me?'

'With pleasure,' was the Englishman's written reply.

Some five minutes later they were seated at a marble table in one of the Vienna cafes on Second avenue.

The Dane spoke English with perfect fluency, and although his pronunciation was labored and often incorrect, his grammar was irrefragable.

'I beg of you, don't set me down for a crank,' he began. 'I am tired of being called that.'

'Whether you are one or not, I'm not

week or a month, after which there is nothing but 'smoke, smoke,' as the hero of one of Turgeneff's novels puts it. Are you fond of Turgeneff? But excuse my impetuous questions. Well, I had made up my mind to be a bachelor. You wish to know why? Because I was the most forlorn fool in creation. In the first place, I had taken it into my head that I had been born to fill the universe with a new sort of sunshine—with the dazzling rays of my poetry. Accordingly, for me to marry and be bothered with a wife and children and the sordid details of family life would be a crime against the interests of humanity, don't you know. In the second place, I should get tired of my wife before the honeymoon was half over, and marriage would be eternal torture. I drew my conclusions—do you know from what? From the brevity of my former passion. 'I was an idiot; the greatest on earth.'

'No you weren't,' the Englishman interrupted him.

like anything I had ever experienced before. It is still there (he pointed to his heart) and will be there to make life hell to me as long as I exist.

'I abandoned a thousand things that I held dear and came over here in search of her—in a quixotic search for her. Was it not foolish, seeing that I knew not even in what city she had settled? And yet—and here I come to the most appalling part of it—I did meet her in this city, and at the same time I did not; but I hope to come across her again, although I may be chasing a golden sunset. But be it as it may I neither have the courage to give it up and to return to my home, nor do I enjoy a single hour's rest in this city.'

'I had searched high and low for her in New York and in Chicago, where the Swedish colony is much larger, but all in vain. I had abandoned all hope and was nerving myself up to leave this country and to try to forget the whole episode as a romantic tale, which could never become

the window. But she did not hear me—at least, she did not seem to.

I rushed out of the train at the very next station and idiotically boarded an uptown one, and—and I have been a wretch ever since.

'I have spent many whole days and many dollars riding up and down the same road in the hope of meeting her once more but in vain, in vain.'

The Englishman was deeply touched, although he tried not to show it. He came away with the Swedish girl's full name in his memorandum book and with a secret determination to do what he could for his eccentric friend. He thought the Dane had not conducted his search in a practical manner, and he decided in his mind to see if he could be more successful.

The idea of discovering the young woman and presenting her to his lover's friend took a firm grip upon the misanthropic bachelor's mind, and little by little became the great ambition of his lonely days. He had a little independence of two or three thousand dollars, and half of it he set aside for advertisements and other expenses which the pursuit of his all-absorbing object might involve. Having learned from the Dane that his beloved had taught French and embroidery he framed his advertisements, in the 'want' columns of English and German dailies, accordingly, in addition to having 'personal' notices inserted in the various Scandinavian weeklies of this country.

A month passed, another and a third. Every evening his landlady would hand him a pile of letters. They bore all sorts of signatures and plenty of Swedish names in their number, but the one name which had become his idea fixe was not there.

The two friends met at the library as usual and frequently took supper together. Their intimacy grew apace, through the Englishman listened more than he talked.

'You aren't a crank at all,' he once assured the Dane. 'You're queer a little bit, that's about all. If you met your good lady and got married you might settle down.'

'Ah, dear fellow,' sighed the other, without the remotest suspicion of what the Englishman was doing for him.

One evening, as the mechanic sat rummaging through his bulky mail, he suddenly leaped to his feet. 'Good! I've got her,' he exclaimed so loud that his landlady heard him through the door of his room and whispered to her husband that their boarder was getting crankier every day.

He at once dispatched a letter to the Swedish young lady and next evening he called to see her.

When she heard the Dane's name she dropped her gaze.

'What is he doing in America?' she then inquired.

'He has come for you.'

'For me?' she said, with a disconsolate shake of her head.

'Yes; for you. Why are you married?'

The blunt Englishman demanded, his heart sinking within him.

She shook her head more sadly than before.

'Very well then,' her interlocutor fairly shouted. 'Do you still love him? Will you marry him? He will die if you don't.'

'How do you know?' She burst into tears and then pursued sobbingly. 'Is it really true, sir? Are you sure of what you say? Why did he not come himself? Where is he?'

'He is safe and sound; but look here, my friend, it is two weeks to Christmas—will you have patience to wait that long? Then I shall give the two of you the nicest dinner I ever ate. But promise me that you'll keep quiet and let me see you every once and awhile.'

'But where is he?'

'No questions till Christmas or you won't see him at all.'

When he met the Dane at the library that evening he thrust a note into his hand.

'Would you mind having Christmas dinner with me? Accept no other invitations.'

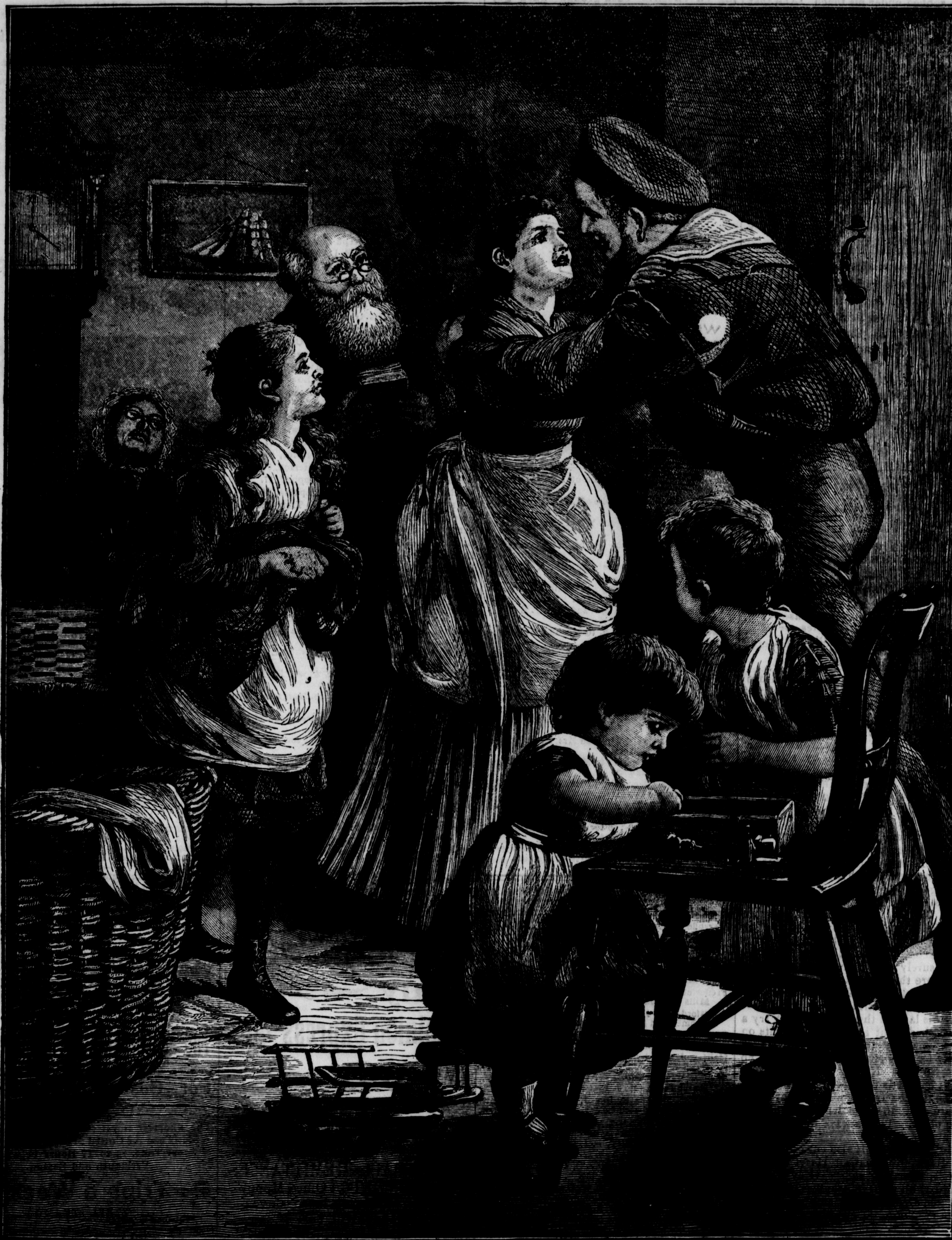
At last the long awaited day arrived and the Englishman with a fast-beating heart received his Danish friend in his little bedroom.

'We shall have dinner with my landlady today,' he said to him, 'but first, I want you to accept a Christmas present which I have prepared for you as a token of our friendship. Come, it is in the parlor.'

With this he opened the door and ushered his perplexed visitor into the presence for which his heart had been pining and yearning without cessation.

The two were married the same week and immediately left for Copenhagen, where, judging from the long epistles which the Englishman receives from both, they live happily.

As to our British friend he still persists in inveighing against married life, but when he sits reading the endless rhapsodies on matrimonial felicity in his Danish letters, his crusty face becomes overpread with radiance and he seems to feel as if the writers of the effusive missives were his beloved children.—New York Advertiser.



A HAPPY HOME-COMING.

pretending to have an aversion to women and children, he passed his leisure hours either in the seclusion of his little hall bedroom or at Cooper Institute. The other was a dry-faced, beardless Dane, of forty, with blue eyes of pellucid clearness, and long waxen locks, which adhered close to his head and neck. It was the childish and yet penetrating look of those crystalline eyes of his which first cast a spell over the gruff-looking Englishman. He could not help glancing at them again and again, and as he tried to read his book or magazine he seemed to feel their soft, appealing gaze upon himself. At one moment he was on the verge of a quarrel, but no sooner had he met the Dane's eye than instead of resentment he felt like asking if he could not be of service to him.

As to the Scandinavian, the crusty look of his neighbor, far from repelling, had a sort of peculiar glamor for him. And so the two passed two or three hours at the same table, six nights in the week until they came to greet each other, at first with a slight nod, then with a more demonstra-

going to call you names, sir,' grumbled the Englishman.

'All right, then. This is my day of misery. Just a year ago Fate dealt me a blow—or rather, played me a trick—under which I have been squirming and writhing ever since. To-day is the anniversary of an accident which may alter all drive me mad. By the way, when you know me better you may find that I am no crank—not as yet, at least. Well, then, it is a love story I am going to recount to you—a love story of which I am the unhappy hero. Is it not amusing—a hero and yet defeated and miserable? Well, some three years ago I fell in love with a poor but accomplished Swedish girl in Copenhagen. Have you ever been in love, sir?'

'That's neither here or there. You just go on,' snarled the Englishman.

'I beg your pardon, sir. I meant no offence. As to myself, I had been in love a dozen times before I met the Swedish young lady, and when I saw that I was infatuated with her I thought it was something like my previous romances—a passion of a

'Yes I was. Well, the last girl I fell in love with was a singular sort of woman. She was not pretty. No. I wish she had been, for then I should have forgotten her long ago. But she was good—a genius of kindness—and it goes without saying that she was also called crazy. She loved me desperately, and I know it and that helped to spoil it all. I made a frank explanation to her and told her I liked her, but my life belonged to humanity.

'Oh, the idiot that I was! She gave me a sad look and I bade me farewell, and that is the last I have seen of her—in Europe, at least.'

'I subsequently learned that she had emigrated to America and that was what brought me over here. Why? Because I could not live without her, because when she was gone I became aware of the real nature of my lover for her. Ah, dear friend! I found when it was too late that I had never loved before. No other woman left an impression so deep, so cruel, so ineffaceable. And the feeling itself, too, seemed novel, unprecedented, so entirely un-

invested in flesh and blood, when this very day a year ago I caught sight of her in an elevated train on Second avenue. Yes, I saw her seated by an open window—it was a beautiful day in September, like this. But it seemed fate had only intended it for a joke on me—for the most cruel joke it ever played upon a helpless being. Ah, only Tantalus and myself are familiar with this kind of torture.

'Yes, she was in an uptown train while I was on the opposite track. I looked at her back without recognizing her, but just as the two trains began to move in opposite directions, she faced about me, and—and—it was she! Excuse me, dear stranger, you don't see me crying, do you? And there is no lump in my throat, either. I am not overcome as I tell you this—no more, at least, than usual, than every day, for my poor heart is always crushed every time I think of it—and when don't I think of it?'

'Did you call to her?' the Englishman queried.

'Did I! I came near jumping out of

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