

## An Affair of The Heart.

Sergeant Maguire of Robbie's father's troop of cavalry, felt aggrieved that the boy had lately avoided the corral. He had always lacked companions of his own age. The troopers who taught him to ride, the few officers of the little post, and his story-books had alone peopled his narrow world.

As Robbie was only seven years old, he had not grown too proud to curl up on a corner of Sergeant Maguire's bunk, and listen to the veteran's yarns of bear-hunts and Indian forays. The people of Robbie's story-books, however,—the knight errant, desert chiefs and princesses,—were as real to him as any of the sergeant's Indians or hunters, and their reported proceedings shaped in a great measure his precocious character. It was because of his lonely readings and fancies, that Miss Newton's visit to Robbie's mamma was an event of far greater importance to the boy than to any one else. She was so like his dreams of the prettiest princess he had ever pictured.

For her gracious smiles and swift caress the stables were deserted, and the old sergeant's affections wounded. How could his gathered spoils of the plain rival the curious treasures of her trunks from the fairy cities of the great East? The most thrilling yarn of Maguire's was stale and uninteresting compared to the songs she sang to Robbie, when they two were alone by the piano in the twilight. She was his princess, he her knight. Therefore he eschewed stables, grew neat in his attire, was particular about his fingernails, and dreamed daring dreams.

'When you were East, Mr. Yorke,' he said reflectively, to a lieutenant of his intimate acquaintance, 'when you were East, did you know Annie—I mean to say, Miss Newton?'

'I had not then that honor, Rob,' the lieutenant answered, smiling at the boy, who stood with straddled legs and hands clasped behind him on the elk's skin before the stove in Mr. Yorke's quarters. 'Why do you ask?'

'Oh! nothing. Do you like her? I do.' 'Do you? I esteem myself very fortunate, young man, in being privileged to know Miss Newton.'

'Were you ever married, Mr. Yorke?' 'I have not that blessed experience, my friend.'

'Aren't you ever going to be married?' 'Death is certain; nothing else. May I inquire why you ask?'

'Oh, nothing,' said Robbie, meditatively. 'I'm going to marry a young lady from the East some time. If you ever do marry, Mr. Yorke, I advise you to marry an Eastern girl. They're the nicest, I think.'

'Thank you, old fellow,' said the lieutenant enthusiastically, as he blew a lot of cigar smoke toward Robbie. 'Thank you, I will.'

It was winter, and skating was the chief amusement at the post. Not the least charming of Annie Newton's accomplishments was her skating. The best ice within reach of the post was on a lake five miles away across the plain, where Master Rob had been a year before with some of the soldiers. He planned for Miss Newton an excursion on horseback to the lake, and he was much hurt at his mother's apparent doubt of its safety.

'I'm not quite grown up yet,' he said, 'but I guess I'm able to take care of myself.'

'But, Robbie,' said his mother, who was not strong enough to go about much herself, 'I should worry till I was sick for fear something should happen to Annie.'

'But, mamma,' the boy reasoned, 'there's nobody there to hurt her. She'd be quite safe, and I'd take the greatest care of her.' Both ladies smiled, just as Lieutenant Yorke came into the room as he frequently did in those days.

'What is this Sir Robert the Bold to protect you from, Miss Newton?' he asked. Then Robbie saw a way to soothe his mother's fears. Being, besides, a good comrade, he had no objection to allowing the lieutenant, his intimate friend, a fair share of his pleasure.

'Well, I'll tell you what,' he said, 'Mr. Yorke can come, if Miss Newton doesn't mind, and then there'll be two of us to look after her. You would not object to Mr. Yorke, would you, Annie? He's a friend of mine.'

Robbie's mother laughed heartily, but both Miss Newton and the officer reddened a little, although they laughed, too.

The trip was arranged as Robbie proposed, but subalterns at army posts are not their own masters, and Yorke was at the last moment detained on a call from the adjutant's office.

'Robbie,' he said, 'you ride on with Miss Newton, and I will follow soon.' So Bob started, after all, as his princess's sole escort, he on Trix, his pony, and she, in a shawl riding-skirt, which she could discard when they reached the lake, on one of the captain's horses.

'I think,' said she, as they rode along, 'that we'd better not go too fast, Robbie, but give Lieutenant Yorke a chance to catch up, you know.'

'Why do you want to wait for him?' Robbie asked, his eyes fixed upon the smiling brown ones above him. 'He knows the way.'

'I have no doubt,' said Annie Newton. 'But, as he was so good as to offer to come, it might look rude to ride away from him.'

'Oh! He won't mind,' Robbie assured her, cheerfully. 'He knows you've got me to look after you. Besides, he doesn't care much for skating.'

'Oh, doesn't he?' 'He never skated at all before you came. He said it was too much like work. I guess he's glad to have an excuse to stay home, don't you?'

'I—I—don't know,' said Miss Newton, looking unexpectantly disturbed. 'Rob-

bie, do you really think it bores him to come?'

'I don't know. It doesn't matter.' He breathed a sigh of great content with his own lot. 'He doesn't know what's good, does he? You and I'll have a good time all by ourselves. Oh, I do like you, Miss Newton!'

The princess laughed merrily down on him, and held out her disengaged hand, which Rob grasped with fervor. 'That's very good of you, Robbie,' she said, gently. 'I am glad I have such a good friend.'

'Say,' said he, shyly. 'Mamma said I mustn't call you Annie. She said it wasn't polite; but I may, mayn't I?'

'Why, of course—I should like you to,' 'Annie,' Robbie murmured, with dreamy eyes. 'An—An—Annie. It's an awfully nice name. An' you're nice, too. Mr. Yorke said you were as near perfect as they make 'em.'

'O Robbie!'

'He did. Does the cold make my cheeks as red as yours? That was the day you came, an' we were all out to meet you. He told Captain Meyer, and Capt'n said Mr. Yorke thought every girl perfect until the next came along.'

'Robbie, be quiet! You shouldn't say such things!'

'Aint it nice to be called perfect?' Robbie asked in wonder, as the princess's cheeks turned pale. 'Then I'll tell Mr. Yorke he'd better never talk like that again.'

'If you do, Robbie, I shall never, never speak to you as long as I live!' she cried, and gave rein to her horse.

'Say!' cried the perplexed boy, as his little steed strained behind, 'I thought you wanted to wait for Mr. Yorke!'

But Miss Newton galloped on, and they soon gained the pond. It was not noon. The early morning had been bright and clear, but strangely still; later the sky grew gray. Now it had become dark and sullen, but the companions did not notice it, so good was the skating. They had so glorious a time that they became ruddy-cheeked and glowing, and impervious to the steadily increasing cold.

It was a day of days to Master Robbie. He told Annie so, in an outburst of happy confidence. He said it was the brightest and best and jolliest that he had ever known. 'And I love you better than any one else in the world,' he assured her, and rapturously kissed her hand, as the knights did in the story-books.

At that she caught him up, laughing, and kissed him on the mouth, before he could wriggle down. He blushed, and was not sure whether that was quite in keeping with his dignity, but perhaps, on the whole, he was well content.

Then flakes of snow began to fall lightly, and their attention was drawn to the clouds. The grayness, the sullenness, the silent threat of the sky's aspect alarmed the town-bred Eastern girl. Now she realized how bitterly cold it was, and drew her wraps more closely about her.

Some passing cattle added to her fears. The beasts were moving swiftly with the wind, led by a big steer. They lowed anxiously and were fleeing as if in fear. There was something in their agitation, frightened flight for shelter which unnerved the girl.

'Robbie!' she cried. 'Let us hurry home. There is going to be a storm.'

The boy helped her off with her skates and took off his own, with little delay, but the snow fell faster and faster, and the wind began to sweep the lake with vicious gusts.

There was an old shack by the lake used by duck-hunters, and in that Robbie and she sheltered their horses. He was running to loose the animals, when Miss Newton slipped on the ice and fell with a frightened cry. Robbie ran back at that strange sound, and she got up with his help but her foot hurt her badly and she was very pale.

'I'm afraid,' she said, in dismay, 'I have twisted my ankle.'

'Oh dear!' said Robbie. 'Never mind,' she said, trying to smile. 'If you help me on, Rob, I don't think it will stop my riding. Let us hurry. Oh! why did Mr. Yorke not come on?'

Robbie looked at her, sorrowfully. 'Won't I do?' he asked.

Resting one hand on the boy's shoulder she hopped to the shack, and leaned against the wall while Rob tried to lead the horses out. But the horse and pony knew better than their riders what kind of a storm was coming up—they were restless and nervous, and inclined to have things their own way. When a big cavalry horse is in that mood, a seven-year-old boy, who can just touch its check strap, is not well able to discipline the brute. Miss

Newton could not help, so the horse reared up and smelt the wind fearfully, and contemptuously tossed its head free from Robbie's hand. Then it plunged once in trix, headed for home, and galloped away.

'I say,' said Robbie, 'what shall I do now?' and he had much ado to swallow a sob.

Between pain and panic Miss Newton was in no condition to counsel him. The wind blustered now about them, and the snow and icy sleet drove down on them so that they had to scream to make themselves heard.

'Robbie!' cried the girl, her face white with fear. 'Is this a blizzard? What shall we do?'

Robbie also turned pale, for he remembered the blizzard of the year before, when two government teamsters had been caught only a few miles from home, and had been brought in dead—frozen to death. His heart sank; but he looked into his princess's terror-stricken, pain-racked face, and he remembered that she was under his protection.

'I'll help you on my pony,' he said, bravely. 'The side-saddle's gone, but if I throw the off stirrup over the saddle like that, it'll make a place for your foot. That's what the commissary sergeant's girl does, and you can ride better than any of the post girls.'

'But you, Robbie! What will you do? We must ride double.'

Robbie was doubtful, but they tried. Trix, however, would not have it. She remained quiet when Miss Newton mounted with Rob's help, but when he tried to get up tiny Trix objected, and tumbled them both off.

'It's no use. She knows she's to small for two,' shouted Bobbie. 'I'll lead her. Don't be frightened, Annie. I'll take you home safe.'

He had the brave heart and the will, but the storm was raging against them, beating them back. It was a terrible gale, worse than that of the year before, when the teamsters died, but of that Rob dared not think. He shut his mind against the horror of it, and plodded ahead, his freezing little fingers on the pony's bridle; but Trix was scared and impatient. She smelt death in the air, she was eager to dash away after the cavalry horse.

The storm smote so furiously on the boy that, in fifty yards, the breath was nearly battered out of his body. His arm grew sore and weary holding the pony, which jerked and tugged to gain its freedom. His chest felt tight and heavy, and he could with difficulty breathe.

Miss Newton, crouching low upon the pony's neck, was in little better plight. Unused to extreme cold, unprepared for it, and suffering from the shock and pain of sprain, she quite lost her usual calm and nerve.

'As fast as you can, Robbie dear!' she cried. 'Do you think we can get home at all this way? Will they send for us?'

'Don't be frightened,' he screamed back to her. 'We're getting on nicely. Trix can find her way. We'll soon be home. Does your foot hurt you, Annie?'

'Not very much, dear. How brave you are, Rob! If only I could change places with you!'

'Don't worry—about—me—I'm—all—right!'

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'Not very much, dear. How brave you are, Rob! If only I could change places with you!'

'Don't worry—about—me—I'm—all—right!'

But his voice, though he tried to make it cheerful, dwindled away to a pitiful sob, for his fingers were very painful, and his legs and arms were quite tired out. Yet the callous wind shrieked at them only the louder, the sullen sky pelted them more mercilessly.

At last a big lump choked Robbie's throat,—he realized he could go no further that way,—that he was beaten. Still his charge remained the uppermost thought in mind—the princess whose sword knight he had dreamed himself to be! He knew Trix would find her road home in less than an hour if allowed to go her own gait, and he knew that the pony would not, could not carry both Annie and him. At the pace they were going now, they would not make the post against the wind in three hours.

Three hours! The princess would be dead—like the teamsters, frozen to death! Robbie set his teeth; she, at least, must get home.

'You must hold on tight,' he shouted, pantingly, to the girl, 'if Trix begins to run.'

'Yes,' said she, faintly. She was pressing her turreted hand to her freezing ears, and in her pain but half understood what he said, but she gathered the reins and settled herself in the saddle.

'Hold very tight, if he gallops!'

'Yes, Robbie, yes. Oh, how cold—how cold it is!'

'Good-by, Annie dear,' he cried. 'I'll come after,' and loosing the pony he brought his hand smartly down on her flank. With a snort and a pause and a plunge Trix darted away.

Miss Newton almost lost her seat, but recovered herself as Trix ran. 'Robbie! Robbie!' she screamed back. 'I can't stop him!'

'Never mind me. I'll come after!' he screamed, assuringly.

Faintly her cry came back to him. 'Robbie! Robbie! My darling, you'll be frozen to death!'

Then he was quite alone, and the mocking storm fell full upon him. He pushed feebly ahead, and it beat him back. He cried for help; there was no one to hear, and it seemed to laugh at him. He stumbled and fell, and it pelted heaps of snow upon him triumphantly. He got up and pressed forward, but tripped on sagebrush, and knew then he had wandered from the trail.

In trying to get back, he stumbled into a drift, and was too tired to get up immediately. He was terribly frightened and sobbing hysterically then, but in a few minutes he ceased to feel the agoony acutely. Soon the snow drifted in so that he welcomed it and found it warm, and then he felt very drowsy and glad he had found a place to sleep in.



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He did not know whether it was real or a dream, but the princess seemed to have come back to him. He saw her distinctly, and she was not dressed for skating or riding. She was in a white dress like a picture in the story-books where the knight knelt at her feet. He kissed her hand and was very happy and smiled, and the snow came drifting, drifting over him.

The next thing he was aware of happening to him was that somebody was smacking his face and hands, and pounding him all over, and hurting him a good deal.

'Gway!' he cried feebly. 'Stop that! I'm not going to get up yet. Let me alone, will you?'

'Robbie! Robbie!' somebody shouted in his ear. 'Brace up, old fellow. That's right, open your eyes! Swallow this!'

'I don't have to get up,' Robbie muttered, weakly, and began to mumble and cry. But Lieutenant Yorke opened his lips by force, and made him swallow something which seemed to set him on fire. He choked and gasped, but his wits came back to him. Immediately he sat up in the fur coat the lieutenant had thrown around him, and asked the question nearest to his heart.

'Where's Annie? Did she get home safe?'

'Thanks to you, my hero, she did. God bless you, Robbie!' said Lieutenant Yorke. 'I saw the storm coming on, and came out after you in the ambulance. I should have come before, but I couldn't get away. I met Annie near the post. Trix had run away with her, but she held on and I was able to stop the pony. She told me what you had done, and sent me after you.'

The driver and the lieutenant put him in the ambulance, the storm still raging, and drove home as quickly as they could. There was great excitement at the post; everybody came through the wind and snow to greet the faithful little knight; but by that time he did not recognize them. He was in a high fever and delirious.

For several days he was very ill, but by and by he was able to be up. One morning he dressed himself when nobody was looking, and slipped down to the parlor door. He entered quietly to surprise the people, and received a terrible shock.

Lieutenant Yorke was sitting beside the princess and holding her hand as nobody had any right to do but Bob. Mr. Yorke started up, and the boy turned white and red and white again.

'Rob!' said Mr. Yorke. 'Annie and I are going to be married. Won't you wish us happiness?'

The lieutenant came to him smiling, and Miss Newton smiled on him also, but Rob's heart was bitter. He burst into a tempest of tears, flung himself away from the lieutenant, and darted from the room.

He was weeping sorrowfully on his pillow when Miss Newton ran after him, and knelt by the bed.

'Robbie! Robbie boy!' she said. 'What have we done to make you angry?' She gathered his little sob-shaken form in her arms.

'Tell me, Robbie,' she whispered. 'I—I—I—was going to marry my myself!'

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**Too Confident.**

Emergency lectures are good in their place, but a writer in the New York Times thinks that some of those who attend upon them acquire very exaggerated ideas of their own consequent fitness to deal with serious cases. The other day a woman fell in the street, and broke her arm. She was taken into a store, and clerks ranged themselves at the door to keep the crowd out. A gentleman had helped to carry her. When she had been placed in a comfortable position, he, after cutting her sleeve from wrist to shoulder, called for some cotton, and making some splints of the thin boards upon which dress goods are rolled, prepared to set the limb. At this moment a tall woman with eyeglasses, having with difficulty run the gauntlet of clerks at the door pressed eagerly forward.

'You're doing that all wrong; all wrong, she said.

As the gentleman did not even turn, she continued, 'Come, you must let me do that. You don't know anything about it; I have an emergency certificate.'

The gentleman paused in his work, and without looking up, remarked briefly, 'Pardon me, madam, but I am a surgeon.'

**Why the Widow Barber Calls Herself 'Miss.'**

A young widow, whose husband died two years ago, has opened a barber shop, and her sign reads, 'Miss Boyd, Barber.'

Asked why she called herself 'Miss,' she naively replied that she had good business reasons; that men seemed to prefer to be shaved and tonsorialized by an unmarried woman; they seem to hesitate at having their hair cut by a woman whose husband might offer to come in and attend to the customer himself.

'If my sign read 'Mrs.' persons who saw it would expect to find my husband here ready to wait on them. A woman barber who is single seems to be more attractive than one who is married,' said Mrs. Boyd.



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