A FISHING INTERLUDE.

Concerning a Young Man, a Pretty Girl and a Bet That Was Never Paid.

WRITTEN FOR THE EVENING STAR BY E. W. MAYO.

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Mason took down his cherished steel fly rod from its resting place against the roof of his shack and started for the landing.

"I'm going to explore that little brook we found yesterday," he announced to White.

"Oh, yes," chuckled White, "wonderfully attractive brook, isn't it? You didn't notice that young woman from Judge Vantine's camp rowing over in that direction, I suppose?"

"She did?" inquired Mason in apparent surprise, straightening up from the task of depositing fish basket and paddles in his canoe.

"Oh, no. Of course she didn't, and of course you wouldn't have planned to explore your creek if you had seen her. Still," sarcastically, "I wouldn't let that spoil a day's sport. I'd go right along if I were you. If you happen to run across her she won't notice you. She never has, and you've tried it on long enough."

"Oh, shut up! White," said Mason testily. "If I really wanted to meet the girl there's nothing to prevent my jumping into a boat and rowing over to Vantine's, is there? The judge is an old friend of father's, and he'd introduce me in a minute."

"Of course, in that case she couldn't help herself," observed White aggravatingly. "But I didn't mean to stir up your injured feelings. I suppose it is a sore subject with you."

"Look here!" cried Mason angrily, "if that girl has really gone over to Cherock I'll row her home, just to show you fellows."

"Bet you $10 you won't," said White sententiously, raising himself on his elbow.

"Done," responded the other as he pushed off from the landing, "I'll row around this side of the island so that you can see."

There was just a light ripple on the water and just a faint breath of cool summer fragrance coming down from Graves' mountain as Rod Mason drove his canoe across the lake in the direction of Cherock creek, which was reached through a tangled maze of dead wood. The exercise brought a glow of color into his handsome face and dissipated the mental annoyance caused by his recent conversation.

"I ought not to have been so hasty," he reflected. "But now I'm in for it. I suppose I've got to see it through; that is, if I can. If I don't I'll never hear the last of it. I wonder what she is like anyway."

It was perhaps an hour later that Miss Elizabeth, or, as she was known to her intimate friends, Bess Elliot, fancied she heard a slight noise as of something moving through the bushes on the higher bank of the stream above the spot where she stood. She glanced up, but seeing nothing, set it down to one of the squirrels or other woods creatures that are always stirring and turned her attention once more to the task of persuading the trout from the pool beside which she was standing.

The spot was one to which Miss Elizabeth came frequently, as much for its natural beauty as for the good fishing it usually afforded. It was an idyllic forest glade. The little mountain brook, which, further up, idled along under dense alders, or tumbled riotously over piled-up bowlders, here left its higher level and slipped noiselessly down a smooth slide some twenty feet in length, between borders of mossy rock, to join the pool below. The steady flow of the waters, for centuries perhaps, had worn away the borders of the pool itself to perfect smoothness, and had given it the appearance of a big natural basin. Ancient trees leaned above the water hole from all sides, making a bower through which only a glance could be caught of the canopied blue sky above. The scene needed only a touch of human life to make it perfect, and this requirement was abundantly satisfied by Miss Elizabeth herself, as she stood on a round-topped rock, sending her flies skimming over the surface of the pool with the graceful movement of the skilled angler. As she stepped from one point to another with the freedom imparted by high boots and a short outing skirt, she seemed a sprightly, self-contained girl, who would be likely to hold her own at any outdoor sport, or in the more subtle contests of the drawing room. Her costume of dark blue suited the surroundings and set off to advantage the somewhat unruly mass of blonde hair beneath the white tourist hat. The front brim of the hat, turned down to shade her wide gray eyes, gave the oval face a piquant look, and suggested that Miss Elizabeth was a jolly person, as well as a very decided one.

She had just drawn a quarter-pound trout from the depths of the pool and deposited him in the fish basket slung across her shoulders, when suddenly the peaceful quiet of the scene was broken.

There was the crackle of a snapping branch above, a sudden exclamation, and before Miss Elizabeth's astonished gaze a young man came flying down the long slide with anything but a graceful or dignified appearance. His arms and legs were wildly brandishing, his cap was gone, and the fish basket trailing behind him was spilling its cargo along the way. One hand still grasped the fly rod and on the end of the line, describing a wonderful circle in the air, was a fine big trout.

It all happened so quickly that Miss Elizabeth was able to take in no more than these details before the wild descent of the unexpected intruder ended in the pool, while the trout, intercepted in his flight, was hanging from a projecting limb and making vigorous flops in a fruitless endeavor to be free.

Miss Elliot did not scream, although she was decidedly startled. She merely cast aside her rod and peered anxiously into the pool for the reappearance of a head. It popped up in a moment, rather wet and bedraggled, and its owner, after a preliminary gasp and a look about, started slowly for the shore.

"Can't I help you?" ventured Miss Elliot. "Can you get out?"

"I'm all right," answered the head, as composedly as possible under the circumstances. "What became of the trout?"

"He's up there," responded the lady, pointing to the limb from which the red-spotted captive was still swinging.

The head turned slowly in the direction indicated, and the expression of the face brightened visibly as the proportions of the fish were observed. The pleased look was succeeded immediately by one of anxiety as the trout made an unusually lively flop that threatened to release him.

"Do you think you could get him down?" inquired the immersed one as he prepared to resume his shoreward course. "It would be a shame to lose him."

"Oh, yes; certainly," replied Elizabeth from the bank, "if you are quite sure that you can get out alone."

It must have required a heroic effort to decline aid so charmingly proffered, but the occupant of the pool replied manfully that he would be on shore in a jiffy. Thereupon Miss Elliot turned her attention to the trout, and by dint of standing on tiptoe and using a crotched stick finally succeeded in drawing him from above the stream and depositing him safely in her basket.

"He must weigh nearly three pounds," she called out. "How ever did he——"

The question died on her lips as she turned toward the pool and saw that the person to whom it was addressed was not only still in the water, but having difficulty in keeping afloat. The bank was steep, and, being of smooth rock, afforded no hold to the man struggling in the water, who slipped back as often as he attempted to climb out. The chill of the pool, fed by mountain springs, evidently was exhausting him, for his movements were becoming weaker. Miss Elliot took in the situation at a glance and acted upon it instantly.

"Keep up; I'll help you," she called, and ran swiftly down the bank to the point where the young man was desperately treading water to keep himself on the surface. Casting about in search of something with which to aid him, her eye fell upon a small dry branch lying on the ground. She caught it up, and, after testing its strength to make sure that it would bear his weight, extended one end to him, crying:

"Now catch hold and hang on."

The swimmer obeyed silently; he had no breath left for words. Elizabeth braced her feet behind a projecting rock and threw her whole weight backward. It was no easy matter to move the 175 pounds at the other end of the pole, but Elizabeth was a remarkably strong girl, and with the aid of such efforts as her companion was able to make in his own behalf, he was brought to a resting place on the bank. He lay there silently for a few moments to recover his breath and strength.

"Thanks, awfully!" he said, presently, clambering up and shaking the water from his dripping person like a big dog. "You saved me from a watery grave."

Miss Elizabeth smiled sympathetically. "My service was hardly so great as that," she answered, "but such as it was, you are very welcome to it. How in the world did it happen?"

A guilty color came into the young man's face, but apparently Miss Elliot was not noticing him.

"Oh, I was rather too anxious for that big fellow," he said, and indifferently as he could, "and I came a cropper on the wet moss at the top of the slide. But if I'm not mistaken, that trout was worth the experience."

The conversation was thus diverted to a new channel, and some moments were occupied in admiring the trout, estimating his weight and wondering how so fine a specimen had strayed up the brook—matters in which both of them evinced a sportsmanlike interest. The diversion gave Mason an opportunity to regain the presence of mind which had deserted him during his recent exciting experience.

"I'm afraid that I have forgotten the formality of making myself known," he said at the first lull in the discussion of the fish. "I'm Roderick Mason of New York, and I am staying at the Witch bay camp."

"Under the circumstances it would be superfluous for me to say that I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Mason," replied the young woman. Her self-possession had not been impaired at any point in the interview, and Rod mentally observed that she must be accustomed to having young men rain down on her in this unconventional manner. "I am Miss Elliot; to be more exact, Miss Elizabeth Elliot of New York, and I am staying with my uncle, Judge Vantine."

Rod made haste to claim his acquaintance with Judge Vantine. He was not rewarded with any intimation that Miss Elliot had ever heard of his existence, however, and the conversation drifted into the conventional channels of a discussion of the camp, the lake, the fishing and the scenery.

"I'm afraid I have spoiled the fishing here for the day," said Rod, apologetically, observing that his fair companion was gathering up her belongings with the evident intention of departing. "My sudden appearance must have sent them all scurrying under the rocks."

"It really doesn't matter," returned Miss Elliot. "I should have left in a few minutes at any rate. I dare say you know the lake's stormy moods."

"You must let me row you home—" began Rod, and stopped abruptly. The thought of the wager with White had passed entirely from his mind until this remark recalled it and made him feel exceedingly uncomfortable.

"I shall manage very well by myself," said Miss Elliot, a trifle coldly, as she noticed the sudden interruption of his remark. "Otherwise I should not have come out alone. If it gets too rough they will send the launch over for me."

"If you take my advice," she continued, breaking the silence that ensued, "you will go straight home, too, or that cold bath will result in making you ill. You have a boat here, I suppose? You could hardly have come by balloon."

Rod felt felt that the cool treatment he was receiving discounted the effect of his immersion, but he decided that it was wise to give heed only to the latter part of her remark.

"My canoe is just around the point here," he said hastily. "It's the place where I usually land. There are fewer logs there."

After this unblushing falsehood the conversation lagged once more and Rod went to the rescue of his fish basket, which had floated some distance toward the outlet of the stream and was lodged against an obstructing log. When he returned he said, with a note of genuine anxiety in his voice:

"I don't want to offend you, Miss Elliot, but I really wish that you would let me row you home. It's blowing half a gale outside. If you will consent to that," he went on eagerly, "I should like very much to borrow the boat to row myself back to camp. You know a canoe isn't much good in rough water."

Miss Elliot mounted a high rock and looked lakeward, where the spray from the tumbling waves was dashing over the fallen timber of the flow.

"It does seem to be rather rough," she said, listening to the booming sound that came from below. "Is your canoe small?"

"Very small," said Rod, unflinchingly, "a mere cockle. I was a fool to come out in it."

"Perhaps it would be better for both of us to wait for the launch," went on Elizabeth.

"I don't believe that is necessary," he answered quickly; "they can't tell from the point how rough it is over here. Your boat will ride as well as the launch, anyway, and the pull across is just what I need to warm me up and keep my muscles from getting stiff."

Miss Elliot seemed convinced that his selfish presentation of the case left no room for argument. She said nothing further while the boat was being made ready, but took her place in the stern and, paddle in hand, steered it through the winding course that led to the lake, while Rod pulled leisurely at the oars. Arriving inside the final barrier of logs that protected them from the force of the gale they paused and looked outside. For miles across its surface there was nothing to be seen except a long succession of waves, one hurrying rapidly after another, each one tipped with flying spray. Stony Point lay directly across one arm of the lake, a mile distant.

"It's all right," said Rod cheerily, "we can take them head on. You needn't steer any more. Put up your paddle and hold on. It will toss us a little at first."

Miss Elliot obeyed this mandate silently. The commanding tone he used now was very different from his first confusion and she decided that he was less of a boy than she had at first believed. He did not look boyish as he prepared to do battle with the gale. He had removed his coat and she could see the play of his muscles beneath his outing shirt as he bent forward and with powerful strokes sent the boat flying to meet the waves. When they struck the first swell the little craft seemed fairly to be thrown in air. Then it went down, down a sickening distance, and then up again. It seemed as though the storm was tossing them in a watery blanket for its own amusement and it was hard to believe that they were making any progress. But with each wave the oars took the water straight and true and the pounding noise of the breakers against the log boom began to recede behind them.

Elizabeth saw that Mason was heading straight across the lake, where bigger and wilder waves were waiting for them. She was not frightened, but she knew that it must be terribly hard work pulling against such a gale.

"Don't you think you had better row around the island?" she screamed. "It's quieter there."

Rod shook his head and rowed straight on. He was thinking that he would rather face shipwreck than row around the island, where White would see them and think that he had done this for the wager.

Various thoughts had been coursing rapidly through the not particularly quick mind of Mr. Roderick Mason as he struggled across the lake toward the Stony Point camp. He thought that he was a fool and a cad to make a bet about a girl like Miss Elliot. Still he was not sorry that he had made it, since it led to meeting her. He earnestly hoped, however, that she might not hear of the bet. He did not believe that she would approve of it. She evidently was not like most of the girls he had met. His complimentary remarks she had taken as a matter of course. She had cut short the high-flown speech of thanks he had intended to make after she had pulled him out of the water. As well as he could remember she had exhibited vastly more interest in the big trout than she had in him. It didn't seem to Rod that this was exactly as it should be. In truth, Miss Elliot awed him a little, but he was decidedly of the opinion that she was the most attractive girl he had ever met.

It was slow work crossing the lake. The task of rowing occupied Rod fully, and the gale made conversation impossible. When they finally arrived at Judge Vantine's landing a feeling of constraint seemed to have come over both of them.

"It was very good of you to bring me home, Mr. Mason," said Elizabeth, as she stepped on shore. "Your oarsmanship is perfect. I could never have made the trip alone, and but for your timely appearance I should probably be making frantic signals of distress from the other side, instead of being safe in camp. I hope your accident won't make you ill."

"There isn't the slightest danger," said Rod, a little stiffly. "The row was just what I needed. I feel first-rate now."

He passed the rod and fish basket out to her slowly. He was wondering if she wouldn't say that she hoped to see him again, but apparently she did not think of that. She took the things from his hands, and, opening the basket, reached his three-pound trout toward him. Rod drew back a little.

"Won't you keep it?" he asked, and was surprised to notice that his request sounded timid. "It's more yours than mine, anyway, because it surely would have escaped if you hadn't taken it down from the limb."

"Oh, I don't think so; I couldn't do that," she said, hastily, "not after the loss of the rest of your catch."

Rod did not press the point further, but he did not put the dead fish into his basket. He threw it instead into the bottom of the boat, as though all its value to him were gone. Miss Elliot did not notice this either. After a few formal words she walked up the path that led toward the camp, while Rod turned and rowed savagely toward home.

The squall that had been blowing brought up a summer thunder storm, which drenched him through before he reached his own camp and concealed the evidences of his former wetting. He found his companions sheltered under one of the shacks, engaged in the usual rainy day employment of telling stories.

"What luck?" called Dean, as he approached.

"None at all," answered Rod, shortly.

"No fish?" queried Dean, jr.

"I got some, but I slipped down and they went into the water."

"Where's your cap?"

"That went the same way."

"How about the wager?" asked White, lazily.

"I lost that, too," said Rod, as he turned toward his own quarters in search of dry apparel.

"Don't seem exactly pleased, does he?" suggested White, as Mason's back disappeared from view. But he forbore to question Rod further.

Rod debated within himself that night whether to return Judge Vantine's boat in person or not, but he finally decided to delegate the task to one of the guides.

"If she doesn't want to know me, I'll let her see that I am not the man to force my acquaintance on anybody," he said to himself, with an attempted loftiness which he did not wholly feel.

For the time being there was no more communication between the camps on Witch bay and Stony Point. Rod went his way, more soberly than usual, and he did not try his luck in Cherock again, though White felt called upon to suggest it on one occasion. After a few days Rod announced one night as the party gathered about the campfire:

"I guess I'll go back to New York at the end of the week."

There was an immediate chorus of "What for?"

"The fishing is getting poorer every day," said Rod, affecting a bored tone, "and I've already been away four weeks. Tomorrow is Friday. I'll have one more day of it and go down the lake on Saturday afternoon."

"All right," said White, "if you insist upon it, but we all wish that you would stay. We'll go over to Brandy brook tomorrow. I know some good spring holes there and we'll have one day's good sport before you leave."

It was when the two young fishermen started to pull for home after their day's sport on Brandy brook that they passed within hail of a boat containing Judge Vantine and his guide.

"Come over here, sir," called the judge peremptorily, as he identified Rod. Then, as they obeyed and rowed alongside, he went on, after the usual greetings and the inspection of their catch: "Why haven't you been over to see us? I think you owe me at least a duty call. For a week I've been wanting to thank you for taking such good care of my niece. She may have something to say on that score herself if you give her a chance."

White opened his eyes an unusual distance and looked hard in Rod's direction at these remarks, but he said nothing.

"I'd be glad to come, sir," said Rod, in confusion, "only—I thought—of going out tomorrow," he ended lamely.

"Nonsense," said the judge with vigor, "the lake has settled just enough to make good fishing in the spring holes. This is no time to leave."

"I think," said Rod, when the usual campfire coterie assembled that evening, "that I'll stay a few days longer after all. We found some mighty good sport in Brandy today, didn't we White?"

"Yes," said White, with a profound wink in the direction of Dean, jr., "I did."

From that time on the Witch bay camp saw little more of Mr. Roderick Mason than it would if he had carried out his determination to return to the city. He developed a sudden fondness for the society of Judge Vantine. According to the accounts which he held forth for the edification of his comrades the amiable judge was continually organizing fishing parties, or trips to Dirmtig Needle, or Indian Mountain pond, to the success of which the company of Mr. Mason was absolutely essential. The camp noted as a significant fact that Miss Elliot's name was mentioned casually or not at all in these recitals and needed no further indication as to how affairs were going between these young folks. There was no surprise, therefore, at the breaking up of the White bay contingent when Rod announced that he had accepted Judge Vantine's invitation to join the latter's party for a week "in order to meet some people who were coming up from the city." Nobody made any pointed remarks on the subject, except White, who called out, as they waved their adieus on parting:

"Let us know, old man, as soon as you have decided when it is to be."

A chorus of good-natured laughter came from the boats as they saw, even at a distance, that Rod was blushing furiously.

On the last day of their stay in camp Rod and Miss Elizabeth decided to make a farewell trip to the Cherock pool, beside which they had first met. They had come to be quite at home in each other's society, and, in fact, evinced a decided and exclusive preference for it rather than for the general gatherings of the party. But on this occasion Rod was grave and apparently disturbed, and Miss Elliot's mood was more serious than usual. The conversation moved only in fitful spurts as they sat side by side on the rocks beside the pool gazing steadfastly into its cool depths. At length the talk drifted inevitably to that earlier occasion, and they went over all its details as they had done a hundred other times. When Elizabeth had concluded her description of his ridiculous appearance as he plunged into the water, Rod cleared his throat with an evident effort.

"Bess," he said, reaching out for the hand which she had allowed to drop idly to her side, "I want to ask you a question, but first I have a confession to make."

"A confession?" Elizabeth's tone indicated a proper amount of alarm at his solemn manner, and she made a weak attempt to withdraw the white hand that lay enveloped between two big brown ones. "I suppose I ought not to listen to it, but," finding that there was no intention of releasing the hand, "I am curious to know what it can be."

"Well," began Rod, heavily, "you remember the time we were just speaking of?"

"You mean the time when you met with your accident? Yes, I believe I have some recollection of the occasion." She gave him a glance that would have precipitated matters had Rod been looking at her instead of at the toe of his boot.

"Well," went on that mentally burdened person, "it wasn't an—an accident."

This time Miss Elliot seemed genuinely surprised. She stood up so suddenly that the white hand was withdrawn before Rod could prevent it.

"Not an accident?" she repeated; "then what in the world was it?"

"I—I did it on purpose," went on the contrite Rod, bowing his head beneath the heavy load of his remorse. "I did it on a—on a bet."

There was a suspicion of a smile about the corners of Miss Elizabeth's mouth as she mentally compared the picture presented by Mr. Mason sitting in dust and ashes at her feet with the one he had made in his wild descent of the slide two months before. She quelled the smile, however, and made her voice as stern as possible before she replied.

"I ought to be shocked," she said with severity. "Yes; I am shocked, Roderick Mason. How do you explain such conduct?"

"Well," said Rod, fairly writhing in his abasement, "I didn't known you then, but, of course, I shouldn't have done it, anyway. Only the boys—one of the boys—joked me about wanting to meet you, and I told him I could go over to your camp and meet you any time, and he said that would be forcing my acquaintance on you, and—well, he kept it up until I got out of patience—a little—" Miss Elliot struggled against another smile—"and I bet him that I could come over here and meet you and row you home."

"And you did," supplemented Elizabeth. "I suppose you felt very fine to win such a bet as that."

"No," said Rod, with his first ray of hope, "I didn't. I felt ashamed after I made the bet, and I felt more ashamed after I—saw you. I wouldn't have asked to take you home that day if it hadn't been so stormy. That was why I stopped when I first started to ask you. I thought of the bet. And that was why I wouldn't row around the island. I didn't want the boys to see."

"And what did your—your friend say, and what did he think of me when you told him that you had won the bet?" continued Miss Elliot relentlessly.

"I didn't tell him," Rod asserted, with a little more spirt than he had before exhibited. "You don't think I could have done that, do you? I told him I had lost it. I paid it."

Elizabeth sat down again. Her hand unconsciously touched the brown one that lay helplessly on the bed of the moss.

"Since you didn't tell that you had won the bet," she said, "I don't know but that you can be forgiven for the rest."

Rod straightened up suddenly, involuntarily squeezing the little hand until it was decidedly pink. He looked straight into the gray eyes that had dropped before his gaze.

"Yes," said Elizabeth, while a faint color glowed through the tan upon her cheeks, "you are forgiven."

And at that Rod felt emboldened to ask the question he had before referred to.

Later—some time later—when the conversation had been resumed, Rod remarked, while he patted the white hand, reached this time by encircling his companion's waist:

"There's one thing, though, that wasn't in the scheme—the trout. That's why I wanted you to take it that day. It would have made me feel better if you had."

"Yes?" queried Elizabeth. "I was just wondering what part the trout played in your little drama. I wanted to accept it, too, only I thought it better not to."

After another interval, Elizabeth spoke:

"By the way, Roderick, dear, you said that one of the boys had joked you about me. Did it happen to be Billy White?"

Rod sat up again.

"You know—White?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Since he is my cousin, yes," replied Elizabeth, her smile this time breaking into a ripple of laughter.

"Well, I'll be—" Rod checked himself. "Then you are the Cousin Elizabeth he was always cracking up to me when we were in college! The villain!"

"Do you think so?" asked Elizabeth, pretending to draw away from him. Rod immediately proved that he did not think so.

"And you are the Rod Mason whose praises he sung in my ears until you threatened to become a bete noir," resumed Elizabeth, when she had recovered breath. "In fact, until I arrived at a very unfavorable opinion of you. He told me when we came up here that he should make a bet with you on the very subject that he afterward did. He also said that you would win the bet if he did. And I told him that if you were the sort of person who would make such a bet you would certainly lose it; and that if you did not lose it I would pay it. You see, I was prepared for you in a way, but I didn't expect you to make your appearance in just the manner you selected. When you told me your name I was suspicious for a moment, but I thought it must have been an accident. Why, Roderick, you might have broken your neck."

"It was worth the risk," said Rod, enthusiastically.

"Then," went on Elizabeth, "when you insisted on rowing me home my suspicions were aroused once more. That was why I suggested that you row around the island. When you wouldn't I thought again that I was mistaken. After I saw how manly you were about the whole matter I didn't care whether I had been mistaken or not. You see, Billy didn't tell either of us all that he might."

Rod was still puzzling over these unexpected revelations.

"But you and White never saw each other while you were up here?" he said.

"Well, hardly ever," admitted Elizabeth, "and then when you were not in the vicinity. Billy is too careless to take much trouble for a mere cousin, and, besides, I suppose it would have interfered with his little plan. Do you object to it?"

"Darling!" said Rod, and again there was a long interval of silence.

"You see, it was really Cousin Will who brought us together," said Elizabeth some time afterward, when the happy pair were on their way back to camp. "Not only the first time, but afterward, when you were going away, he got you to go fishing over in Brandy brook, where he knew that uncle was to be."

"He's the dearest fellow in the world," said Rod, and the next day he wrote to White to tell him that the "day" would very soon be set.

At a wedding which took place some months later White was the most prominent figure aside from the bridal pair. After the reception, when the house had been cleared of the guests, he bore down upon the twain with a handsomely mounted figure of a stuffed trout.

"Here's a bit of evidence in the case," he said, soberly, "which I trust that you will keep long and value highly. I rescued it from the oblivion to which Rod would have consigned it that first night, and here it is."

"It shall adorn our dining room," said Rod, "and you must come often and eat under it."

"And in recognition of your valuable services in the whole affair," put in Elizabeth, "I hereby declare that you may have one extra kiss from the bride."

THE WILD DESCENT ENDED IN THE POOL.

Precipitated a Crisis.

From Puck.

The Justice—"To what am I indebted for this visit?"

The Groom—"I reckon it's to Sal's mother, judge. She 'lowed I'd been callin' on Sal long enough, an' she up and asked my intentions."

"Now, Sammy," began the teacher, "I want you to tell me in which battle Lord Nelson was killed."

Sammy was in despair, but he must prove himself equal to the emergency.

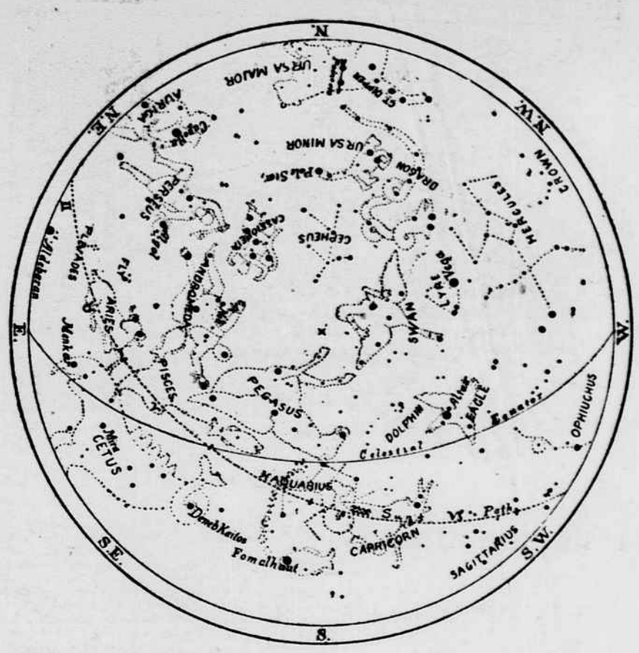
"Did you say Lord Nelson?" he asked cautiously.

"Yes."

"Which battle?"

"Yes. In which battle was he killed?"

"Wal," said Sammy, with apparent surprise at such an easy question, "I 'specs it must er been his last."—London Spare Moments.



A Planisphere of the Heavens, Showing the Positions of the Principal Stars which will be above the Horizon October 1—15, 31, at 9—8—7 P.M.

OCTOBER HEAVENS

Stars and Constellations That Will Be Above the Horizon.

FIVE OF THE FIRST MAGNITUDE

Interesting Facts and Figures for Amateur Astronomers.

STUDYING THE VARIABLES

Written for The Evening Star.

Of the fourteen first-magnitude stars which are visible in the mean latitude of the United States, only five will be above the horizon at 9 o'clock this evening. They are Fomalhaut, low in the south; Vega and Altair, in mid-heavens in the west, the former on our right, the latter on our left as we face in that direction; Capella, in the northeast, and Aldebaran, barely above the horizon, a little north of east. Arcturus, in the northwest, and Antares, in the southwest, have just disappeared below the horizon.

The most interesting of the constellations now visible at the hour named are east of the meridian. Directly before us as we face the east, midway from the horizon to the zenith, is Andromeda. Beneath her is Aries; at her left and well up toward the zenith in the northeast is Cassiopeia; below this constellation and at the feet of Andromeda stands Perseus, still lower is Auriga, only in part above the horizon.

Beneath Aries is Taurus, at the right of Aries, occupying nearly the whole of the southeastern quarter of the heavens, is Cetus the Whale, or Sea Monster. At the right of Andromeda and at a greater altitude is the winged horse, Pegasus; between Pegasus and Cetus is the constellation Pisces, the Fishes; in mid-heavens in the south is Aquarius, the Waterman; below Aquarius is the Southern Fish, of which little more than the eye—the star Fomalhaut—is discoverable.

Easily Identified.

Cassiopeia, known also as the Lady in Her Chair, or simply as the Chair, is easily identified from the arrangement of her five brighter stars in the form of a somewhat broad letter W. This fair queen of mythology now sits nearly erect in her chair. Her head is marked by a star of the fourth magnitude above the second star in the W, reckoning from right to left; the fifth and lowermost of these stars is in her feet.

Auriga, the Wagoner, can be located by means of the star Capella, which marks the position of the Goat borne upon the Wagoner's left shoulder.

Midway between Capella and the lowest star in Cassiopeia, at the right of a straight line drawn between the two stars, is Alpha Persei, a star of the second magnitude, in the breast of Perseus. This old hero of mythology now stands erect, brandishing in his right hand, as he is depicted upon celestial charts, a weapon which seems to be a cross between a sword and a pruning hook, but of which no trace can be found among the stars, and swinging by its snaky locks, in his left hand, the frightful head of Medusa, in the forehead of which stands the "Demon star," Algol.

Interesting Stars.

Alpha Persei is the first in a line of five stars of about the same brilliancy and at about the same distance apart, which curves upward to the right and terminates in a large rectangular figure, completed by the addition of two other second-magnitude stars which form a striking dipper-shaped figure of about twice the length of the Great Dipper in the Ursa Major. The second, third and fourth of these stars, reckoned from Alpha Persei, belong to Andromeda. The lowermost of the three, Gamina, is in her left foot; the uppermost, Alpha, known also as Alpheratz, is in her head. This star forms one corner of the rectangle referred to, the remaining three stars of which belong to Pegasus. The four are, however, commonly grouped together as a single asterism known as the Square of Pegasus.

A straight line run from the head of Andromeda diagonally across the Square and continued beyond to a distance equal to the length of the diagonal will strike Alpha Aquarii, a third-magnitude star in the right shoulder of the Waterman. Still farther to the right, at a distance about two-thirds as great, is Beta Aquarii, a star of the same magnitude, in the left shoulder. Above these two stars, making with them a right-angled triangle with two equal sides, is another star of the third magnitude—Epsilon Pegasi—in the nose of Pegasus. This triangle is a noticeable figure, and will aid in locating the constellation Aquarius.

Aquarius.

Aquarius is the eleventh of the zodiacal constellations, Pisces, between it and Aries, being the twelfth. It is not a particularly striking constellation, though it contains a fair supply of stars of the fourth and lower magnitudes. Upon the charts Aquarius is represented by a man in a decidedly cramped position pouring water from a pitcher or ewer held in his right hand. This ewer is formed by a very pretty Y-shaped cluster of four small stars at the left—the observer's left—of the star Alpha, in the right shoulder. The stream which issues from it, marked, or imagined to be marked, by a sprinkling of small stars, descends to the mouth of the Southern Fish.

Below Beta Aquarii, at a distance from Beta about equal to that of this star from Alpha, is a pair of stars, one of the third and one of the fourth magnitude, which are in the coil of the tail of Capricorn. The head of this monster, half a goat and half a fish, is made by another and somewhat wider pair of stars, one of the second and one of the third magnitude, at some distance to the right, or west, of the first pair. They lie directly in line with the shoulder stars of Aquarius, and are about equally distant from Alpha Aquarii and Altair, in the Eagle. The upper and smaller star of the pair can be seen by a person with good eyesight to be double, and a small telescope will show that the smaller star in this naked-eye double is itself double. This little group of stars in the head of Capricorn forms an exceedingly pretty object for an opera glass, and is, indeed, about all there is in the constellation to attract the ordinary star gazer.

A Monster Constellation.

Turning again to the east, we may see directly in front of us, at one-third of the distance from the horizon to the zenith, the conspicuous pair of stars which stand in the head of Aries. Below and at the left of these stars is the well-known cluster of the Pleiades. At the right of the Pleiades, and at about the same distance from this cluster and the two stars in Aries, is Menkar, a star of the second magnitude, in the head of Cetus. At about three-fifths of the distance from Menkar to Fomalhaut is Deneb Kaitos, also of the second magnitude, which marks the tail of Cetus. This monster constellation, which may thus be located, is by no means a striking one, and is of interest mainly because of its remarkable variable star, Omicron, better known as Mira, the "Wonderful." The star is situated at about one-third of the distance from Menkar to Deneb.

Mira has a period of about eleven months. When at its faintest it is of about the ninth magnitude, away below the limit of the naked eye. Having remained in this condition for some weeks, it begins slowly to brighten, and in about two months it becomes visible to the naked eye. Continuing to brighten, by the end of another two months it reaches its maximum of brilliancy, which may be anywhere between the fourth and the second magnitudes. For a couple of weeks it hovers about this point, sometimes brightening a little and again paling, and then begins steadily to decline in brightness, and in about three months it is again beyond the reach of the naked eye.

An Unsolved Problem.

The last maximum of Mira occurred in the latter part of last October, when it was nearly up to the second magnitude. The star is now visible, and very likely before this appears in print it will have passed its maximum for this year. It is a decidedly red star, and, when Menkar has been found, should easily be identified from its position, as above given. The spectrum of Mira contains several bright lines, chiefly those of hydrogen, indicating that its light, as it brightens, comes mainly from glowing gases. The cause of the variability of this and similar variables is a problem still unsolved.

An account of the interesting variable star Algol was given last month. Ordinarily Algol is of the second magnitude, but at intervals of a little less than three days it undergoes a decided change of brilliancy, becoming when at its faintest of only the fourth magnitude. The whole change takes place within the space of eight or nine hours. A minimum of Algol will occur tomorrow evening (October 1) at 11:30 and a second minimum will occur on the 4th at 8:30 p.m.

The Planets.

Mercury and Venus are both evening stars, but are too close to the sun to be seen, though Mercury will become visible in the west about the middle of the month. Mars, Jupiter, Uranus and Saturn are all evening stars, situated eastward from the sun in the order here given, but all setting before 9 p.m. Neptune, in Taurus, rises at about 10 p.m., invisible to the naked eye, being of only the tenth magnitude.

Docking Horses.

From Blackwood.

Docking horses took its rise in the dark days when bull and bear baiting were honored by a place in the category of sport, rightly now relegated by law to the catalogue of outrage. This custom of docking was once generally applied to English roadsters, hunters and harness horses. The only useful purpose it ever served was in the peninsular war, when British dragoons could be most easily distinguished from French by their cocktails. It fell into disuse with the decline of road coaches, and we owe its unwelcome revival to their partial restoration. It is senseless, barbarous, and disfiguring; it inflicts needless suffering upon brood mares and horses turned out to grass, depriving them of their natural defense against flies, besides the severe pain and shock caused by the operation itself. It should be discouraged in every possible way by influential persons, by those who lead the fashion in such things, and agricultural societies should be moved to refuse prizes to exhibits which have undergone this mutilation.

Force of Habit.

From Puck.

First Wheelman—"Robinson still rides a horse."

Second Wheelman—"Yes? What make of—oh!"

"I found your medicine a blessing to me and my family."

There are women who feel something like a grudge against the children, who, one after another rob their mother of her beauty and strength. Men do not usually realize how much the mother gives to each child to her own loss. Women accept it as part of the obligation of Nature and pay the debt grudgingly. Yet in Nature's plan every child is a new joy and fresh happiness. It isn't the children that steal the mother's strength. It is the unnatural drains and pains which weaken her.

Every woman who has used Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription has found in it the one thing woman has waited for. It stops the drains, heals inflammation and ulceration, makes the baby's advent a pleasure and his life a blessing. No opiates or narcotics are contained in "Favorite Prescription."

"I read what your medicine had done for other people," writes Mrs. Edwin H. Gardner, Box 70, Beechwood, Norfolk Co., Mass., "so thought I would try it, and I found that it was a blessing to me and my family. I began in June and took six bottles of your medicine, and three vials of 'Pellets.' I took your medicine a year when I had a ten pound girl. I had the easiest time I ever had with any of my children. I have been very well since. I took three bottles of "Favorite Prescription, three of 'Golden Medical Discovery,' and three vials of 'Pellets.' I had no appetite and could not eat much without it distressing me. Before I took the medicine I only weighed 135 pounds, and now I weigh 175."

Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets clear the brain by cleansing the body of the corruption which clouds it.