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**CASTORIA**

THE CENTAUR COMPANY, NEW YORK CITY.

**Their  
Prettiest Girl.**

By HENRY BERLINGHOFF.

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Literary Press.

It was Ned Bellingham who discovered the girl across the way. Crosby Maurer hooted at the suggestion that she was the daintiest and most wholly lovable young woman on the globe.

Ned retorted with some heat, and the result was that then and there the domestic partnership was threatened with dissolution.

It was the first time since they had set up housekeeping in a bachelor apartment three years before that they had had a disagreement.

Maurer had flung himself out of the room with never a goodbye, and Ned had sat himself down at his drawing board to make the girl across the way the central figure in a set of illustrations he was doing for a story, blissfully ignoring the fact that the author's heroine was tall, above the ordinary, a fair haired goddess of the Norseland, while the girl across the way was petite and decidedly dark.

Maurer did not return to dinner for dinner, and Ned was fast asleep by the time he did come in. There was no reopening of the discussion, and in the morning the clash of the day before was tactfully ignored.

More than a week passed and the cloud had blown away when Maurer, waiting for his breakfast to be sent up from the restaurant in the building, approached the window and gave a low whistle of surprise.

"You're right, old man," he cried, "and I'll eat all the humble pie you care to feed me. That girl is a goddess in miniature."

Ned sprang to the window, a pleased smile of triumph on his face. But the smile faded when he looked closely.

"It's awfully good of you to say so, old chap," he said gratefully, "but I'll eat that pie myself. Funny I should have thought her such a stunner. She's a good looker, but nothing like the goddess I've been raving about."

"Don't be a beastly fool," urged Maurer politely. "You're an artist. You must know that she's one woman in a thousand."

"Do you mean it?" demanded Ned wonderingly. "I thought you were saying it to please me. Funny that you should like her. Usually your taste is very good."

"Good!" echoed Maurer. "Of course it's good, and it tells me that that girl is a remarkable beauty."

"Nonsense!" scented Ned. "She's good looking, but commonplace. There are hundreds like her."

Maurer turned a look of ineffable scorn upon his friend and silently made his way to the table, where the breakfast now was spread.

The meal was eaten in silence, and for a second time within ten days Maurer departed for his office without the "good luck in your work, old man," which started Ned on his drawings in proper humor with himself.

Instead of going to his drawing board Ned went to the window, and for a long half hour he studied the dainty figure sewing by the window across the street.

He turned away with a sigh, then regarded the half completed sketch tacked to his drawing board. It was a remarkably good likeness of the girl opposite; but, kneading his rubber afresh, Ned started to efface the figure with another sigh for his lost ideal.

He took a melancholy pleasure in drawing in a girl who was tall and plump and whose hair glistened yellow against a crimson curtain. This was to be the frontispiece of a magazine, and he had wondered the afternoon before if the girl would see it and recognize her likeness. He had drawn nothing else but pictures of her since that first morning, and now he wondered how he had ever been such a fool.

That evening Maurer smoked his pipe in front of the window where he could watch his new divinity, and Ned, to avoid further rupture, clapped on his hat and went out for a street car ride, a form of amusement he detested, but which was better than watching Maurer make a fool of himself.

Ever since he had come to the city he and Crosby Maurer had been the firmest of friends. For three years they had lived together in the little four room apartment that had become a real home to them, and so closely had they studied each other's peculiarities there were none of the outbreaks of ill humor that had spoiled many such arrangements. This was the first time that there had come a real clash, and Bellingham felt it keenly.

On the edge of the trouble wore away, but there was no real resumption of the old friendship. Maurer was still too hurt to forget all that had been said in the heat of passion, though he had forgotten the things he had said to Ned at the first disagreement.

While there was a careful observance of the old forms, back of them was lacking the real regard that had made them something more than forms.

Vainly Ned sought to overcome his reversal of opinion, but it was nearly two weeks before he could change. Then as he was dressing one morning he chanced to glance through the half opened shutters, and a moment later he was in his friend's room.

"You win!" he cried with such abruptness that Maurer cut himself with the razor he was wielding. "That girl

is a raving beauty, Maurer. Funny that I should have taken that dislike to her, but it's gone now. She's all that you say she is."

"And that isn't much," was the reply in cold contempt. "Funny I should have raved about her. She looks like a chorus girl. It was a shock when I saw her this morning."

"Are you crazy?" stormed Ned. "Why, she's the daintiest little woman the world can show. She's better looking and sweeter than I thought she was at first."

"She's a tricky sort of young person," observed Maurer calmly. "One day she looks like the real thing, and then again she looks utterly commonplace. Funny you can only rave about her on one of her uninteresting days. I suppose that from now on you'll be drawing brunette dwarfs, no matter what sort of heroine the author likes. You'll lose your pull with the publishers if you keep that sort of thing up. Better see a doctor about it."

"You'd better see an oculist yourself if your eyes are so dull to real loveliness," retorted Ned. "When you have finished your breakfast let me know, and I'll come and get mine. The lease here runs out at the end of this month. I guess I won't renew my share, Maurer. Better get some one else."

"Think I'll move, too," assented Maurer. "I don't want to stay here with a female freak like that living across the way. I'll stop at the office on the way out and tell them to look for another tenant."

He went out to a lonely breakfast, and when he had gone Bellingham came out to play with the cold chops and the lukewarm coffee. He did not go to the drawing board in spite of the splendid inspiration of the girl across the way.

He was tremendously fond of Maurer, and this abrupt termination of their friendship, coming as it had, unsettled him for work. He could only puff at his pipe and wonder what it would be like to set up housekeeping alone in a smaller apartment. He would take an apartment in the same house to be near the girl, but he would need only one room.

Maurer paid the larger share of the joint rental. He was making more money and insisted that he would pay as much were he alone. Ned had appreciated his kindness, and when he did not look at the girl he reproached himself for his new ingratitude.

But when he saw the little brown head and the delicate profile through the window opposite he told himself that an unseeing brute like Maurer did not deserve sympathy.

The luncheon came up and was sent back untasted, and the afternoon shadows grew into dusk, and still Ned sat and smoked and thought.

The girl was gone now, but he could still fancy that she was there, and he was so absorbed with his thoughts that he did not hear the key turn in the lock, and not until Maurer burst in with a whoop that rattled the shades on the electric globes did he rouse himself.

"We're both right, old man!" shouted Maurer as he dragged Ned from his chair and forced him to participate in an impromptu war dance about the tiny parlor. "The prettiest girl in the world lives across the way, but your prettiest girl is not my prettiest girl, thank heaven! There are two of 'em, old man, yours and mine—at least they're going to be yours and mine, I hope."

He sank into a chair.

"I'm taking care of Gordon's clients while he's in Europe, and Mrs. Foster sent for me today to consult about some real estate deal. That's where my prettiest girl went! They're twins, Alice and Phoebe Bayard, and they're Mrs. Foster's nieces. She's an invalid, and they take turns living with her. She says it's too much of a strain to have them both there at once and to try to tell which is which. That's why sometimes it was my prettiest girl, and sometimes it was the one you liked. We made the mistake of thinking that they were only one. The old lady's going to Europe with a trained nurse for keeps. It's a good thing that we gave up this apartment. We'll need two, and they won't be in bachelor halls either."

Ned grasped his friend's hand in his own. "There's only one prettiest girl," he declared, "but yours isn't commonplace." And with that concession Maurer was content.

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**Political Meetings**

The undersigned will meet the electors of the First District of Queen's County at the following places:

Long River, Irishtown Hall, Monday June 21st.

French River, Tuesday, June 22nd.

Clifton, Wednesday, June 23rd.

Hope River, Thursday, June 24th.

Granville, Friday, June 25th.

Springton, Friday, June 26th.

Bradabane, Tuesday, June 29th.

Prediction, Wednesday, June 30th.

Emyvale, Thursday, July 1st.

Kelly's Cross, Friday, July 2nd.

Bonshaw, Saturday, July 3rd.

Crapaud, Monday, July 5th.

All meetings at 7:30 p. m.

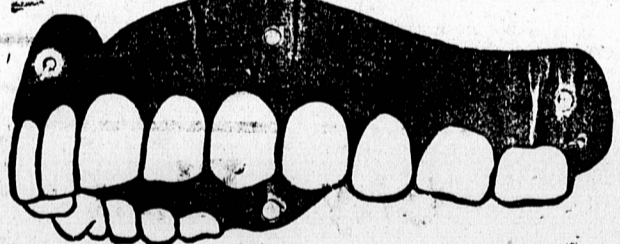
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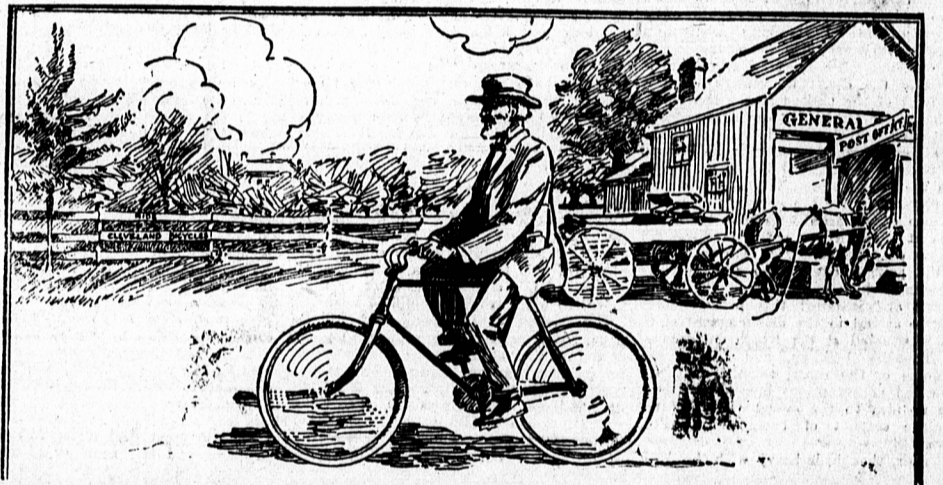
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