THE LARK

UNK·IN·A·LEAFY·WELL·I·LIE : AND·DREAMING;GAZE·INTO·THE·SKY
AR·UP·ABOVE·THE·TREE·TOPS·THERE : A·LARK·SWIMS·THROUGH·THE·VACANT·AIR

NUMBER 4 ❖ 5 CENTS

The Lark;

GELETT BURGESS

FLORENCE LUNDBORG
RICHARD REDFORTH
EDMOND CHARLROY

NUMBER 4

SAN FRANCISCO, AUGUST FIRST

1 8 9 5

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM DOXEY, 631 MARKET STREET. ISSUED MONTHLY. SUBSCRIPTION, SIXTY CENTS A YEAR.

Entered at the Post Office in San Francisco as second-class matter.

Copies of the Lark Poster for May may be had on application. Price, twenty-five cents, postpaid.

THE HALCYON DAYS.

A LITTLE wan-faced boy guided a plow to and fro all day across a clean, sweet field. With large head and small body, stumbling in and out of the furrow, now he held the plow, and now the plow held him. And by his side a rosy, black-eyed girl walked with him over the clods.

As they went together back and forth and back again in the sunshine, the Lark swung down the breeze, and met the smell of fresh-turned earth, and the jingle of the blackbirds in the maples; and he saw the boy and girl were in another world. For, as she tramped it up and down beside her brother, urging the old horse, that whole forenoon she read aloud to him, in her clear, young voice, out of a magic book the *Song of Hiawatha.*

"SHE HAD A KIND HEART," SAID VIVETTE.

HE whole world was open and we walked in, smiling. There was no one at home but a squirrel, so we sat down to wait. At last the people began to come back. First, there was a lame old man with his foot gone.

"Poor old man!" said Mamie, "I feel *so* sorry for you! Won't you take my foot?"

He was such a droll man with Mamie's little foot on him, but he would n't stay, and ran off, shouting. Then along came a boy, with his arm in a sling.

"Can't you get a good arm?" said Mamie; "here,—take mine!" So off went Mamie's right arm—and how I laughed at her!

"Faith, I'm all one-sided, and you 'll have to hold me up," said Mamie.

A little later they came, two by two, and thick as spatters, and by noon there was nothing left of good little Mamie but Mamie's voice.

Put me in your ear, so you'll not lose me," said Mamie.

Then all the rest came too, for the cripple man had told them, and "*O where's Mamie?*" they said.

"Tell them I'm up the tree," whispered Mamie's voice.

"She's gone up the tree after more limbs," said I.

So they all went up the tree after her.

"Is the whole world up there?" said Mamie.

"They're all up there," said I.

"Then call them down," said Mamie, "one by one."

So first a little girl came.

"Do you like black eyes?" said Mamie.

"Brown ones," said I, "like yours."

"Then let her go," said Mamie.

After a while another came down.

"She has eyes like yours," said I.

"They're prettier!" said Mamie, "or you'd never have said that; so take them!" So I took them away from her as she came down the tree; but I kissed her first, for Mamie could n't see.

"Now, I'll have a mouth next," said Mamie. (How she could have suspected I don't know, but she watched me with her two brown eyes after that.) It was a rosy mouth, with pretty milk teeth, that I got for her. There was nothing in the whole world like it.

"Now, you're safe," said Mamie.

"Do you like light hair, or dark?" said Mamie.

"Gold hair," said I, "with a spark in it," said I; and they came down by dozens, and ran away across the earth like ants, before I got any to suit her.

By this time Mamie was too pretty, almost. I kept turning my head to look at her. "Hurry up," said Mamie; "we must let them all go before night, and it's four o'clock already."

So Mamie grew, and grew. The folk were selfish at first, and stingy when I stopped them; but when they saw Mamie they were proud of her, and they'd say, "Oh, indeed, my hands are pretty enough; Teddy always said so!" But at first Mamie would refuse them, and turn up her nose. "Oh, please, take them, do," they'd say. "Well, perhaps they'll do," said Mamie.

The very last thing was a little pink toe, and Mamie was so particular that they were all out of the tree but three old men, before we knew it.

"The sun is setting," said Mamie; "I don't want their old toes; let them go."

So when the whole world was empty again, I was alone with a beautiful, *beautiful* Mamie.

"I'm afraid I shall limp a little, but I'm perfectly happy!" said Mamie.

OVER THE WEST HILLS.

HE has tightened her cinch by another inch,
she has shortened her stirrup-strap,
And she's off with a whirl of horse and
girl, and I'm a lucky chap!

With a "Catch if you can! I'm as good as
a man!" at a breakneck pace we ride.
I have all but placed my arm round her
waist, as we gallop side by side.

When "Roop! Ki Yi!!" and her elbows high, she spurts
in the cowboy style:
With a jerk and a saw at her horse's jaw, she's ahead for
another mile!

And it's Nancy's dust that breathe I must, and it's Nancy's
trail I follow,
Till I leave the rut for a steep short-cut, and I've caught
her down in the hollow.

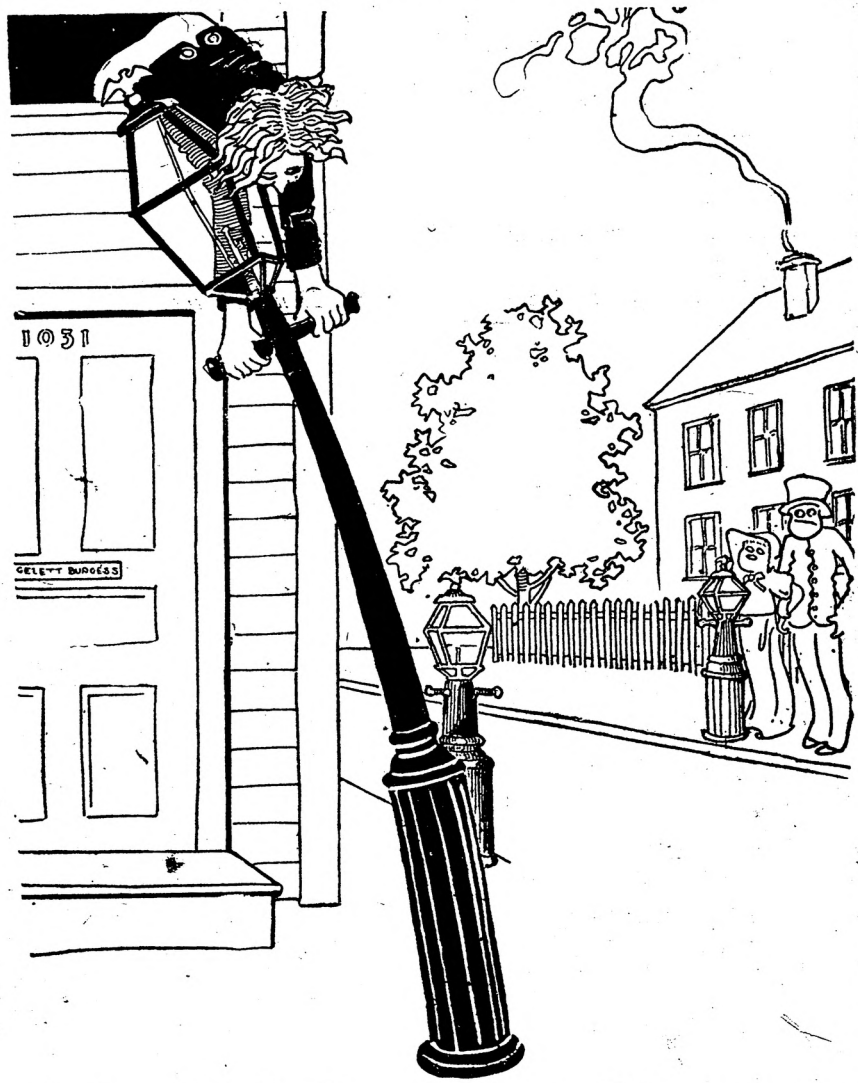
Then into the creek, with a splash and a shriek, to her
saddle-girth she dares;
"Oh, make for the shoal, or he'll stop and roll!" But
it's little that Nancy cares.

And up the hill she's ahead of me still, and over the ridge
we go!
And my steaming nag has begun to lag; but it is n't my
fault, I know.

Oh! fair astride does Nancy ride, and her spur she
uses free,
And it's little she cares for the gown she wears, and it's
little she cares for me!

But the strawberry-roan, with the sharp backbone, that
Nancy rode that day,
He does n't forget that Saturday yet when Nancy led the
way!

There is a Theory some deny,
That Lamp Posts once were three foot high



And a Little Boy was terrible strong,
And he stretched 'em out to 'leven foot long!

THE DIVERTING OF DEIGHTON.

IN truth, Deighton had never committed an indiscretion. He had never gone larking, linked arm in arm with Laughter, and, with Gayety for a guide, made zigzags through the fields of wild-oats he had never sown. He had followed, instead, the straight path of sobriety; and when he had come at last to the security of the church, it was with a mind virginal of a joke, and a heart, consequently, unfitted for the ministry to man, who stumbles so frequently into the snares set by Hilarity. Deighton had denied himself to Experience; but the Gods of Life will not let us keep the door shut to the knocking of the Teacher forever.

* * * * * * * * *

He was burrowing for his text in the second chapter of Ezra, when it leaped out at him, full-fledged, naked of device, so madly gay, so irreverent, so obscene, that he sprang to lock the door, and on the second, bowed on the desk and scattered the papers of his sermon with the blowing of his mirth! He laughed till the very pictures on the wall swung on their hangings; he shook the floor with his stamping, then rolled there till the paroxysm came to the gasp—then took it up again, his sides kneaded like dough, his chest flatted with the wind he could not breathe, and meantime his thoughts whirling, like a smutted pie-plate, level above his head. It was of a humor so wild, so irresistible, that it illuminated life for him—of meanings so various, so subtle, so vile, that his brain blackened and his heart clutched with fear, till his blood was sent bouncing through his veins with the mirth of it, and his laughter cracked in his throat.

He became aware, at last, of the strained voice of his housekeeper at the door, appealing to his sanity, and through the keyhole he gasped his assurances, and told her with cheers that he would not come down to tea.

And he passed the night in the grip of his mirth, and at breakfast (haggard and joyless of feature) had but to open his mouth to fall into the trap the gods had set for him. He shouted at the suggestion of toast; he walked the floor at the offer of bacon; and the housekeeper gathered Apprehension and Injury to her bosom, and took them to her own apartment to nurse. And with the hours he saw it all: madness lay before him; the blighting of the hopes Her promise had made blossom; the withdrawal of all his chances of advance in the church that the Bishop (Her father) had given him glance of; and all his life lay naked and bare, because he had conceived a *bon mot*—rather a *bonne bouche*,—a mouthful of a story that had filled him full.

No, he must be manned, to resume life, to take up again the routine of the days—as if he had never broken it. He would resume habit upon this instant; he would go now and call upon Her,—and God give him strength to be sedate, to forget!

He went. He laid his mind for the old train of talk—the village poor, the choir's improvement, the missions' subscriptions. But the curse ran with him behind the hedges and gave him a spasm at every corner. He was admitted to the Palace—he was composed, equal to the minute; but She delayed it, and as he waited, here was the curse dodging behind the tea-table and bellying the door-hangings with mirth! And WHEN She came, his greeting was inarticulate with giggles and squeaks; and, with despair, he saw the vista of insane laughter opening before him, and he made his way, with broken apologies, to the street.

The fit was on him, and he reeled home. Already the news of his aberration had spread from his own house, and here he went gasping its confirmation.

He was home, and he obscured himself to think out solutions. Life was impossible till he had found one. There was only one: he must share the hilarity—tell for once, in all its circumvention, in all its sacrilegious detail, this story that was undoing him. Tell it! *But to whom?* Could he, of the cloth, give to a frolicsome world this that, in its roistering humor, could undo all the work of the Fathers in a day? And always the authorship to be HIS! To be known as HIS! He saw an inundation of vile hilarity swallow the world, and only he himself, standing on a sedate Ararat, safe of the flood he had instigated. No—not to the world! He passed the night in the fearful variety of sensation that the cursed knowledge—the joy of it—gave him; the horror of it turning him cold by turns. But with the dawn, he slept like a babe, with a broad smile upon his lips. He had found the solution—he would tell it to that soul of sobriety, of discretion, the Bishop!

And to the Bishop he went. His mirth of the day before, the affront of it to Her, had chilled the Bishop. And Deighton felt on the instant (he had never been critical before) how impervious his virtues had made the Bishop. They had varnished him, besides, with that vanity of all vanities—a manner. Despair dragged at Deighton's heart, Humour chucked at his ribs.

The Bishop was plugged with propriety, but Deighton went on; he spoke words of convention, of the thorny path where temptation led him, and the Bishop looked sympathy. But when Deighton had laid the cloth of contrition, and then asked the Bishop—in pity, that he might save his soul,—to share with him a feast of humorous

impropriety, the Bishop squeaked with indignation and alarm, and, red with choler, togged out of the room, and Deighton went cheering home.

His one thought now was to tell the tale. Discretion began to grow phantom.

He *would* tell it. He hastened to the station, bought his ticket anywhere, and found himself at a small fishing village and an obscure resort, on the Channel Coast. He formulated his plan with desperation; he timed his trains. He was unknown here absolutely; and he would make his way to the outskirts of the town, hurl the talk in all its variety to some embarking fisherman, give him a guinea, yell with him for an hour, feel the human clap of comradeship upon his back, help push the boat from shore, and—who can tell what sudden flaw in the wind, what mismanagement of a helmsman, so overloaded with mirth, might do with a boat? At least *he* would be rid of it—and then back by the speeding train to right his life again and go steady.

He sped the streets, the beach, with its booths, the villas fronting the cliff walk; his goal was in sight beyond the cheerful, homely cottages, quiet under the sun. His mind fell to visions of the change his tale would bring the lives of the fisher folk, by slow degrees, the lives of the dwellers in the villas—the story coming in by the trades entrances with the fish; but the Devil was father to that tale, and he was to be done with it and home again. He plunged down the hill, and—confusion! the curse of the Gods!—pale and cold, *She* was coming up!

He gave one cry for thwarted freedom and despair, and turning, fled! The station, the train, home—all in a whirl—and then the merciful blank. The days passed dark. He heaved at intervals with hopeless laughter, and again he wept helpless tears.

ONTINUED.

He had one hour of brightening. It was when it came to him to tell it to Her. She was his betrothed; she was a woman who could be kind; and she might, too, be brave. If he told her all, all would be explained, and he might resume his life. Then, at a swoop, came blackness and giant strokes at the foundations of his soul! He saw Her sacrificed. And he—*he* could never *marry* a woman who knew *such* a story!

The book of his life was closed. He lay in hiding for weeks, and without hope.

* * * * * * * * *

A letter to the Bishop, after days of waiting, brought at last his release from England, and permission to pursue his works in foreign parts. The Bishop's letter was frigid, —and Deighton wandered south.

* * * * * * * * *

In a mountain village of Afghanistan see Deighton very grey now; and scandalously scant, his parishioners of the old day would think, his costume.

The years had carried off one by one his garments.

His watch (the beating heart of the absolutely respectable) was hanging silent on the breast of the Chief. It had bought his immunity from matrimony with the ladies of the tribe. The privation of his life had struck deepest with the ragging into nothingness of his last handkerchief; since then he had grown friendly with sacrifice.

And the years had gone; fourteen he had counted by the fall of the seasons, and now the time was ripe. Fourteen years of devotion; fourteen years of the patient teaching of one smiling savage. He had carried him by gentle stages through the intracacies of acknowledged humor.

Gently, at first he had guided the heathen mind through the mild and thought-stirring wit of the First Readers of England and the States:—

"Do we go up?
We do go up!"
"The hen is on the bed.
Why is the hen on the bed?"

And the savage smiled.

He had followed this mildly, with—

"H was an indigent Hen,
Who picked up a corn now and then.
She had but one leg
On which she could peg—
And behind her left ear was a wen."

It *seemed* to please; and hope was kept alight in Deighton's bosom.

It was the twelfth year of his labor, that a plague struck the village panic, and with terror he saw the fruits of his labor about to be snatched. He fought for the life of his pupil with desperation—and the long convalescence he cheered with somewhat indiscreet readings from Rabelais. And the savage seemed *awfully* pleased.

Ah! man's heart! What toil! Theology, classical history, and the wide readings in pure and impure literature—the traditions of the culture of centuries, to teach this poor heathen in a decade. Yet all this was part of it; and how Deighton slaved! There were days when he could n't—when he sat in driveling laughter in his hut and wept.

But his reward was within reach—the day when he might tell his tale, then, speeding northward, leave the savage to his paroxysms,—and he back in cleanly England again, and * * * How dear the thought!

CONTINUED.

And the day came. He took the savage by the hand, and, with titters, led him into the fastnesses of the hills. His heart was tremulous, his hands were cold, his sides heaving, and his tongue clucking the roof of his mouth. He took a little stimulant to nerve him. His eyes made mute appeal to the savage for gayety. Then, with fear upon him, Deighton began. Old memories swam, he tried control, but there in that savage dingle he rolled again on the study floor; he enacted the scene in the palace, when he went reeling out. All the old abandonment was on him. And it seemed to amuse the native.

At last he sobered to speech. He told the story—told it with the exquisite *finesse*—the flavor that had come with years. And he built to the climax, step by step; laid one exquisite phrase against the next; played variable lights and colors over the whole; and when he came to it, he turned the point between his lips in the unspeakable refreshment of the delight of release—then blew it forth! And the sky blacked and the hills rocked, and he fell—with a last shout of joy in it. He lay there, he knew not how long, spent, but serene. It was done! No longer his—he was free. His ear opened to the distant calling of cocks. He sat up—renewed—in the clear air of dawn—Free!

"My teacher," came a voice, "am I to remember the tale of last night as coming under the head of the Instructive—or the Amusing?"

The Lark is printed by C. A. Murdock & Co., 532 Clay Street, San Francisco. They are printers without a specialty; but regarding printing as an art as well as a business, they are especially equipped for fine work. They recognize, however, no essential connection between high art and high prices.