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# LOVE IN Its TENDERNESS

IDYLLS OF  
ENOCHDHU

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*"The greatest of these is love"*

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III.  
A MATHEMATICIAN'S LOVE  
STORY.

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HE was a Mathematician from his birth, but the thing that settled his career was an experiment in optics. His father was only a shepherd, and a douce man at that, but he had wit enough to know the stamp of genius. He had watched over his son from the day he taught him "Three-times-Three." That was when the boy was two years old. He was seven now, and dipping into science and algebra on his own account, when the light of a candle showed the shepherd the path of duty.

The candle had been stolen and the experiment had been planned for a week. The Mathematician was supposed to be

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fast asleep, and the shepherd was himself in bed, when a ray of light came through the floor of the loft where his son lay. The shepherd rose, and crept up the ladder, and watched. The boy, in his sark, was placing the candle between two parallel plane mirrors facing each other. He took a foot-rule (it had been borrowed from young Duncie Broom) and measured.

“Three feet 'tween the mirrors. Yae fit frae the cannel tae the first mirror. Sae, twa frae the second. Problem—find the distance frae the first mirror o' the three nearest images seen in't. Ditto for the second.”

For a few minutes the boy was working on a slate, the shepherd watching him the while with growing wonder and admiration.

“Answer—one, five, and seven feet ahint the first mirror, and two, four, and eight ahint the second.”

Then the Mathematician rose, put the mirrors in their places, picked up the flint (lent by Gordon of Tomnamoan) with which

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he had lit the candle, blew that out, and went to sleep.

The shepherd stole down the ladder and crept to bed.

An hour afterwards his wife heard him muttering :

“It's no canny. But the laddie that'll get up oot o' his bed tae dae a coont like that hes mair in him.”

And next day he led the Mathematician down to the Dominie.

Dominie Baird (the auld master that ruled Enochdhu before my dominie came—a maker of men), henceforth had him for his own. He put him through a course of Pure Mathematics, and found him cantering through Euclid, Book XII., ere most of the school had entered Book III. He tried him with Trigonometry and Conic Sections, and saw the boy delight in symbols, like an artist in forms, or a child in toys. He went on to applied Mathematics and found his appetite keener still. The charm of science now lay on every problem, and the scholar

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ate greedily. The Dominie could not contain himself for joy. And, when he died, he prophesied aloud, that the nation would never lack a mathematician while Angus Smith lived.

He was a long, lanky, big-boned boy, with a great head that seemed too heavy for him and hung down on his shoulders, covered with a shock of fair hair. His face was open and simple, his mouth firmly set, his brow broad and high, his eyes deep-blue and hazy, as if filled with visions far away. He thought in symbols and resolved everything into figures. Mathematical problems were ever starting up in him, and he set himself to solve them wherever he might be, whatever doing. Naturally, he was a source of great amusement to every boy in the Glen, as well as of wonder. They joked him in Enochdhu, but, in the great world beyond, they were proud of him, and spoke oft the glories of our Symbolist.

“ Find the velocity wi' which this ba' hits

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Fergusson's heid, Angus," would Gordon of Tomnamoan cry.

"An' the distance it hed stotted back hed it hit me," would Fergusson answer, ducking the ball.

"First," would the Mathematician answer, "ye maun gi'e me the 'resistance' o' yer heid, Ferg. Noo the 'resistance' o' wood is——"

But he never finished, for Fergusson had shied the ball, and struck him on the brow, shouting—

"The same as that, Angus!" amid the loud laughter of the Glen.

As a rule, however, the boys were very tolerant of him, and found much pleasure in his strangeness. Now and again, as the mood took them, they would even try to puzzle him with questions. Then was the Mathematician glorified in Enochdhu.

One bright day they went fishing. In the Pass the Mathematician suddenly stopped at a fir tree. The boys waited and smiled.

"Oot wi't."

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“Gin soon traivels along fir the wy o’ the fibres, at the rate o’ 15,000 feet a second, whit maun be the length o’ a fir rod that, when vibratin’ longitudinally in its fundamental mode, it may gie a note o’ 750 vibrations a second?”

The boys held their breath while he counted. In a minute the answer came :

“Ten feet, as sure as I’m a leevin’ soul!”

That triumph led Gordon of Tomnamoan when he came to the river to put a poser. He noticed, as he went to seek a trout near the Garry brig, that the inverted image of the concavity of the arch received his shadow exactly as a real inverted arch would do if it were in the place where the image appeared to be.

“Explain it, Angus, an’ll gi’e ye a’ the trout I catch the day.”

“Oh, that’s an easy yin. It’s this. The sun’s image throws a shadow o’ your image on the arch itsel’, owin’ tae yir body stoppin’ the rays on their wy tae the water.

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It's ower easy, Gor. Ye made a bargain, but I'll gi'e ye hauf back."

Soon the boys came to a place where the trout were known to lie. They waded into the water and commenced to guddle. They went silently to work, but raced to see who would catch a dozen first.

It was bonnie to watch them lift the stones, and seize the silver trout, and toss them to the bank. The enthusiasm overmastered the Mathematician, and he waded in. But just as he was tickling his first, Ferguson shouted,

"A dizzen! An' bonnie yins tae!"

And the silver beauty darted from Angus' hand.

Then his spirit possessed him. The world of trout and merriment passed and his heaven of figures drew nigh. Ferguson, scorning him for losing his trout, watched him with a smile.

"Whit noo, Angus?"

"The lowest an' highest notes of the human voice ha'e about 80 an' 800 vibra-



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tions each a second. Problem—find the wave-lengths in water in which the velocity o' soond is 4,900 feet a second!"

And there, standing in the water, with the silver trout playing about his feet, the Mathematician worked it out.

"Answer— $61\frac{1}{4}$  feet for the lowest note, an'  $6\frac{1}{8}$  feet for the highest. That, an' nae mair!"

And then went on guddlin' as if nothing whatever had happened.

"He's a winner," said Fergusson, as he bent to the work again.

"Twa dizzen," he cried, shortly.

And by that time the Mathematician had caught one, and was on the hunt after a problem that must have slipped him like his first trout, for it never came to the consciousness of the Glen, and never straightened his own back.

On the way home they rested by a deep, smooth pool near the Soldier's Leap. In this pool there was said to be a trout so fat that it could not get out. No boy had ever

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seen it, but every one was sure of it, and each had a tale to tell.

"I fished it wi' a line yae day," said Gordon "but juist as I wes pooin' it oot, the line snapped, an' it ran awa. It wes as big as—as—as—ma airm!"

"I saw it a month syne," said Fergusson. "It wes rushin' efter anither ane that hed got into the pool. An' it made a' the water foam. It loupit oot efter the wee yin, an' I had time tae measure it. As sure as daith, it wes as big as—as—as—oor Jock!"

Jock was four feet four inches tall.

"I saw it yesterday," said Buchanan o' Crankie. "It wes staunin' on its tail an' catchin' midges! An' it wes as big as—as—as—a whale!"

Whereat Gordon and Fergusson were very angry, and called him "a leear," and asserted the truth of their own stories. And it was this righteous indignation against Buchanan, "a leear," that was the cause of what followed.

The Mathematician, simple-like, was

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bending over the pool, if haply he might catch a sight of the wonder, when his spirit possessed him. He took a tiny lens from his pocket and held it over the pool.

"Whit's he up tae, noo?" asked Gordon.

"A dinna ken, an' a dinna care," growled Buchanan.

"Somethin' by ordinar," answered Fergusson, catching sight of the lens, afire with the sun.

"The rays o' a vertical sun," said the Mathematician, "are brocht tae a focus by a lens at a distance o' yae fit frae the lens. Gin I haud the lens juist abune the pool, at whit depth in the water will the rays come tae a focus?"

"Gang in an' see," growled Buchanan, giving a push and sending him headlong into the pool. He was angry at being called "a leear."

"An' you gang in an' prove it," shouted Fergusson, infuriated, sending him sprawling into the water.

"That'll teach ye tae be a leear," said

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Gordon solemnly, as Buchanan rose to the top, panting and blowing, "The ways o' transgressors are hard!"

"Saxteen inches," answered the Mathematician, crawling on to the bank. "Saxteen inches, no a nippie mair!"

"Come awa, Angus. It's no guid for ye tae be in the company o' a leear!"

And they dragged him up the bank.

At the top they turned and watched Buchanan climbing out of the pool.

"Tak' care, Buchanan," cried Gordon, anxiously. "It thinks ye're a midge, man. It's stannin' on it's tail! Look!"

"Oh, tak' care, Buchanan," mocked Ferguson. "It's as big as—as—as a whale, man, an' it'll swallow ye! Oh, for yer mither's sake, tak' care!"

And, so mocking, these two righteous heroes burst into loudest laughter, and took to their heels, and scampered home, leaving Buchanan to follow as best he could.

The fate of the Mathematician's life lay in the eyes of Jeannie MacLintock of Auld-

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clune. She was a little lithe-limbed lass, with wild black eyes that shone with super-abounding life. She was the leader of the schule in every frolic, leader of all the boys and girls, wilder than the wildest boy in Enochdhu. She could guddle trout, climb trees, run a race with the best of them. Her great delight was to mount her father's untamed colts, and ride them, bare-backed, till they dropped. The law of opposites was surely at work when it brought these two together. And Fate was very hard.

She was his father's master's daughter, and frisked to schule, leaving the Mathematician to follow carrying her bag. That came to pass this way. One day, on the road to schule, the spirit descended on Angus. He was long time silent, then was given speech.

"Gin I cairried your bag an' mine, Jean, weighing say twal pounds, frae here tae the schule-hoose, say yae mile, whit amount o' 'work' wad I dae?"

"Better try, Angus!" Jean answered, handing him her bag.

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And from that day the Mathematician carried her bag always.

At first he thought it was rather hard of her, but came to like it by and by. He did not yet know that it was love that made him. Soon enough for that! Soon enough for that!

Though content to make him her burden-bearer, the lithe-limbed Jean playfully smiled on the big-boned Mathematician till one day she led the schule bird-nesting up the Crag. There was a swallow's nest high up, and no one in the Glen had a swallow's egg, and Jeannie Maclintock cried she must have one. She tried to climb the Crag herself, but was beaten and angered. She urged every boy around, but to no purpose.

"It's owre high," they answered, one and all.

Meantime the Mathematician was far in the rear, shouting towards the Crag, listening all alert, and noting something. She spied him and ran back.

"The velocity o' soond," he was saying to

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a wee wean, when she reached him, "is 1100 feet a second, Noo, the echo frae the Crag comes back tae me in yin an' a hauf seconds. Problem—whit is the distance o' the Crag frae where we're stannin'?"

"Angus, I want ye," broke in Jean.

"Whit for, Jean?"

"Tae get me a swallow's egg."

"Where is't, Jean?"

"There, Angus, up there. An' no yin o' them'll get it for me."

"It's owre high," they answered, in dudgeon.

But the Mathematician did not hear them.

Slowly he began to climb the crag, clinging with hands and feet to the jutting rocks. Twice his footing gave way, and he was nearly hurled to the ground. But he recovered, and mounted higher and higher, very slowly and with increasing pain. Breathless, the boys looked up at him, with fear on their faces. And Jean's heart beat wildly. A third time the Mathematician

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missed his footing, and a bit of the Crag came dashing down to their feet.

"He'll get killed," whispered Gordon.

"An' it'll be your blame, Jean," added Fergusson.

But, up and up went the Mathematician, till at last he came to the nest.

"825," he cried.

"Hoo mony?" asked Gordon.

"825," he answered.

"Gang awa wi' ye, Angus. Speak the truth, man!"

"825 feet, as sure as daith!"

"Feet? Wha's speakin' aboot feet? Hoo mony eggs are there?"

"Three."

"That's liker't. Noo, come doon."

The Mathematician put the eggs in his bonnet and began to descend. But he found this harder far than climbing. Jean, who had not spoken a word, watched him with great excitement.

"Tak' care, Angus," she cried, as he came



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to where his footing gave way the second time on mounting.

A moment later she screamed and bounded forward. The Mathematician had fallen.

As fortune would have it he fell on a bramble-bush some twenty feet below, and six from the ground. And as Jean bounded forward she caught him as he tumbled from the bush to the ground.

“Are ye hurt, Angus?”

“No muckle, Jean,” he answered, wiping the blood from his bramble-scratched face.

And he looked up into her eyes. They were gentle as his mother's and filled with tears.

Then the Mathematician knew that he loved her.

“Here's yir eggs, Jean. They're a wee bit broken, but ye can blaw them oot . . . 825 feet. That's hoo faur we were frae the Crag when we heard the echo. As sure as I'm a leevin' soul!”

“Nae mair eggs for me, Angus,” answered Jean.

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And she took him by the hand and led him away.

Never was a hand so tender, thought he. To his dying day the Mathematician lived on that loving touch.

The crisis came about a year later. Rab Maclintock found Auldclune too hard to till, and too small for sheep, and, like many another in the Glen since, and thousands throughout his native land, he determined to emigrate. At first, the joy of travel and adventure, far afield, possessed Jean, and carried her many days. Then, as the time drew near when she must leave "home," a sense of weariness and loneliness overcame her. And in her weariness she turned to the Mathematician. And all the sentimental that was in her woke.

The night before she went away they met by the Garry and wandered through the Pass together. Her heart was very tender, and, like the child she was, she let it speak. She leant on a stile and wept, and he dried her tears.

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"Here, Angus, let me peen it on yir breast—a sprig o' ivy—and a wee blue floo'er, "I-cling-to-thee," "Forget-me-not!"

And she held up her face to be kissed.

And the Mathematician kissed her.

It was his first kiss—and his last.

She was twelve years of age and he thirteen. What wonder that when she went away she forgot? She was only a child. Her new strange life engulfed her. The old passed like a childish dream. The new grew up, and wiped it out. She forgot! She forgot! And the Mathematician in course of time became a blurred memory.

But with him it was different. That meeting and parting were real forever. That kiss lingered on his lips. That tender look stirred his heart, and would not pass away.

The boy grew to a man, big-boned, long, and lanky, and his love for Jean Maclintock outpaced his years. He looked for the letter that never came. Still his heart was true. Robbed of all ambition, he stayed on in Enochdhu, and, in time, became Postman

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and Mathematical tutor to the Glen. Still the letter never came to him, though many a love-song he carried to others. Only one bit of news, indeed, ever reached the Glen of her. Rab sent Gordon a Canadian paper with a note of her marriage. No one knew of the Mathematician's lasting love for her, and so he never was told even this. Nor did he hear till, thirty years later, her son came to Enochdhu, and told that Jean was dead.

In the Glen, too, he was counted heartless, loveless, a passionless sage, wedded to symbols, affianced to figures. They twitted him about women, and put him mathematical queries as to the number of wedless maidens in the world, and the simple fraction that might easily be resolved by him.

But he answered them not a word.

He went on with his work, loving her in secret with a great and deathless love—till near the end. Then it all came out, and he was honoured by every heart in Enochdhu.

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One day he was on his round and came to the ruins of Auldclune. The grass grew on the broken thatch and on the "chuckies" (smooth stones) round the door. The windows had fallen out. The door lay across the entry. The north gable had lain on the ground for many winters. The garden was overgrown with bracken, and only one old gooseberry tree stood to mark the spot. It was a desolate, dreary ruin, to be seen, to-day, repeated a thousand times, all over braid Scotland. But to the Mathematician it was the bonniest place in all the Glen.

Coming from the ruin, Gordon of Tomnamoan met him full in the face.

"A letter for ye," he said, and hurried on.

But Gordon had time to see the look in his eyes.

"He's a queer yin, Angus. There's nae accountin' for the wy feegures thraw him. But that's no the look o' symbols. . . Problem—find o' what!"

And Gordon looked after him, much puzzled.

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“Sall!” he shouted, an hour later, startling his collie out of its wits, “Sall! I’ve got it! Love—that’s the answer. ‘An’ Jeannie Maclintock’s the lass. Dae ye no mind hoo he cairried her bag tae schule . . . an’ speilt the Crag for her? . . . An’ the ivy that’s a’ owre his hoose is it no the same as covers Auldclune, an’ found in nae ither place in a’ the Glen? . . . Sall, but we were a pair lot no tae hae fun’ that oot afore noo!”

And from that day the Mathematician was glorified in the Glen.

Angus Smith went home that night and took a withered flower from his Book. It was the flower Jean pinned on his breast that summer eve long ago. He felt the thrill of her kiss still, and saw the tears in her eyes! And he bent and kissed the flower softly. It was broken and withered and brown, but its message was fresh in his heart.

And there in his book the flower lay till he died, and lies unto this day—a memorial

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of the greatness of his love. I have it in my desk now, and, when my heart is faithless or weary, I take it out, and have a long, long look.