

PATERNITY PAYOFF

One old Scandinavian bachelor had a reputation for raising some of the best fruit in town. During strawberry season he brought in a wagonload of fruit every day for us to pack and ship to the market. During the peak of the season he hired several local women and young girls to pick the fruit and produce. Being soft-hearted and compassionate, he was easy to work for and sometimes quite generous with the presents and extra bonuses for the ladies. It was also rumored that occasionally some of them did special favors for him above and beyond the call of fruit picking duty.

He came one evening, depositing a small load of manure from his boots onto the parlor carpet, and leaving behind a barn stench that stayed with the room for days.

"Vell, I tink maybe ve better talk, Brudder Clem. You know tree year ago I tell you it be alright if dese people get vot dey need and put it on my bill at da store. Tree year now dey do it and I say nutting. You know vy." "Pshaw, I know why. The husband claimed you were the father of his wife's baby. Were you?" "Yaw, denn I tought maybe could be. Not no more, and I don't vant dey put an udder penny on my bill.

"Of course, that's up to you, but what's changed your mind?"

"I talk to my bishop and he say, 'Gustave, day voman's 'baby tree year old now and anybody can see he da spitten image of her man. You not da papa of dat child.' He say, 'dose people not in our vard. Dat man outa my reach, but you see Brudder Clem about it.'"

"Well Gustave, have you seen the little fellow lately? Does he look like you or the other man?"

"He look yust like him. He don't look like me,"

"Confound it man. I'd say you really paid dear for that load of forbidden fruit. It better be the last time for you ever again. Maybe the Lord will forgive you. That's not for me to say. You tell those people not to bother you about the matter anymore. Your account with them is closed. If they say anything about it tell them to come and see me."

I don't believe they ever came around to talk about it.