Faded, Yellowed, Tattered and Torn

Uncollected Works of Lucy Maud Montgomery

A compilation of lost stories, transcribed from their original magazine scans.

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PUBLISHING HISTORY

In Haying Time *The Ladies' World*, July 1897.
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A Girl's Place at Dalhousie College, 1896 *The Halifax Herald*, 1896. Reprinted in *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice*, Volume 5, Number 1, 1979.
An Open Letter from a Minister's Wife *The Chatelaine*, October, 1931. Death date of the illustrator Edith McLaren is unknown; illustrations have been omitted.
A June Memory *Smith's Magazine: A Publication for the Home*, May 1910.
The Woods in Summer *The Canadian Magazine*, 1911.
The Woods in Autumn *The Canadian Magazine*, October 1911.
The Woods in Winter *The Canadian Magazine*, December 1911.
Spring in the Woods *The Canadian Magazine*, May 1911.
A Winter Dawn *Munsey*, December 1899.
The Little Gable Window *Designer*, May 1907.
Our Charivari *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, May 9, 1896.
Our Practical Joke *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, August 8, 1896.
Our Uncle Wheeler *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, January 22, 1898.
A Missing Pony *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, October 17, 1896.
A Pastoral Call *The Christian Herald and Signs of Our Times*, Part I: April 13, 1898; Part II: April 20, 1898.
Old Hector's Dog *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, June 4, 1898.
A New-Fashioned Flavoring *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, August 27, 1898.
A Brave Girl *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, July 19, 1899.
A Double Joke *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, January 21, 1899.
A Country Boy *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, January 8, 1898.
Uncle Dick's Little Girl *American Agriculturist Weekly*, August 15, 1903.
Aunt Rose's Girl *New England Homestead*, June 18, 1904.
Margaret Ann's Mother *Farm and Fireside*, September 10, 1910. Illustrated by Robert A. Graef
Uncle Chatterton's Gingerbread *Housewife*, March 1912.
Josephine's Husband *The Housewife*, January 1913.
A Patent Medicine Testimonial *The Star Monthly*, April 1903.

Teddy's Mother *Vick's Family Magazine*, September 1902.
How Grandma Ran Away *New England Homestead*, March 27, 1909.
The Violet's Spell *The Ladies' World*, July 1894.

INTRODUCTION

Montgomery was nothing if not prolific. Every month some journal, magazine, or newspaper carried one of her poems, stories or essays.

Some of these were filler. Some the lead articles. Some a single page, others multiple parts over the issues, and were assembled into her famous novels. Stories targeted at youth, romances targeted at the housewife, moralistic tales for the religious, Montgomery produced a tale for everyone.

At the turn of the 20th century, before radio, tv, and the internet, periodicals abounded, giving Montomery many places to be published. Some of these stories were modified into novels: and the originals lost. Some of these many stories were collected and loosely tied together into the books such as *The Story Girl*, and *The Golden Road*.

Other stories languished until being rediscovered at the end of the 20th century, when Rea Wilmhurst collected many into such collections as *Akin to Anne: Tales of Other Orphans*; or *Along the Shore: Tales of the Sea*.

But many others were never collected—some may not exist anymore. In this anthology, we present works which to the best of our research have not been popularly collected before. Of course, her stories sometimes changed name, and appeared again in another publication, so we could have missed some!

All these works come from old newspaper and magazine scans: yellowed, faded, and generally hard to read. We've done our best to transcribe the works as originally written, and, where possible, include any images that were in the magazines.

Some of these works are truly awful, and perhaps should have been left lost in obscurity, of interest only to the true Montgomery aficionados. Others you will have to judge for yourself. Never collected because it was lost? Or not worth the bytes we use to publish it today?

Enjoy!

Alex White
Distributed Proofreaders Canada
September, 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The vast majority of these stories come from the scans found on the website kindredspaces.ca, a project by the L. M. Montgomery Institute at the University of Prince Edward Island.

The institute has placed online The Ryrie-Campbell Collection. This collection was the lifetime work of Dr. Donna Jane Campbell, a leading collector of publications by and about L. M. Montgomery.

This work would not have been possible without this collection.

Many of the members of Distributed Proofreaders Canada struggled over the faded pages of these scans. Without them, this work would never have been assembled. If you like this work, the limitation on our works is always a lack of volunteers, the more volunteers, the more works we can save.

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In Haying Time

First published *The Ladies' World*, July 1897.

Wide meadows under lucent skies,
Lie open, free to sun and breeze,
Where bird and bee and rustling leaf
Blend all their air-born melodies
In one sweet symphony of sound.
The lush green grasses bend and sway,
And fleet winds steal from new-mown slopes
The fragrance of the clover hay.

The fields at dawn are silver-white,
And wet with their baptismal dew;
They ripen in the long rare noons,
Beneath a dome of cloudless blue.
And in the twilight's purple dusk,
How solemn, hushed and dim they lie!
At night the mellow moon looks down
From silent, star-sown depths of sky.

Each passing hour of night and day
Some new and rare enchantment brings,
In flowers the bloom and winds that blow,
And joy of shy, blithe living things
That hide within the meadows green,
Or murmur in the drowsy fields;
And all the golden air is sweet
With incense rose-red clover yields.

Faint whispers wander to and fro,
On idle winds, from east to west.
The dainty blossoms lift their cups
Of perfume o'er the blue bird's nest,
The meadow larks their raptures trill
To drown the brooklet's murmering chime,
When ripened summer ushers in
The witcheries of the haying time.

Essays

A Girl's Place at Dalhousie College, 1896

First published in *The Halifax Herald*, 1896.
Reprinted in *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice*, Volume 5, Number 1, 1979.

"Why, sirs, they do all this as well as we."

"Girls,
Knowledge is now no more a fountain sealed;
Drink deep until the habits of the slave,
The sins of emptiness, gossip and spite,
And slander, die. Better not be at all
Than not be noble."

"Pretty were the sight,
If our old halls could change their sex and flaunt
With prudes for proctors, dowagers for deans,
And sweet girl graduates in their golden hair."
Tennyson—"The Princess."

It is not a very long time, as time goes in the world's history, since the idea of educating a girl beyond her "three r's" would have been greeted with up lifted hands and shocked countenances. What! Could any girl, in her right and proper senses, ask for any higher, more advanced education than that accorded her by tradition and custom? Could any girl presume to think that the attainments of her mother and grandmother before her, insufficient for her? Above all, could the dream of opposing her weak feminine mind to the mighty masculine intellect which had been dominating the world of knowledge from a date long preceding the time when Hypatia was torn to pieces by a mob of Alexandria?

"Never," was the approved answer to all such questions. Girls were "educated" according to the standard of the time. That is they were taught reading and writing and a small smattering of foreign languages; they "took" music and were trained to warble pretty little songs and instructed in the mysteries of embroidery and drawing. The larger proportion of them, of

course, married, and we are quite ready to admit that they made none the poorer wives and mothers because they could not conjugate a Greek verb or demonstrate a proposition in Euclid. It is not the purpose of this article to discuss whether, with a broader education, they might not have fulfilled the duties of wifehood and motherhood equally well and with much more of ease to themselves and others.

Old traditions die hard and we will step very gently around their death bed. But there was always a certain number of unfortunates—let us call them so since the world would persist in using the term—who, for no fault of their own probably, were left to braid St. Catherine's tresses for the term of their natural lives; and a hard lot truly was theirs in the past. If they did not live in meek dependence with some compassionate relative, eating the bitter bread of unappreciated drudgery, it was because they could earn a meagre and precarious subsistance in the few and underpaid occupations then open to women. They could do nothing else! Their education had not fitted them to cope with any and every destiny; they were helpless straws, swept along the merciless current of existence.

If some woman, with the courage of her convictions, dared to make a stand against the popular prejudice, she was sneered at as a "blue-stocking," and prudent mothers held her up as a warning example to their pretty, frivolous daughters, and looked askance at her as a not altogether desirable curiosity.

But, nowadays, all this is so changed that we are inclined to wonder if it has not taken longer than a generation to effect the change. The "higher education of women" has passed into a common place phrase.

A girl is no longer shut out from the temple of knowledge simply because she is a girl; she can compete, and has competed, successfully with her brother in all his classes. The way is made easy before her feet; there is no struggle to render her less sweet and womanly, and the society of to-day is proud of its "sweet girl-graduates."

If they marry, their husbands find in their wives an increased capacity for assistance and sympathy; their children can look up to their mothers for the clear-cut judgment and the wisest guidance. If they do not marry, their lives are still full and happy and useful; they have something to do and can do it well, and the world is better off from their having been born in it.

In England there have been two particularly brilliant examples of what a girl can do when she is given an equal chance with her brother; these are so widely known that it is hardly necessary to name them. Every one has read and heard of Miss Fawcett, the brilliant mathematician, who came out ahead of the senior wrangles at Cambridge, and of Miss Ramsay, who led the classical tripos at the same university.

In the new world, too, many girl students have made for themselves a

brilliant record. Here, every opportunity and aid is offered to the girl who longs for the best education the age can yield her. There are splendidly equipped colleges for women, equal in every respect to those for men; or, if a girl prefers co-education and wishes to match her intellect with man's on a common footing, the doors of many universities are open to her. Canada is well to the front in this respect and Dalhousie college, Halifax, claims, I believe, to have been the second college in the Dominion to admit girl students, if we can use the word "admit" of an institution which was never barred to them. Girls, had they so elected, might have paced, with notebook and lexicon, Dalhousie's classic halls from the time of its founding. When the first application for the admission of a girl to the college was received, the powers that were met together in solemn conclave to deliberate thereon, and it was found that there was nothing in the charter of the college to prevent the admission of a girl.

Accordingly, in 1881 two girls, Miss Newcombe and Miss Calkin, were enrolled as students at Dalhousie. Miss Calkin did not complete her course, but Miss Newcombe did and graduated in 1885 with honors in English and English history,—the first of a goodly number who have followed in her footsteps. Miss Newcombe afterwards became Mrs. Trusman and is now on the staff of the Halifax Ladies' college. In 1882 Miss Stewart entered, took the science course and graduated in 1886 as B.Sc. with honors in mathematics and mathematical physics.

In 1887 three girls graduated, Miss Forbes and Miss MacNeill each took their degree of B.A., the latter with high honors in English and English history. The third, Miss Ritchie, the most brilliant of Dalhousie's girl graduates took her B.L., she then took her Ph.D., at Cornell university and is now associate professor of philosophy in Wellesley college. Then occurs a hiatus in the list, for we find no girls graduating till 1891 when there were four who received their degrees, Miss Goodwin, Miss McNaughton and Miss Baxter in arts; Miss Muir took her degree of B.L.

In 1892 Miss Baxter, who had graduated with high honors in mathematics and mathematical physics, took her degree of M.A., after which she went to Cornell and there gained a Ph.D.

Miss Muir took her M.L., in 1893 and has since been studying for a Ph.D., at Cornell. In 1892 three girls, Miss Weston, Miss Archibald and Miss Harrington, obtained their B.A. degree. Miss Archibald graduated with great distinction and took her M.A. in 1891. Afterwards she went to Bryn Mawr college, winning a scholarship at her entrance. Miss Harrington graduated with high honors in English and English literature and became M.A. in 1894. She also won a scholarship at Bryn Mawr, where she is at present studying.

In 1893 the two girl graduates were Miss McDonald and Miss Murray, the

latter of whom took high honors in philosophy and is now on the staff of the Ladies college. The graduates of 1894 were Miss Hebb, B.A., Miss Hobrecker, B.A., Miss Jameison, B.A., and Miss Ross, B.A. Miss Hobrecker took honors in English and German. Miss Jameison and Miss McKenzie each took their M.A. in 1895. Miss Ross graduated with high honors in mathematics and mathematical physics. In 1895 three girls graduated B.A. Miss McDonald took honors in mathematics and mathematical physics; Miss Ross was the second Dalhousie girl to graduate with "great distinction," and takes her M.A. this year. Miss Bent is at present studying for her M.A.

It will be seen, from those statements, that, out of the twenty-five girls who have graduated from Dalhousie, nearly all have done remarkably well in their studies, and attained to striking success in their examinations. This, in itself, testifies to their ability to compete with masculine minds on a common level. This year there is a larger number of girls in attendance at Dalhousie than there has been in any previous year. In all, there are about fifty-eight, including the lady medical students. Of course, out of these fifty-eight a large proportion are not undergraduates. They are merely general students taking classes in some favorite subject, usually languages and history.

In all, there are about twenty-nine undergraduate girls in attendance this session. The number of girls in the freshman class is the largest that has yet been seen at Dalhousie. Out of the twenty-six girls, at whom disdainful sophs are privileged to hurl all the old jokes that have been dedicated to freshmen since time immemorial, there are nine undergraduates. In the second year are eleven girls, eight of whom are undergraduates; and in the third year six out of the nine girls are also undergraduates.

There are also nine girls in the fourth year, seven of whom graduate this session. This is the largest class of girls which has yet graduated from Dalhousie. Several of these are taking honors and will, it is expected, amply sustain the reputation which girl students have won for themselves at the university. No girl has as yet attempted to take a full course in law at Dalhousie. Not that any one doubts or disputes the ability of a girl to master the mysteries of "contracts" or even the intricacies of "equity jurisprudence;" but the Barristers' act, we believe, stands ruthlessly in the way of any enterprising maiden who might wish to choose law for a profession.

However, we did hear a different reason advanced not long ago by one who had thought the subject over. He was a lawyer himself, by the way, so no one need bring an action against us for libel. "Oh, girls," he said, "Girls were never cut out for lawyers. They've got too much conscience." We have been trying ever since to find out if he were speaking sarcastically or in good faith.

But, if shut out from the bar, they are admitted to the study and practise of medicine and two girls have graduated from the Halifax medical college as full

fledged M.D.'s. One of these, Miss Hamilton, obtained her degree in 1894 and has since been practising in Halifax. In 1895 Miss McKay graduated and is now, we understand, practising in New Glasgow. There are at present three girl students at the medical college. One will graduate this year; of the other two, one is in the third, and one in the first year.

Dalhousie is strictly co-educational. The girls enter on exactly the same footing as the men and are admitted to an equal share in all the privileges of the institution. The only places from which they are barred are the gymnasium and reading room. They are really excluded from the former, but there is nothing to keep them out of the reading room save custom and tradition. It is the domain sacred to masculine scrimmages and gossips and the girls religiously avoid it, never doing more than cast speculative glances at its door as they scurry past into the library. We have not been able to discover what the penalty would be if a girl should venture into the reading room. It may be death or it may be only banishment for life.

The library, however is free to all. The girls can prowl around there in peace, bury themselves in encyclopedias, pore over biographies and exercise their wits on logic, or else they can get into a group and carry on whispered discussions which may have reference to their work or may not.

They take prominent part in some of the college societies. In the Y.M.C.A. their assistance is limited to preparing papers on subjects connected with missions and reading them on the public nights; in the Philomathic society they are more actively engaged. The object of this society is to stimulate interest and inquiry in literature, science and philosophy. Girls are elected on the executive committee and papers on literary subjects are prepared and read by them throughout the session.

They are also initiated into the rites and ceremonies of the philosophical club and are very much in demand in the Glee club. Once in a while, too, a girl is found on the editorial staff of the Dalhousie Gazette, and what the jokes column would do, if stripped of allusions to them, is beyond our comprehension.

The athletic club, however, numbers no girls among its devotees and it does not seem probable that it will—certainly not in this generation, at least. The question of the higher education of girls involves a great many interesting problems which are frequently discussed but which time alone can solve satisfactorily. Woman has asserted her claim to an equal educational standing with man and that claim has been conceded to her. What use then, will she make of her privileges? Will she take full advantage of them or will she merely play with them until, tired of the novelty, she drops them for some mere fad?

Every year since girls first entered Dalhousie, has witnessed a steady increase in the number of them in attendance; and it is to be expected that, in the years to come, the number will be very much larger. But beyond a certain point we do not think it will go. It is not likely that the day will ever come when the number of girl students at Dalhousie, or at any other co-educational university, will be equal to the number of men. There will always be a certain number of clever ambitious girls who, feeling that their best life work can be accomplished only when backed up by a broad and thorough education, will take a university course, will work conscientiously and earnestly and will share all the honors and successes of their brothers. There will, however, always be a limit to the number of such girls.

Again, we have frequently heard this question asked: "Is it, in the end, worth while for a girl to take a university course with all its attendant expense, hard work, and risk of health?" How many girls, out of those who graduate from the universities, are ever heard of prominently again, many of them marrying or teaching school? Would not an ordinarily good education have benefited them quite as much? Is it then worth while, from this standpoint, for any girl who is not exceptionally brilliant, to take a university course?

The individual question of "worth while" or "not worth while" is one which every girl must scramble for herself. It is only in its general aspect that we must look at the subject. In the first place, as far as distinguishing themselves in after life goes, take the number of girls who have graduated from Dalhousie —say thirty, most of whom are yet in their twenties and have their whole lives before them. Out of that thirty, eight or nine at the very least have not stood still but have gone forward successfully and are known to the public as brilliant, efficient workers. Out of any thirty men who graduate, how many in the same time do better or even as well? This, however, is looking at the question from the standpoint that the main object of a girl in taking a university course is to keep herself before the public as a distinguished worker. But is it? No! At least it should not be. Such an ambition is not the end and aim of a true education.

A girl does not—or, at least, should not—go to a university merely to shine as clever students take honors, "get through and then do something very brilliant." Nay; she goes—or should go—to prepare herself for living, not alone in the finite but in the infinite. She goes to have her mind broadened and her powers of observation cultivated. She goes to study her own race in all the bewildering perplexities of its being. In short, she goes to find out the best, easiest and most effective way of living the life that God and nature planned out for her to live.

If a girl gets this out of her college course, it is of little consequence

whether her after “career” be brilliant, as the world defines brilliancy, or not. She has obtained that from her studies which will stand by her all her life, and future generations will rise up and call her blessed, who handed down to them the clear insight, the broad sympathy with their fellow creatures, the energy of purpose and the self-control that such a woman must transmit to those who come after her.

The ’Teen-Age Girl

First published *The Chatelaine*, March 1931.

Author of “Anne of Green Gables” and other books, is Canada’s most beloved writer for girls. In this penetrating discussion of mothers of daughters, she reveals her sympathy and understanding for the problems of The ’Teen-Age Girl.

Do you find it hard to understand your daughter? Does she shut you out of her confidence? Do you feel she is “boy-crazy”—thoughtless—selfish? Read this telling article written for mothers and daughters.

Just why *The Chatelaine* should have asked me to write an article on the relations between the ’teen age girl and her mother is, as *Lord Dundreary* used to say, “One of thothe thingth no fellow can underthtand.” I, alas, have nothing but sons. So what know I about the problems of daughters?

Perhaps it was because I have written books about girls. But, as for girls in books, you can, up to a certain point, make them behave as you want them to. It is probably a very different thing with flesh and blood creatures.

No, my only justification for complying with the editor’s request must lie in the fact that I was a girl once myself and have, I believe, managed to retain, even till now a very vivid recollection of what I was, and what I wished to be and how far and why I failed. For girlhood and its problems do not change as much from generation to generation as folks imagine. The outward fashion changes, but underneath they remain basically the same. Therefore do I rush in where angels might fear to tread, unheeding the gibes that may be hurled at the perfect daughters of the daughterless woman. It is, after all, the easiest thing imaginable to tell the world what you would do in some situation in which you’ll certainly never find yourself.

Perhaps it is because of long association with a minister that I have a fondness for texts. Anyhow, I do like something to tie to. So this article is just going to be a string of texts with my comments thereon. And the texts are just going to be certain things that have been said to me by mothers and girls at sundry times and in divers places all over Canada. For I want this article to be practical and helpful, dealing with the real perplexities and worries of real people.

I am, of course, taking some things for granted. I am taking it for granted that your girls are normal and that, unless you have utterly failed in your duty as a mother, they have been taught certain basic principles without which no

life can be built. That honest work is the finest thing in the universe; that it is better to lose than to win unfairly; that it is a cowardly thing to lie; and that the fundamental immorality of the world from which most, if not all of the iniquities and immoralities spring, is trying to get pleasure and success without paying the price the Power and Wisdom we call God put on it—trying to get something for nothing, in short.

Now, dear mother, let us have a little frank talk together about certain things that are troubling mothers today, as they have troubled them for hundreds of years. I will be candid with you and I shall expect you to be candid with me. Above all, don't try to pretend to me that you were a model and perfect creature when you were a young girl yourself. You may have forgotten how silly and flighty you were in your youth. I think people must forget or else their sense of humor would prevent them from saying the things they do say to their children. Your children may believe you but I shall not. Which leads me to my first text.

Only a few weeks ago I heard a mother say to her sixteen-year-old daughter,

"I never did that when I was a young girl."

I wanted to shout with laughter and I am sure it will be counted unto me for righteousness that I kept a perfectly straight face, not even winking an eye when the daughter looked at me as if seeking confirmation. But I said afterwards to her mother what now I say to you . . . are you so perfectly sure you never did things like that? It seems to me that there was a time when what "he" said and what "he" did made up a very large part of your conversation—pardon me, of our conversation. This seems funny to us now, funny and silly because we have outgrown it. But remember I insisted on candor, wasn't it a fact? And as for "petting" . . . well, it isn't an entirely new institution, is it? We called it "spooning." Petting is certainly a much prettier word—so much gain for the cult of the beautiful. But tell me, dear lady, in this heart to heart talk of ours, if "he" never kissed you at the gate after he had "escorted" you home, and if both his arms were continually employed in driving the horse that drew the top buggy of the "gay nineties." If you can answer "no" sincerely then you may be quite truthful in telling your daughter that you never did things like that. But I do not think you will be altogether wise. Because, though your daughter may believe you, she will think that times and manners—and men—have changed mightily in forty years and that you have no comprehension of her problems at all.

"Do you then approve of petting?" demands a scandalized matron. No, I do not. But I cannot see any use in saying, "Don't." You must try to make your daughter see that to be an aristocrat of the body is as fine a thing as to be an

aristocrat of the mind or of society and that anything which degrades to amusement or habit that which should be consecrated to the service of love alone is a foolish thing to do or permit, because it means taking the third rate thing and losing the first rate. She must make her choice. She cannot have both.

"The young people of today are so selfish and thoughtless," mourned a mother to me recently.

Selfish? Yes, they are. Just as the middle-aged of today are selfish; just as the old are selfish—and always have been. No more. Selfishness isn't a matter of years. I have known many ghastly instances of selfishness in older people that wrecked lives and ruined careers. Selfishness is an abominable thing but for pity's sake don't imagine it is peculiar to youth.

"Thoughtless?" Ah, I grant you that. The young are thoughtless. Naturally. You have to learn to think. Nobody is born thoughtful. Your daughter doesn't know certain things which might make her thoughtful. What is more, she has no right to know them. She has a right to her unclouded youth, revelling for a few brief, glorious years in thoughtlessness. They will pass all too quickly, dear mother. Don't grudge them to her. Wouldn't it be really nice if we could be thoughtless once again for a little while?

"My daughter doesn't tell me things—she shuts me out of her confidence," was another mother's plaint.

Is that one of your problems? And if so, are you so sure that you are not yourself to blame for it? Do you remember the time—she was much smaller than she is now perhaps—when she came to you to tell you something silly or trivial, at least, you thought it silly and trivial. You laughed at her. And now you make moan that she doesn't confide in you as you hoped for.

If you ever laughed at her I don't blame her for not taking you into her confidence. *Never laugh at her.* Don't blow her little candles out. Youth takes itself so very seriously. And laughter makes scars that never fade. I know. I have forgiven the people of my youth who advised me and scolded me and lectured me. But I have never forgiven the ones who laughed at me.

We will suppose, however, that you have not committed this unpardonable sin. And yet your daughter denies you her full confidence. What then? Why worry over it? Your daughter may be one of the many people who do not find it easy to talk to older people of intimate and personal things. "There are some things," says Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler, "so delicately made that to talk about them destroys them." Your daughter may feel that way about a good many things. You should respect her personality and never try to force her confidence. A girl's confidence is like a rosebud . . . "We must not tear the

close-shut leaves apart." She has a right to her own secrets, her own inner, unshared life. I think a tremendous lot of harm is done in every relationship by this failure to respect one another's personality and in none more than in that between mother and daughter. The mother who insists that she must know every word and act and thought of her daughter is going to make a dismal wreck of what should be one of the most beautiful of all human ties. I always smile when I hear a mother say, "I know every thought of my daughter." She doesn't. No mother does. God has mercifully arranged it thus in order that mothers may have some peace of mind.

"She had no clothes on," said a sweet old lady to me once, with a gasp of horror.

"No clothes?" I echoed.

"Well, none to speak of. No petticoat I'm certain, no stockings, nothing but a thin dress and, and knickers."

I don't know that many modern mothers are worried as to how their daughters dress but I know that some are. Some think their girls don't wear enough, some think they want too many clothes. There are battles royal waged every day about it. The foolishness of it!

Why not let your daughter dress as she wants to, even if you think it foolish? She probably wants to dress just as the rest of her set are doing and it will be torture to her if she can't. Never shall I forget how I suffered because when a girl I was not allowed to have a "bang" when every other girl had one. And because I had to wear boots and stockings when all the other girls went barefoot to school.

Never mind if you think the things she wears aren't "decent." Personally I ask only one thing about a girl's clothes—are they beautiful and do they add to the beauty of the wearer? If they are not and do not they are indecent. I always loathed too short skirts because they show the ugliest curve in the human body, the in-bend of the knee. Too low backs I dislike because nine out of ten backs are ugly and should be covered up. I have seen sadly few beautiful bare legs—they are generally too scrawny or pimply. But I can't see any other indecency save that of ugliness in them. Girls should want pretty clothes and should have them. "Dowdiness," says Oliver Wendell Holmes, "is clearly an expression of imperfect vitality."

"Oh, she's boy-crazy." So said a woman once in my hearing. I didn't know the girl to whom she referred. Perhaps she was boy-crazy. There are always a few silly girls like that—always have been, and, I fear, always will be. But, dear mother, every normal girl likes boys. "A woman," says Holmes, "would rather talk to a man than to an angel." Which is sweetly reasonable. Why

shouldn't she? What point of contact would she have with an angel? I'm sure I wouldn't know what to say to such a being.

Of course there is a year or so in the teens when boys do seem to a girl more wonderful beings than they will ever seem again. This interest is a natural and healthy one and should be acknowledged and directed, not forbidden. At that last word an old memory comes up. I hear a very small girl, wild horses will not drag from me the secret of who that girl was, saying pleadingly,

"Aunty, please forbid us to do it so that it will be fun to do it."

That small girl did not know much but she had got hold of a powerful bit of psychology by the tail. The forbidden thing has a charm. Don't make too many things charming because of a taboo. Especially boys, who are quite charming enough without that to Sweet Sixteen. Don't let your girl pass into womanhood with nothing but starved or stolen youth behind her. Let her have some boy friends and some "dates"—even, to use a real nice, old-timey word, some beaus. If she hasn't a beau or two in her 'teens how on earth is she ever going to learn how to manage the men? I once heard a dear old lady say severely,

"I don't 'old with beaus. Either they means nothing or they means too much."

Her daughters both ran away and married the wrong men. Naturally. They hadn't learned to distinguish for themselves between those who meant nothing or too much.

"I love her so—and I want to save her from making the mistakes that I did."

Of course you love her. Who could help loving her, this palpitant young creature, so sweet and so absurd, as beautiful and mysterious as a summer twilight, with her flower-like face, her great, asking eyes, her body exquisite in its litheness as a lyric of spring, her every step a dance, her every gesture one of grace and virility, believing romance and happiness to be hers of right by the token of the dimple in her chin? But love isn't enough, dear lady. You must understand, too. And understanding is something very much rarer and harder than loving.

Perhaps you find it hard to understand her. Small wonder. She is an enigma—this creature who sometimes has the face of one who listens to fairy music and at other times is austerely intellectual, staggering you with casual remarks about the quantum theory and the planetesimal hypothesis. Who sometimes seems to you like a lonely little rudderless ship drifting over the rim of the world, and anon is only a girl who is a star forward in basket ball and aspires to the championship in bareback riding. Who now is a living flame and again

as cool as an April night, with a horror of not seeming hard as nails which a really hard person would never feel. Who is sometimes so near you and sometimes so far away that she might as well be beyond Sirius. Indeed, it is hard to understand her. But just remember what you were twenty years ago, your moods, your whims, your dreams, your aspirations. Perhaps it won't be so hard then.

It's all very well to say you want to save her from the mistakes you made. But you can't do it. And anyway she isn't likely to make the same mistakes. She'll probably make entirely different ones. Why not cultivate that rarest thing in man or woman, toleration, and let her make a few mistakes? Our mistakes teach us more than anything else sometimes. You may be wise with the wisdom of the old. But remember she is wise with the wisdom of the young. Such a thing does exist and sometimes I feel very sorry that I have lost it. Don't try to plan her life out for her. Let her do the planning herself. Don't force her into a mold. Don't make her do something just because someone else, or everybody else—is doing it. Don't give her too much advice. Youth hates advice. Age hates advice. And our attitude to it is generally that of an old man I once knew whose daughter-in-law nagged him terribly. When he was asked why he put up with it he smiled tolerantly.

"Lawful heart, she do enjoy giving advice so much. And it don't hurt me 'cause I never takes it."

Let her alone a good deal. Young things can stand an immense amount of letting alone if we elders could only realize it. As I said, in the beginning, teach her a few basic things and beyond that exercise a little wise forgetfulness. Having done your best don't worry. Keep a sense of proportion. I have known few if any "model" girls who have in later life made women of vitality or magnetism or success. And I have known many harum-scarum girls who turned out to be wonderfully good wives and mothers. Yourself, for example.

But oh, *do* insist that she returns the books she borrows!

This little preachment of mine isn't all for the mothers. Lastly and very briefly (more ministerial influence probably!) I do want to say a word to the girls.

You are all so youthful and charming, dears, and so much, so very much, like the girls of my own generation. You won't quite believe this of course. You can't believe that your mothers and grandmothers were ever girls like you. But it's true.

I'm taking a few things for granted, just as I did when talking to your mothers. I'm taking it for granted that you are not the kind of girl who yowls about living her own life when her mother objects to her staying out most of the night in the company of some youth about whom she knows nothing. I'm

taking it for granted that you are not the kind of girl who is always sorry for herself and who calls making life miserable for everybody connected with her "developing her own personality." All that sort of thing has a tendency to make me Dorothy-Dix-minded. No, I'm taking it for granted that you are a girl, very like what I was myself once, eager, ambitious, asking much of life and willing to give all I had to life in return. Full of faults and small vanities and quite mistaken notions about many things, the greatest mistake being that which youth is always so prone to make, in believing that it can pounce on life like a cat on a mouse, play with it awhile, and then devour it at once. And I want, really want, to help you if I can.

"The youth of today is so fearless," said a girl to me not long ago. "We look at life without fear."

The darling thought her generation the only one that had ever done that. But youth is always fearless. It is unafraid because it hasn't found out what life can do to it. And it is always "modern." It is well that it should be so. There would be no progress otherwise. Only don't mistake running around in circles for progress and don't think your mothers were absolute figureheads because they weren't air-minded and didn't talk with what you call, and perhaps believe, "stark sincerity" about certain matters. They weren't "cowards" because of that. Oh, no. Or if they were they were no greater cowards than some of you, who don't, in your secret souls, want to "pet" indiscriminatingly and smoke and drink but are afraid you'll be laughed at by your set as old-fashioned or "Victorian" if you don't.

"He was the biggest coward there is," I heard a man say once. "He was scared not to do it."

How many of you are cowards of that sort? Answer that question for yourselves.

Oh yes, we girls of that olden day were very much like you. There were rose-leaf girls then where there are sun-tan girls now but the difference is only in the skins. So we understand you better than you think. And I want you to believe that in nine cases out of ten "the old bromide," "your mother is your best friend," is true. Bromides have such an abominable habit of being true. Perhaps that is why we hate them so.

Oh, I know there is a lot of silly fiction of today dealing with "smother love" and all that. There are such cases of abnormal mothers just as there are abnormal daughters. But I'm just talking to normal girls about normal mothers, mothers whom you may think a bit fussy and faddy, as perhaps they are. But don't forget that they love you better than anything in the world and would do far more for you in a pinch than any of your "sophisticated" chums and beaus.

We all love you, dear hearts, with your starry eyes and your belief that life

is one endless adventure; with your dreams of all the things that may happen tomorrow; with your thirst for "thrills," and your firm conviction that there are only two complimentary adjectives in the English language, "priceless" and "marvellous." We love you and we want you to have rich full lives, quench your thirst for living at the unknown, enchanted springs we sought and could not find, do all the wonderful things we wanted and failed to do. We want you to have more real freedom, not merely more apparent freedom, than we had to develop and expand. Because, as Holmes says—I'm really quite "nutty" about Holmes and I don't know whether this generation has read a line of his delightful Breakfast Table series . . . "The truest lives are those which are cut rose-diamond fashion answering to the many planed aspects of the world about them."

That's the advantage your generation has over mine, you can be cut with more facets. And so you will have more power than we had, the power of the broadened thought, the power of the more unfettered act, the power of the spoken word, and the greatest of these is, I verily believe, the spoken word. Just one word uttered or unuttered and a whole life is changed, even, it may be, the course of history. Suppose Napoleon's mother had said "no" in place of "yes."

"Give us a standard to live by in this age of shifting faiths and ideals, when all the old traditions seem to be going by the board," you say. Ah, but can I? well, here's a try for it. Just another quotation, this time from one of my own books in which a very wise old lady says to the little Marigold,

"Play the game of life according to the rules. It's wiser because you can't cheat life in the long run. Live joyously. Do what you want to do as long as you can go to your mirror afterwards and look yourself in the face."

That isn't as easy as it may sound!

AN OPEN LETTER
from a Minister's Wife

First published in *The Chatelaine*, October, 1931.

L. M. Montgomery, Author of "Anne of Green Gables," and one of the most noted minister's wives in the Dominion answers the question: —"*What does the minister's wife expect from the women of the congregation?*"

Illustrated by Edith McLaren

When, twenty years ago, I married a minister, my friends groaned in unison, "So much is expected of a minister's wife!" I was not ignorant of this, having been brought up in a community where I had heard several ministers' wives discussed, favorably and unfavorably. I had, indeed, a pretty clear idea of what was expected of a minister's wife. Moreover, I admitted that I thought the congregation had a right to expect certain things from the mistress of their manse. I have never had any sympathy with the point of view expressed in the statement, "The congregation doesn't pay me a salary, so they have no right to expect anything in particular from me." There are certain things that cannot be expressed in terms of dollars and cents. The leadership which the minister's wife can give, especially in rural communities where it may otherwise be lacking, is one of them. From my viewpoint, the minister's wife has a special opportunity for service which is a privilege and not a duty.

But nothing is one-sided. If the congregation has a right to expect certain things of the minister's wife she has an equal right to expect certain things of them. This is what *The Chatelaine*—May her shadow never grow less!—has asked me to write about, and I will try to present as briefly as possible the "minister's wife's" side of the expectations.

In the first place, while a good deal may be expected from a free and unencumbered manse mistress, no congregation should expect anything more from a wife with a young family and no help than from a "lay sister" in the same position. She has a right to this consideration from them. This understands itself, as the French say. And she has a right to expect that if some lynx-eyed mother in Israel discovers a button missing from the ministerial vest on Sunday, she will not be condemned too hastily, but that due allowance will be made for the teething baby or the croupy Junior.

She has a right to expect loyal and intelligent co-operation on the part of the women of her husband's congregation. The minister's wife cannot do it all

when it comes to church societies. She can only give a little leadership and guidance. For success and forward marching good team work is necessary for all. It is a joy to work with sweetly reasonable women, but one crank on the executive can embitter the existence of the minister's wife and wreck the work of the organization woefully.

Also I would humbly suggest that she should not have her perfect and incomparable predecessor cast in her teeth too often. In days to come, when she in her turn will be gone and rainbowed with the iridescence of the past, she, too, will be remembered as a flawless and competent creature. But that will not take away the sting of the present comparison.

She expects that the congregation will concede to her a right to her own opinions, tastes, methods of housekeeping and child training. To be the target of endless criticism along these lines would take the joy out of any life.

She expects that they will be willing to overlook her blunders and mistakes. She is not flawless any more than they are. She cannot at twenty have the wisdom of sixty. And, after all, the woman who never makes mistakes may be an admirable woman but somehow I think she would be an unlovable one, too. The minister's wife may sometimes fail to recognize the right time to be silent, or she may bungle in trying too hard to be an inspiration. The path of perfection is narrow and few there be that find it. In short, she expects that her husband's people will remember that she is a human being.

She has a right to dress to please herself. This should not worry the women of the parish—or the men either. For women are not the only offenders in this respect. I once heard it asked what a certain good and reverend elder had died of.

"Heart failure," said one neighbor.

"Not at all," said another. "He really died of the minister's wife's bobbed hair."

And I knew of a case where a whole session refused to call a minister who had pleased them in every respect, because his wife, who unwisely accompanied him when he came to "preach for a call," had a gay red rose in her hat.

Let the minister's wife's clothes alone. It is not likely that on the average minister's salary she will have more pretty things than are good for her. Besides, even if her dress were dowdy and her hat swore at her nose, she wouldn't be a bit the better wife to the minister or help to the congregation.

Then, too, the congregation should remember that the minister's wife likes a little fun, especially if she has been cursed with an inconvenient sense of humor. What agonies I have endured betimes when I was dying to laugh but

dared not because I was the minister's wife. How did I keep a straight face when a dear, kindly soul remarked that her husband hadn't been able to attend a certain funeral because he had such a headache that "he knew he wouldn't enjoy himself if he did go!" Or when another equally good and sweet woman groaned behind me at another funeral, as we passed the flower-heaped casket, "Oh, poor man, I hope you are as happy as you look"—more as if she hoped rather than believed it!

She has a right to expect that they will respect her confidences as they expect her to respect theirs. And she has a right to expect that when people tell her about B's faults they will tell her about B's virtues at the same time. But this, I realize, is a counsel of perfection.

If at times the minister's wife is a bit absent-minded or preoccupied or "stiff," the congregation should not imagine that she is unfriendly or uninterested or trying to snub them. She has a right to expect that they make a few excuses for her. Perhaps she is so tired that she is not quite sane; perhaps she is one of those people to whom it is torture to show their feelings—dead and gone generations of sternly repressed forefathers may have laid their unyielding fingers of reserve on her lips; perhaps she is wondering if anyone could sell her a little time; perhaps there are many small worries snapping and snarling at her heels; perhaps she has had one of those awful moments when we catch a glimpse of ourselves as we really are; perhaps she has the odd feeling of not belonging to this or any world, that follows an attack of flu; perhaps she is just pitifully shy at heart. Or her own feelings may have been hurt. Because ministers' wives have feelings that are remarkably like the feelings of other women, and injustice and misunderstanding hurt us very keenly.

For my own part, when I recall the happenings of my own twenty years as mistress of the manse, I conclude that on the whole this is a nice kind of a world even for a minister's wife. The roses have outnumbered the thorns by thousands.

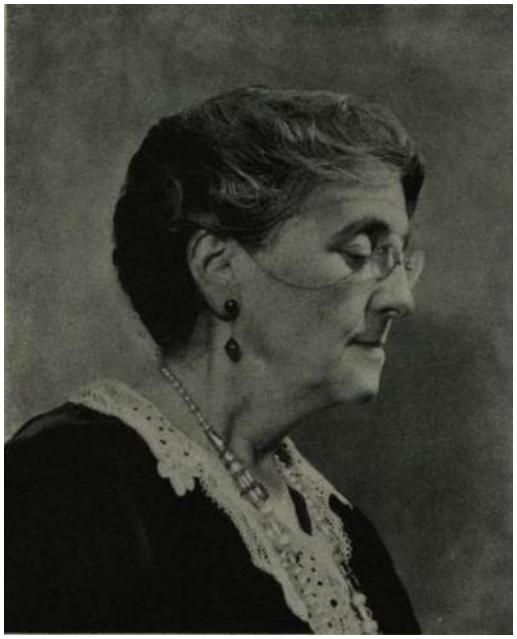
I look back and see many lovely things. They crowd into memory in a curious medley. Charming vanished households from which no one ever went away without feeling better in some way. Homes that were hospitality incarnate. Houses that always seemed pleased to have you come to them. Frank, ungrudging tributes, appreciative, priceless words that cast a sudden rainbow over existence. Dear gentle souls who never once made me feel that I had said the wrong thing. Silent, gentle handclasps of sympathy that heartened when life was grey. Camp fires of young folks like fiery roses of night. Little friendly, neighborly offerings now and then—the jar of cream or jelly, the box of eggs, the root of an admired perennial, the bouquet that brought to the manse the loveliness of old-fashioned gardens.

And the dear, dear women I have known! Mrs. A., who was always like a comfortable fire on a warm hearth. Mrs. B., who had something about her capacious maternal bosom that made you want to lay your head on it and whisper your troubles. Mrs. C, whose memory comes as a balm whenever I recall her. Mrs. D, whose words were always of things lovely and of good report Mrs. E, dear soul, who told me so simply and sweetly, that she had been praying that my lost, beloved pussy might be found. And darling Mrs. F, with ageless sorrow and patience in her eyes, who, when someone remarked to her, "You've had so many troubles, poor thing," flashed back, "Yes, but think of all the fun I've had between times." A meeting with these women and many more like them always made me feel as if the day had given me a purple gift. I have received far, far more than I expected or had any right to expect from the people among whom it has been my lot and privilege to work.

Is This My Anne?

Asks L. M. Montgomery
authoress of the famous "Anne of Green Gables" recently brought to the screen

First published *The Chatelaine*, January 1935.



An authoress goes to her movie. L. M. Montgomery, who, thirty years ago began the story of "Anne of Green Gables"—went recently to a preview of the screen feature which has been made of her story. How did she like it? What did she think of the things Hollywood had done to her story? Mrs. Montgomery tells you herself.

Many years ago I sat down one spring evening, in the kitchen of an old Prince Edward Island farmhouse, and wrote the first chapter of my first book, *Anne of Green Gables*.

It might be more correct to say that I sat "up." For I climbed up on the high, old-fashioned sofa and sat on the end of the kitchen table, by the west window, to catch the last gleams of sunset. It was one of my favorite roosts for

writing. I have always liked to write with my portfolio on my knee and the sofa made a capital footrest. And I could look out into an old apple orchard and a ferny grove of spruces and birches.

Outside it was a warm blossomy May evening. There had been a shower and the leaves of the big maple that almost brushed the window were wet and glistening. I finished one chapter and then, a caller dropping in, I put the work away. I hadn't the most remote idea that I would one day sit in a theatre and see that chapter "come to life" on the screen. At that time "movies" were not even dreamed of; and if they had been, it would never have occurred to me that my simple little story of life in the Maritimes, nine miles from a railroad and twenty miles from a town, would make its appearance in them. Yet the other day I sat with a small group and saw a preview of the film, just before it was released in Canada.

Although I began the story that long-ago night, I had been "brooding" it for some time, waiting until I could find leisure to write it in the intervals of writing the "pot-boilers" by which I made my living. Indeed, *Green Gables* itself was first intended for a pot-boiler, and only escaped that fate because *Anne* simply wouldn't be confined within the limits of a pot-boiler. She demanded more "scope."

People ask me how I came to create *Anne*. I didn't create her. She simply sprang into being in my mind, all ready created—Anne, spelled with an e, red-haired, dreamy-eyed and elfin-faced. Yet she seemed so real to me that when I tell people that she is "entirely fictitious" I have the uncomfortable feeling that I am not telling the truth.

People ask me, too, why I gave her red hair. I didn't. It *was* red. And as I described her long red braids as she sat on the shingle pile at Bright River Station, I did not foresee a curious situation of the future when four prominent lawyers of the Boston Bar would sit around a table piled high with dictionaries and books of engravings, and argue heatedly for three mortal days over the exact tint of Anne's tresses. Were they or were they not Titian red? And if they were, then just what shade exactly *was* Titian red?

In due time *Green Gables* was completed and started out to find a publisher. Eventually one was found and Anne made her bow to a world that took her at once to its heart. To my unbounded surprise I found that my little story seemed to possess universal appeal. Letters soon began to pour in. They have been pouring in ever since. Anne has gone through so many editions that I have lost count of them.

In 1921 Anne appeared in the "silent" pictures. Mary Miles Minter starred as Anne, but I did not like her. She was too "sugary sweet"—not a scrap like my gingery Anne. There was a good Matthew and a good Marilla and a

passable Gilbert, but on the whole the picture made me furious. The producers evidently thought it had to be “pepped up,” and they introduced a lot of absurdities—among others, Anne at the door of her school, a shotgun in hand, standing off a crowd of infuriated villagers who were bent on mobbing her because she had whipped one of her pupils!

There were two things in the silent film that especially enraged me. One was the fact that in a scene at Queen’s Academy, on the occasion of Anne’s graduation, the Stars and Stripes was prominently displayed! The other was that on her way to a Sunday-school picnic Anne foregathered with a skunk which she mistook for a kitten!

Anne Shirley as the red-headed, hot-tempered girl of Prince Edward Island.

Now, at that time there were no skunks in Prince Edward Island nor ever had been, and I was jealous for the good name of my fair native land. But "coming events cast their shadows before." A few years afterward some brilliant Island mind conceived the idea of breeding skunks for their fur. Fox farming was profitable. Why not skunk farming? Accordingly some man started a skunk ranch and imported several pairs of skunks. But the ranch did not pay. It was abandoned. The bars were thrown down and the skunks left to

wander at their own sweet will. In a few years the Island was overrun with them. They became such a nuisance that the Government was compelled to offer a bounty per snout for deceased skunks. As a result the skunk population has been reduced but some still remain.

The silent film was a huge box-office success but in mid-career it suddenly ceased to be. It had been advertised for release in Great Britain, but it was never shown and Mary Miles Minter disappeared with it. I never knew the reason for years. Then one day in a railway station I bought a book for train reading with the delightful title, *Twelve Unsolved Murder Mysteries*. Among them was that of William Desmond Taylor, the director of Anne, who had been found murdered on the floor of his Hollywood bungalow. The murderer, or murderess, was never discovered. Mary Miles Minter was not suspected of it, though it ruined the careers of two other stars; but the police found in Desmond's desk a packet of letters which proved that the little golden-haired star who was heralded as a rival to Mary Pickford, had been in love with her director—who had a wife somewhere—and the great American public threw back its head and howled. Her career was ended and every film in which she had starred was hastily withdrawn from circulation.

That was thirteen years ago. The other day I sat and watched the "talkie" with mingled feelings. On the whole I liked it much better than the silent picture. Naturally, no picture can, in the very nature of things, reflect the characters and setting just as the author has conceived them. So at times I had the sensation of watching a story written by somebody else.

The little girl who played the part of Anne—whom we must call Anne Shirley, since she has taken that name for the screen—is a good Anne. There were many moments when she tricked even me into feeling that she *was* Anne. I loved the "rick-rack" braid on her pinafore: it was just what I wore myself once. Matthew, whom I have always seen with a long grey beard, seemed a stranger to me at first, but he was so good that I finally forgave him his clean-shaven face. Oddly enough, both Matthew and Gilbert Blythe were exceedingly like the Matthew and Gilbert of the silent pictures, though entirely different people. Marilla was not the tall, thin, austere Marilla of my conception, but it was impossible to help liking her. I had, for the time being, the conviction that although Marilla was not the least like that, she should have been.

Of all the cast I liked Mrs. Barry the least. They tried to make a composite of Mrs. Barry and Rachel Lynde, and the hybrid result was not satisfactory. And Diana was a washout.

There were no American flags in the picture. Canada and the Island were given some credit for the story. Prince of Wales College was even mentioned

by name. Which indicates some faint glimmerings of a sense of geography on the part of Hollywood, which seemed entirely lacking in the silent version. The opening views are real Island pictures but the rest of the setting is California, not Prince Edward Island; and "Green Gables" is New England colonial and not an Island farmhouse. The river where Anne was nearly drowned, while dramatizing *Elaine*, is not my blue Lake of Shining Waters. But how could it be? One must not be unreasonable.

Naturally, the introduction of dialogue into the picture adds to the verisimilitude and is a distinct asset to stories which, like mine, owe much of their interest to the "talk." The producers sent me a copy of the script, but I had no "say" in it in any way or in any features of the story which was bought outright from the publishers. For two-thirds of the film my story was followed with reasonable fidelity. In the remaining third the producers "produced" a narrative of their own for the purpose of providing Anne with a love story. They dragged in the old Montague-Capulet *motif* and everything ended bee-yew-tifully, with Matthew—who died in the book—rescued from the brink of the grave. But I am devoutly thankful that they did *not* end the story with a long lingering kiss between Anne and Gilbert. Had they done so I would have risen up and shrieked!

On the whole, the "talkie" gave me a much greater sense of reality than the silent picture. And I looked back to the evening of long ago, when I began the story of Anne with a smile and a sigh. For it is a "far cry" from those days to these, and the creation of the story and its characters and atmosphere gave to me a delight that Hollywood cannot give or take away.

To see one's own story on the screen certainly provides plenty of "thrills." But one always wonders!

A June Memory

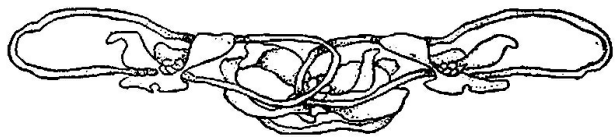
First published *Smith's Magazine: A Publication for the Home*, May 1910.

There was a young moon in the west that night,
And a great star that hung above the pine;
The valley was so brimmed with sunset light
That it spilled over like a golden wine,
And trickled through the greening meadow land
Where we walked hand in hand.

A little brook went with us mirthfully,
And there were low, sweet voices in the grass,
As if the pixy people laughed to see
Two lovers in the bridal springtime pass,
And in the dingles where the roses swung
Their lamps the fireflies hung.

Her face was like a star all pale and fair.
Her mouth was like a blossom crimson-bright,
There was a gloss of darkness on her hair,
And in her eyes a shadow and a light.
And in her voice all music ever heard
Trembled and softly stirred.

We walked with love and gladness through the shower
Of purple nightfall in a mood divine.
And in her kiss the essence of that hour
With all its glamour and delight was mine.
Oh, June, what pain and joy you hold for me
In this dear memory!



The Seasons

The Woods in Summer

First published *The Canadian Magazine*, 1911.

The spring woods are all spiritual. They charm us through the senses of eye and ear—delicate tintings and aerial sounds, like a maiden's dreams set to music. But the summer woods make a more sensuous appeal. They know that they have lost the freshness of their first youth, that something is gone for which all their luscious shadows and mellow lightings can never quite atone. So they offer us delectable things to tickle our palates. Who that has eaten strawberries, grass-new, from the sunny corners of summer woods, can ever forget them?

Strawberries are very delicious, even when eaten with cream and sugar, among the haunts of men. But would you know the real flavour of the strawberry in its highest perfection? Then come with me to a certain sunlit dell, along which white birches grow on one side and on the other the still, changeless ranks of the spruces. There are long grasses here at the roots of the trees, combed down by the winds, and wet with morning dew, long into the afternoon. Here we shall find berries, fit for the gods on high Olympus, great ambrosial sweetnesses, hanging like rubies to long, rosy stalks. Lift them by the stalk and eat them from it while they are uncrushed and virgin, tasting each berry by itself, with all its wild fragrance ensphered within. If you try to carry it home that elusive essence escapes, and then it is nothing more than a common berry of the fields and sunshine, very kitchenly good, indeed, but not as it should be when gathered and eaten in its uncharted haunts until our fingers are stained as pink as Aurora's eyelids.

There are blueberries, too, growing on the sandy hill where we gathered May flowers in the spring. The blueberries are not sung in song or enshrined in romance; but I do not see why they should not be, for they are beautiful to behold; and, if eaten in their native haunts, are delicious enough as well, although, of course, not to be mentioned in the same paragraph as the strawberries. Perhaps it is because they are somewhat too lavish of themselves, in their great, heavily-hanging, plainly-seen clusters. They lack the charm of comparative rarity and exclusiveness; they need not to be eaten one by one, like the strawberries, but may be crunched together in generous mouthfuls. See how pretty they are—the dainty green of the unripe berries, the glossy pinks and scarlets of the half-ripe, the misty blue of the fully matured. To sit on this hill, steeped in languid summer sunshine, rife with odours of fir and of nameless growing things in their golden prime, with the sough of winds in the

shaking tree-tops, and eat blueberries, is something that the mighty ones of earth might envy us. The poor inhabitants of palaces, how we can pity them, from this, our hill throne of the wilderness, fronting the gateways of the west! The afternoon is a great, dulcet, golden dream of peace, through which the heart of summer throbs with lazy rhythm.

Pigeon-berries are not to be eaten. They are woolly, tasteless things. But they were created to be looked at and they have the beauty that is its own excuse for being. They grow in the places of shadow, preferably the fibrous banks under the boughs of the spruces, knowing, perhaps, how the green and the gloom set off their glowing scarlet. Such scarlet! They, too, are true children of the wood, in that they lose their beauty elsewhere. Dare to take them home with you, and they seem hard, flaunting, obvious things, void of all charm. But in the spruce wood they are vivid and brilliant, the jewels with which the sombre forest of cone-bearers loves to deck its brown breast.

The woods are full of summer flowers, and rich spoil may be ours for the seeking; but it is a pity to gather wood flowers. They do not bear it well, not even so well as the strawberries. They lose half their witchery away from the shadow and the green and the flicker. The gay ones look too gay and crude when unsoftened by the backgrounds of the ancient wood; and the little, shy, sweet things seem lost and timid and homesick. No, we shall not pluck the wood flowers. The way to enjoy them most is to track them down to their remote haunts, gloat over them there, and then leave them, with backward glances, taking with us only the beguiling memory of their grace and fragrance.

In late June and early July the spruce woods are given over to the June-bells, which have another and more scientific name, of course. But who wants a better name than June-bells? They are so perfect in their way that they seem to epitomise the very secret and charm of the forest, as if the old wood's daintiest thoughts had materialised in blossom, and all the roses by Bendameer's stream are not so fragrant as a shallow sheet of June-bells under the boughs of fir.

Starflowers grow here, too, spirit pale and fair; and ladies' lips are found in abundance by those who know just where to look for them, but never reveal themselves to the casual passer-by. They are not, as their name might suggest, red, but creamy tinted. Perhaps it is their surpassing sweetness which accounts for the name. Their perfume is richer than that of the June-bells and every whit as haunting and mystical.

In July the waste places of the wood, which axe has scarred and flame scorched, are aglow with the purple pomp of the fireweed, which depends, and not vainly, on its colouring alone for its beauty. The fire that defaced and blackened must have awakened some answering glow and fervour in the veins

of the wood, which has outbroken in this wave of royal magnificence, surging against the pine hill and overflowing the brushwood to our very feet.

The ladies' eardrops are twinkling jewel-like from hanging boughs on all the brooklands; and along the lanes and among the birches the buttercups are smiling at us, quite as much at home here as on the breezy uplands.

In August the goldenrod makes glad the sunny woodways, and the asters shake out their frilled lavender gowns. The country people have such a pretty name for them; they call them "farewell-summers," because they come when summer is beginning to walk westering. She is with us still, but her face is turned from us.

Look, I pray you, at the tints on the trunk of that birch tree before us, whence some vandal hand has torn away the white-skin wrapper in several places. They range from the purest creamy white through exquisite golden tones, growing deeper and deeper until the inmost layer reveals the ripest, richest brown, as if to tell us that all these birches, so maiden-like and cool exteriorly, have yet warmly hued feelings at their hearts.

It is so easy to love your neighbours when your neighbours are all trees; and it is so easy to live with trees. They are the most friendly things in God's good creation. To hold converse with pines, to whisper secrets with mountain ashes, to listen to the tales of old romance that beeches have to tell, to walk in eloquent silence with self-contained firs is to learn what real companionship is. And then, too, trees, unlike so many humans, always improve on acquaintance. No matter how much you like them at the start you are sure to like them much better further on, and best of all when you have known them for years and enjoyed intercourse with them in all seasons, staunch, loyal friends that they are.

Trees have as much individuality as human beings to those who love and learn them. Not even two spruces are alike. There is some kink or curve, or bend of bough to single each one out from its fellows. Some trees love to grow sociably together, branches intertwining, like girls with their arms about each other, whispering interminably of their secrets. There are more exclusive groups of four or five, and there are hermits of trees who like to stand apart in solitary majesty and hold commune only with the winds of heaven. Yet these trees are often the best worth knowing, and have all the charm that attaches to the strong and lonely and reserved. It is more of a triumph to win their confidence than that of easier trees.

Pines are the trees of myth and legend. They strike their roots deep into the traditions of an older world, but wind and star love their lofty tops. What music when old Aeolus draws his bow across the branches of a pine! What a sense of two majesties meeting when a pearl white planet seems resting on its very crest! Have you ever witnessed a thunderstorm in a pine wood, especially

when evening is drawing on? I have, once. And since then I think I have known what God's voice must have been speaking to Job out of the whirlwind.

We are not going to have a thunderstorm on our walk of this evening, but I verily believe a shower of rain is coming up. Have you noticed the veiled hush that has fallen over the woods lately, while we have been wandering from tree to tree? All the young breezes that were whispering and rustling so importantly a while ago have folded their wings and are motionless and soundless. Not a leaf rustles, not a shadow flickers. The maple leaves yonder turn wrong side out, until the tree looks as if it were growing pale from fear. And now a cool shade falls over the woods; the cloud has reached us; it is not a big cloud; there is crystalline, untroubled sky below and above it. 'Twill be but a passing shower, and the thick boughs of this fir copse are all the protection that we shall need. Creep under and sit at ease, on the dusky soil, compact of many dead and gone generations of fir needles, which no passing shower can moisten.

Ha, there is the rain now, with a rush and sweep of wind, really more noise than anything else! Yet the shower is a good, smart one while it lasts. It patters down sharply on the maples and dimples the faces of the wood pools. It dances along the lanes and byways and pelts the brook right merrily. It makes quite a fuss for the time being, this impertinent, important shower. But not a drop touches us through our staunch fir, and presently it is all over. The cloud is away and the low sun is shining out on the wet, glistening trees. Far away we see a hill still dim with rain, but below us the cup of the valley seems brimming over with peach-tinted mists. The woods are all pranked out with the sparkle and glitter of jewels, and a bird begins to sing overhead as if he were cheated into believing it is springtime again, so wondrously fresh and sweet is the world all at once.

The rain is a marvellous alchemist. It has extracted the aroma from tree and shrub and blossom, and flung it lavishly on the cool, moist air. It has taken from the firs the tang of their balsam, from the lanes the warm breath of the asters and grasses, from the blueberry hill its savour of ripening fruit, and the wind comes down from the wild places spiced and poignant with the breath of drenched and tangled fern.

A bird comes tiptoeing along the lane, with a worm in her mouth. After a shower is the blessed time for birds. It is a robin, a plump, reddish-breasted thing, that is not even afraid of us. I know her nest is near by, for I found it last week, half-built. Let us look to see if any eggs are in it. Ha, Madam Robin, this disturbs your complacency somewhat, does it? Even the worm is dropped and forgotten, and you fly to a bough above us, chirping frantically. Dear, we are not going to hurt your little home, nor yet this most wonderful egg in it, though we touch it with reverent fingers.

Think what is penned within those fragile, pale-blue walls . . . not, perhaps, "the music of the moon," but an earthlier, homelier music, compact of wholesome sweetness and the joy of living. This egg will some day be a robin, to whistle us blithely home in the afterlights.

It is afterlight now, for the sun has set. Out in the open there is still much light of a fine, emerald-golden sort. But the wood is already wrapping itself in a dim, blue twilight and falling upon rest in bosk and dell. It will be quite dark before we reach the end of this long, wetly-fragrant lane. There goes the first firefly, or is it a pixy out with a lantern? Soon there are hundreds of them, flashing mysteriously across the dusk, under the boughs and over the ferns. There is certainly something a little supernatural about fireflies. Nobody pretends to understand them. Did anyone ever see a firefly in daylight? They are akin to the tribes of faery, survivals of the olden time, when the woods and hills swarmed with the little green folk. It is still very easy to believe in fairies when you see those goblin lanterns glimmering among the fir tassels.

The full moon has been up for some time, and now, as we come out to the clearing, she is gleaming lustrously from a cloudless sky across the valley. But between us and her stretches up a tall, tall pine, far above the undergrowth, wondrously straight and slender and branchless to its very top, where it overflows in a crest of dark boughs against the silvery splendour behind it. Beyond, the uplands and the homesteads are lying in a suave, white radiance, but here the spell of the woods is still on us, and the white magic of the moonlight behind the pine speaks the last word of the potent incantation.

The Woods in Autumn

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Maples are trees that have primeval fire in their souls. It glows out a little in their early youth, before the leaves open, in the redness and rosy-yellowness of their blossoms, but in summer it is carefully hidden under a demure, silver-lined greenness. Then, when autumn comes, the maples give up trying to be sober and flame out in all the barbaric splendour and gorgeousness of their real natures, making of the ancient wood a thing out of an Arabian Nights dream in the golden prime of good *Haroun Alraschid*.

You never may know what scarlet and crimson really are until you see them in their perfection on an October hillside under the unfathomable blue of an autumn sky. All the glow and radiance and joy at earth's heart seem to have broken loose in a splendid determination to express itself for once before the frost of winter chills her beating pulses. It is the year's carnival ere the dull Lenten days of leafless valleys and penitential mists come.

The maples are the best vehicle for this hidden, immemorial fire of the earth and the woods, but the other trees bear their part valiantly. The sumacs are almost as gorgeous as the maples; the wild cherry trees are, indeed, more subdued, as if they are rather too reserved and modest to go to the length the maples do, and prefer to let their crimson and gold burn more dully through over-tints of bronzy green.

I know a dell, far in the bosky deeps of the wood, where a row of maiden birches fringe a deeply-running stream, and each birch is more exquisite than her sisters. And, as for the grace and goldenness of the young things, that cannot be expressed in terms of the dictionary or symbols of earth, but must be seen to be believed or realised. I stumbled on that dell the other day quite by accident . . . if, indeed, there can be such a thing as accident in the woods, where I am tempted to think we are led by the Good People along such of their fairy paths as they have a mind for us to walk in. It was lying in a benediction of amber sunshine, and it seemed to me that a spell of eternity was woven over it . . . that winter might not touch it, nor spring evermore revisit it. It must continue forever so, the yellow trees mirrored in the placid stream, with now and then a leaf falling on the water to drift away and be used, mayhap, as a golden shallop for some adventurous wood sprite, who had it in mind to fare forth to some wonderful far-off region where all the brooks run into the sea.

I left the dell while the sunshine still shone on it, before the shadows had begun to fall. And I shall never, if I can help it, revisit it again. I wish to

remember it always as in that one vision and never see it changed or different. I think it is one of the places where dreams grow; and hereafter whenever I have a dream of a certain kind . . . a golden, mellow, crimson-veined dream, a very dream of dreams, I shall please my fancy with the belief that it came from my secret dell of birches, and was born of some mystic union between the fairest of the sisters and the genius of that crooning brook.

The woods are full of purple vistas, threaded with sunshine and gossamer. Down drop the tinted leaves, one by one, with the faintest of sighs, until our feet rustle most silverly through their fallen magnificence. The woods are as friendly as ever; but they do not make the advances of spring, nor do they lavish attentions on us as in summer. They are full of a gentle, placid indifference. We have the freedom of their wonders, as old friends, but we are not any longer to expect them to make much fuss over us; they want to dream and remember, undisturbed by new things. They have spread out a spectacle that cannot be surpassed . . . have flung all their months of hoarded sunlight into one grand burst of colour, and now they wish to take their rest.

The conebearers hardly know what to make of the transformation that has come over their deciduous neighbours, who comported themselves so discreetly and respectably all through the earlier months of the year. The pines and hemlocks and spruces seem to wrap their dark mantles around them, with a tinge of haughty disapproval. No change of fashion for them, and it please ye, no flaunting in unseemly liveries of riotous hue. It is theirs to keep up the dignity of the forest. Only the firs are more tolerant. Indeed, here and there a fir seems trying to change its sober garments also, and has turned a rich red-brown. But, alas! The poor fir pays for its desertion of fir tradition by death. Only the dying fir can change its colour . . . and exhale that haunting, indescribable odour, which steals out to meet us in shadowy hollows and silent dingles.

There is a magic in that scent of dying fir. It gets into our blood like some rare, subtly-compounded wine, and thrills us with unutterable sweetnesses, as of recollections from some other, fairer life, lived in some happier star. Compared to it, all other scents seem heavy and earth-born, luring to the valleys instead of the heights. But the tang of the fir summons upward and onward to some "far-off, divine event" . . . some spiritual peak of attainment, whence we shall see with unfaltering, unclouded vision the spires of some ærial city beautiful, or the fulfilment of some fair, fadeless land of promise.

Autumn woods give us another rare fragrance also—the aroma of frosted ferns. The morning is the best time for it—a morning after a sharp frost, when the sunshine breaks over the hollows in the woods; but sometimes we may catch it in the evenings after the afternoon sun has steeped the feathery golden sheets of a certain variety of fern and drawn out their choicest savour.

I have a surprise for you if you will but walk with me through these still, stained mazes and over the enclosed harvest field beyond, and up this dour hill of gnarled spruces and along this maple-fringed upland meadow. There will be many little things along our way to make us glad. Joyful sounds will "come ringing down the wind;" gypsy gold will be ours for the gathering; I can promise you a glimpse now and then of a shy partridge, scuttling away over the fallen leaves; as the evening deepens there will be nun-like shadows under the trees; and there will be squirrels, chattering in the beeches where the nuts are. Squirrels, you know, are the gossips and busybodies of the woods, not having learned the fine reserve of its other denizens. But there is a certain shrill friendliness in their greeting, and they are not really half such scolds as one might imagine from appearances. If they would but "take a thought and mend" their shrewd-like ways they would be dear, lovable creatures enough.

Ah, here is my promised surprise. Look you . . . a tree . . . an apple tree . . . an apple tree laden with fruit . . . as I live, a veritable apple-bearing apple tree here in the very heart of the woods, neighboured by beeches and pines, miles away from any orchard. Years ago it sprang from some chance sown seed; and the alien thing has grown and flourished and held its own. In the spring I wandered this way and saw it white amid wildness with its domestic blossom. Pluck and eat fearlessly, I pray you. I know these apples of old and fruit of Hesperides hath not a rarer flavour, nor the fatal apple of Eden. They have a tawny skin, but a white, white flesh, faintly veined with red; and, besides their own proper apple taste, they have a certain wild, delicious flavour no orchard-grown apples ever possessed or can possess. Let us sit here on this fallen tree, cushioned with mosses, and eat our fill, while the shafts of sunshine turn crimson and grow remote and more remote, until they vanish altogether and the early autumn twilight falls over the woods. Surely, there is nothing more for our quest, and we may as well go home.

Nothing more? Look you, I pray you, over yonder, through the mist of this mild, calm evening. Beyond the brook valley, halfway up the opposite slope, a brush fire is burning clearly and steadily in a maple grove. There is something indescribably alluring in that fire, glowing so redly against the dark background of forest and twilit hill. A wood fire at night has a fascination not to be resisted by those of mortal race. Come, let us arise and go to it. It may have been lighted by some good, honest farmer, bent on tidying up his sugar orchard, but it may also, for aught we know, have been kindled by no earthly woodman, a beacon or a summons to the tribes of færy. Even so, we shall seek it fearlessly, for are we not members of the immemorial free-masonry of the woods?

Now we are in the grove. Is it not beautiful, O comrade of my wanderings? So beautiful that it makes us perfectly happy; we could sit down and cry for

pure, unearthly joy; and we desire fervently some new language, rich in unused, unstained words, to express our rapture.

The fire burns with a clear, steady glow and a soft crackle; the long arcades beneath the trees are illuminated with a rosy radiance, beyond which lurks companies of enticing gray and purple shadows. Everything is very still and dreamy and remote. It is impossible that out there, just over the hill, lies a village of men, where tame household lamps are shining. We must be thousands of miles away from such things. It is an hour and place when and where anything might come true . . . when men in green might creep out to join hands and foot in fealty around the fire, or wood nymphs steal from their trees to warm their white limbs, grown chilly in autumn frosts, by the blaze. I don't think we would feel much surprise if we should see something of the kind . . . the flash of an ivory shoulder through yonder gloom, or a queer little elfin face peering at us around a twisted gray trunk. Oh, I think I do see it . . . but one cannot be sure. Mortal eyesight is too slow and clumsy a thing to match against the flicker of a pixy-litten fire.

Everything is in this hour—the beauty of classic myths, the primal charm of the silent and the open, the lure of mystery, the beguilement of gramarye. It has been a pure love match 'twixt light and dark, and beautiful exceedingly are the offspring thereof.

We go home by the old fir lane over the hill, though it is somewhat longer than the field way. But it always drags terribly at my heart to go past a wood lane if I can make any excuse at all for traversing it. Sometimes I like to walk in this lane alone, for I know it well and can tryst here with many shapes of old dreams and joys. But to-night I am glad to have a comrade . . . for the dark is coming down, and I am just a wee bit afraid, with a not unpleasant fear. The whole character of the lane seems changed. It is mysterious . . . eerie . . . almost sinister. The trees, my old, well-known friends, are strange and aloof. The sounds we hear are not the cheery, companionable sounds of daytime . . . they are creeping and whispering and weird, as if the life of the woods had suddenly developed something almost hostile . . . something, at least, alien and unacquainted and furtive. I could fancy that I hear stealthy footsteps all around us . . . that strange eyes were watching us through the boughs. I feel all the old primitive fear known to the childhood of the race—the awe of the dark and shadowy, the shrinking from some unseen menace lurking in the gloom. My reason quells it into a piquant watchfulness, but were I alone it would take but little—nothing more than that strip of dried bark keening so shilly on the rail fence—to deliver me over to a blind panic, in which I should turn and flee shamelessly. As it is, I walk more quickly than my wont, and feel, as we leave the lane behind, that I am escaping from some fascinating, but not altogether hallowed, locality—a place still given over to paganism and the revels of fauns

and satyrs. None of the wild places are ever wholly Christian in the darkness, however much they may seem so in daylight. There is always a lurking life in them that dares not show itself to the sun, but regains its own with the night. Comrade, I vow I am right glad to see the steady-gleaming homelight below us, shining on homely, mortal faces. It is a good thing after the uncanny enchantment of the autumn forest.

The Woods in Winter

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Last night it snowed. I had been waiting for this first snowfall before I went again to the woods. I did not wish to spy upon their nakedness. It seems like taking an unfair advantage of old friends to visit them when they are unclad, with all the little ins and outs of their realm laid pitifully bare. There is always a November space, after the leaves have fallen, when it seems almost indecent to intrude on the forest, for its glory terrestrial has departed, and its glory celestial . . . of spirit and purity and whiteness . . . has not yet come upon it. Of course, there are dear days sometimes, even in November, when the woods are beautiful and gracious in a dignified serenity of folded hands and closed eyes . . . days full of a fine, pale sunshine that sifts through the firs and glimmers in the gray beechwood, lighting up evergreen banks of moss and washing the colonnades of the pines . . . days with a high-sprung sky of flawless turquoise, shading off into milkiness on the far horizons . . . days ending for all their mildness and dream in a murky red sunset, flaming in smoky crimson behind the westering hills, with perhaps a star above it, like a saved soul gazing with compassionate eyes into pits of torment, where sinful spirits are being purged from the stains of earthly pilgrimage.

But such days are an exception in late November and early December. More commonly they are dour and forbidding, in a "hard, dull bitterness," with sunless gray skies. The winds that still go "piping down the valleys wild" are heartbroken searchers, seeking for things loved and lost, wailing in their loneliness, calling in vain on elf and fay; for the fairy folk, if they be not all fled afar to the southlands, must be curled up asleep in the hearts of the pines or among the roots of the ferns; and they will never venture out amid the desolation of winter woods where there is no leafy curtain to screen them, no bluebell into which to creep, no toadstool under which to hide.

But last night the snow came . . . . enough to transfigure and beautify, but not enough to spoil the walking; and it did not drift, but just fell softly and lightly, doing its wonder-work in the mirk of a December night. This morning, when I awakened and saw the world in the sunlight, I had a vision of woodland solitudes of snow, arcades picked out in pearl and silver, long floors of untrodden marble, whence spring the cathedral columns of the pines. And this afternoon I went to find the reality of my vision in the woods "that belt the gray hillside" . . . ay, and overflow beyond it into many a valley white-folded in immortal peace.

One can really get better acquainted with the trees in winter. There is no drapery of leaves to hide them from us; we can see all their beauty of graceful limb, of upreaching boughs, of mesh-like twigs, spun against the transparent skies. The slenderness or straightness or sturdiness of their trunks is revealed; even the birds' nests . . . "there are no birds in last year's nest" . . . are hung plainly in sight for any curious eye to see. It does not matter now. The dappled eggs have long ago hatched out into incarnate melody and grace, and the birdlings have flown to lands of the sun far-distant, caring nothing now for their old cradles, which are filled with winter snows.

The beeches and maples are dignified matrons, even when stripped of their foliage; and the birches . . . look you at that row of them against the spruce hill, their white limbs gleaming through the fine purple mist of their twigs . . . are beautiful pagan maidens who have never lost the Eden secret of being naked and unashamed.

But the conebearers, stanch souls that they are, keep their secrets still. The firs and the pines and the spruces never reveal their mystery, never betray their long-guarded lore. See how beautiful is that thickly-growing copse of young firs, lightly powdered with the new-fallen snow, as if a veil of aerial lace had been tricksily flung over austere young druid priestesses forsworn to all such frivolities of vain adornment. Yet they wear it gracefully enough . . . . firs can do anything gracefully, even to wringing their hands in the grip of a storm. The deciduous trees are always anguished and writhen and piteous in storms; but there is something in the conebearers akin to the storm spirit . . . something that leaps out to greet it and join with it in a wild, exultant revelry. After the first snowfall, however, the woods are at peace in their white loveliness. To-day I paused at the entrance of a narrow path between upright ranks of beeches, and looked long adown it before I could commit what seemed the desecration of walking through it . . . so taintless and wonderful it seemed, like a street of pearl in the New Jerusalem. Every twig and spray was outlined in snow. The undergrowth along its sides was a little fairy forest cut out of marble. The shadows cast by the honey-tinted winter sunshine were fine and spirit-like. Every step I took revealed new enchantments, as if some ambitious elfin artificer were striving to show just how much could be done with nothing but snow in the hands of somebody who knew how to make use of it. A snowfall such as this is the finest test of beauty. Wherever there is any ugliness or distortion it shows mercilessly; but beauty and grace are added unto beauty and grace, even as unto him that hath shall be given abundantly.

As a rule, winter woods are given over to the empery of silence. There are no birds to chirp and sing, no brooks to gurgle, no squirrels to gossip. But the wind makes music occasionally and gives in quality what it lacks in quantity. Sometimes on a clear starlit night it whistles through the copses most

freakishly and joyously; and again, on a brooding afternoon before a storm it creeps along the floor of the woods with a low, wailing cry that haunts the hearer with its significance of hopelessness and boding.

To-day there are no drifts. But sometimes, after a storm, the hollows and lanes are full of them, carved by the inimitable chisel of the north-easter into wonderful shapes. I remember once coming upon a snowdrift in a clearing far back in the woods which was the exact likeness of a beautiful woman's profile. Seen too close by, the resemblance was lost, as in the fairy tale of the Castle of St. John; seen in front, it was a shapeless oddity; but at just the right distance and angle, the outline was so perfect that when I came suddenly upon it, gleaming out against the dark background of spruce in the glow of a winter sunset, I could hardly convince myself that it was not the work of a human hand. There was a low, noble brow, a straight, classic nose, lips and chin and cheek curve modelled as if some goddess of old time had sat to the sculptor, and a breast of such cold, swelling purity as the very genius of the winter woods might display. All "the beauty that old Greece and Rome sang, painted, taught" was expressed in it; yet no eyes but mine saw it.

She is a rare artist, this old Mother Nature, who works "for the joy of the working," and not in any spirit of vain show. To-day the fir woods on the unsheltered side of the hill, where the winds have shaken off the snow, are a symphony of greens and grays, so subtle that you cannot tell where one shade begins to be the other. Gray trunk, green bough, gray-green moss, above the white floor. Yet the old gypsy doesn't like unrelieved monotones . . . she must have a dash of colour. And here it is . . . a broken dead fir branch of a beautiful brown swinging among the beards of moss.

All the tintings of winter woods are extremely delicate and elusive. When the brief afternoon wanes, and the low, descending sun touches the faraway hill-tops of the south-west there seems to be all over the waste places an abundance, not of colour, but of the spirit of colour. There is really nothing but pure white after all, but one has the impression of fairy-like blendings of rose and violet, opal and heliotrope, on the slopes and in the dingles, and along the curves of the forest land. You feel sure the tint is there; but when you look directly at it it is gone . . . . from the corner of your eye you know it is lurking over yonder in a spot where there was nothing but a pale purity a moment ago. Only just when the sun is setting is there a fleeting gleam of real colour; then the redness streams over the snow, and incarnadines the hills and fields, and smites the crest of the firs on the hills with flame. Just a few minutes of transfiguration and revelation . . . and it is gone . . . and over the woods falls the mystic veil of dreamy, haunted winter twilight.

To my right, as I stand breathlessly happy in this wind-haunted, star-sentinelled valley, there is a grove of tall, gently waving spruces. Seen in

daylight those spruces are old and uncomely . . . dead almost to the tops, with withered branches. But seen in this enchanted light against a sky that begins by being rosy saffron and continues to be silver green, and ends finally in crystal blue, they are like tall, slender witch maidens weaving spells of necromancy in a rune of elder days. How I long to share in their gramarye . . . to have fellowship in their twilight sorceries!

Up comes the moon! Saw you ever such beauty as moonlight in winter woods . . . such wondrous union of clear radiance with blackest gloom . . . such hints and hidings and revealings . . . such deep copses laced with silver . . . such aisles patterned with shadow . . . such valleys brimmed over with splendour? I seem to be walking through a spellbound world of diamond and crystal and pearl; I feel a wonderful lightness of spirit and a soul-stirring joy in mere existence . . . a joy that seems to spring fountain-like from the very deeps of my being and to be independent of all earthy things. I am alone and I am glad of it. Any human companionship, even the dearest and most perfect, would be alien and superfluous to me now. I am sufficient unto myself, needing not any emotion of earth to round out my felicity. Such moments come rarely . . . but when they do come they are inexpressibly marvellous and beautiful . . . as if the finite were for a second infinity . . . . as if humanity were for a space uplifted into divinity. Only for a moment, ’tis true . . . yet such a moment is worth a cycle of common years untouched by the glory and the dream.

Spring in the Woods

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The woods are so human that to know them we must live with them. An occasional saunter through them, keeping, it may be, to the well trodden paths, will never admit us to their intimacy. If we wish to be near friends we must seek them out and win them by frequent reverent visits at all hours, by morning, by noon, and by night, and at all seasons, in spring and in summer, in autumn and in winter. Otherwise, we can never really know them, and any pretence we can make to the contrary will never impose on them. They have their own effective way of keeping aliens at a distance and shutting their heart to mere casual sight-seers.

Believe me, it is of no use to seek the woods from any motive except sheer love of them; they will find us out at once and hide all their sweet, world-old secrets from us. But if they know we come to them because we love them they will be very kind to us and give us such treasure of beauty and delight as is not bought or sold in market nor even can be paid for in coin of earthly minting; for the woods when they give at all give unstintedly and hold nothing back from their true worshippers. We must go to them lovingly, humbly, patiently, watchfully, and we shall learn what poignant loveliness lurks in the wild places and silent intervals, lying under starshine and sunset, what cadences of unearthly music are harped on aged pine boughs or crooned in copses of fir, what delicate savours exhale from mosses and ferns in sunny corners or on damp brooklands, what dreams and myths and legends of an older time haunt them, what unsuspected tintings glimmer in their dark demesnes and glow in their alluring by-ways; for it is the by-ways that lead to the heart of the woods, and we must not fail to follow them if we would know the forests and be known of them.

Spring is the best time to walk in the woods; at least, we think so in spring; but when summer comes it seems better still; and autumn woods are things quite incomparable in their splendour; and sometimes the winter woods, with their white reserve and fearlessly displayed nakedness, seem the rarest and finest of all. For it is with the forest as with a sweetheart of flesh and blood, in every changing mood and vesture she is still more adorable in her beloved's eyes.

But it is certain that there is more of frank friendliness in the woods in spring than at any other season. In summer they are very busy about their own concerns; in autumn they are so gorgeous and imperial that we feel they have

no particular need of us, even though they may like us as well as ever; and in winter their chaste aloofness inspires us with more of the awe of a worshipper than the ardour of a lover.

But in the spring they have so much time before them, and are so well pleased with themselves and the exquisite things that are budding in and about their bailiwick, that they take us into full companionship and make us free of all their crafts and mysteries, from the potent, unutterable charm of a dim spruce wood to the grace of flexile mountain ashes fringing a lonely glen.

The spring woods have a fashion of flowers, dainty, spirit-fine things, akin to the soul of the wilderness. Here is a westward sloping hill, lying under white drifts of cloud, feathered over with lisping young pines and firs that cup little hollows and corners where the sunshine gets in and never gets out again, but stays there and grows mellow, coaxing dear things to bloom long before they would dream of wakening up elsewhere. This is the spot for mayflowers; we are certain to find them here, on this little russet knoll for choice, where at first sight there is not a hint of blossom. Wait; the mayflowers never flaunt themselves; they must be sought and wooed as becomes them. See, we stoop, we pull aside the brown leathery leaves, and behold! The initials of spring's first lettering, trails and clusters of star-white and dawn-pink that have in them the very soul of all the springs that ever were, reincarnated in something which it seems gross to call perfume, so exquisite and spiritual will it prove to be.

Now that we have learned the art of finding mayflowers we can gather them all over this hill. It is the only place where they grow, for they do not like luxurious surroundings, they extract all their sweetness out of sandy, inhospitable soil, and offer it to the wet, leafless world before the forests have fairly begun to waken up and preen themselves.

After the mayflowers have gone the woods open eyes of blue violets. We find them almost everywhere; the thick spruce woods are the only places where we can venture fearlessly. Elsewhere we must walk most delicately, lest our feet crush the dear, sky-tinted things. Wherever a bit of grass finds sunshine enough on which to thrive there we find violets, along the lanes, and about the roots of slim birches, and in the dappled pasture corners overhung with beechen boughs; but to find the place where they grow most thickly we must wander into a tiny, sequestered valley of a western hill; beyond it there is a pool which is not known to summer days, but in spring is a glimmering green sheet of water on whose banks nymphs might dance as blithely as ever they did on Argive hill or in Cretan dale. Certes, they would have rare footing of it, for here violets grow so thickly that all the grass is enskied with them; and in just one corner we find the rarer white violets, tiny blossoms with purple pencillings in their little urns, which are filled with the most subtly distilled incense.

This pool is a witching spot near which to linger on spring evenings. Somewhere through the lissome willows and poplars that fringe it faint hues of rose and saffron from the far bourne of sunset steal across its pearly shimmer. It is unruffled by a breath, and every leaf and branch is mirrored in it, to the very grasses that sway on its margin. The willows are decked with glossy silver catkins, the maples are mistily red-budded, and that cluster of white birches, a meet home for a dryad, is hung over with golden tassels.

When the violets begin to leave us we have the white garlands of the wild cherry flung out everywhere, against the dark of the spruces and in the hedges along the lanes; and will you please look at that young wild pear which has adorned herself after immemorial fashion as a bride for her husband, in a wedding veil of fine lace. The fingers of wood pixies must have woven it, for nothing like it ever came from an earthly loom. I vow the tree is conscious of its own loveliness; it is trembling and bridling before our very eyes, as if its beauty were not the most ephemeral thing in the woods, as it is the rarest and most exceeding, for to-day it is and to-morrow it is not. Every south wind purring gently through the boughs will winnow away a shower of slender petals. But what matter? To-day it is queen of the wild places, and it is always to-day in the woods, where there is neither past nor future but only the prescience of immortality.

Of course, there are dandelions in the woods, because there are dandelions everywhere. They have no sense of the fitness of things at all; they are a cheerful, self-satisfied folk, firmly believing that they are welcome wherever grass can grow and sunshine beckon. But they are alien to the ancient wood. They are too obvious and frank; they possess none of the mystery and reserve and allurement of the real wood flowers; in short, have no secrets. Still, nothing, not even the smug dandelion, can live long in or near the woods without some sort of psychic transformation coming over it; and presently all the obtrusive yellowness and complacency are gone, and we have instead misty, phantom-like globes that hover over the long grasses in full harmony with the traditions of the forests.

The open spaces in the woods, washed in a bath of tingling sunshine, visited of all the winds of heaven, with glimpses of faraway hills and home meadows where cloud shadows broaden and vanish, are dear to our hearts; and dearer still the place of hardwoods, hung with their mist of green, where elfin lights frolic; but dearest of all is the close wood, curtained with fine-spun purple gloom, through which only the most adventurous sunbeams may glide, looking pale as if with fear over their own daring. This is where the immortal heart of the wood will beat against ours and its subtle life will steal into our veins and make us its own forever, so that no matter where we go or how wide we wander in the noisy ways of cities or over lone paths of sea, we shall yet be

drawn back to the forest to find our most enduring kinship.

Those who have followed a dim, winding, balsamic path to the unexpected hollow where a wood spring lies, have found the rarest secret the woods can reveal. Here it is, under its pines, a crystal-clear thing, with lips unkissed by so much as a stray sunbeam. It is easy to dream that it is one of the haunted springs of old romance, an enchanted spot where we must go softly and speak, if we dare speak at all, in the lowest of whispers, lest we disturb the rest of a white, wet naiad or break some spell that has cost long years of mystic weaving. Come, let us stoop down on the brink and ever so gently drink from our hollowed hands of the living water, for it must have some potent quality of magic in it, and all our future lives we shall have better understanding of the wood and its lore by reason of drinking from the cup it offers.

A brook steals away from the spring. At first it goes deeply and darkly and softly, as becomes its birth; but as soon as we follow it from that somewhat uncanny locality we see that, though born of the spring, it was begotten by the spirit of the wild, and is more its father's child than its mother's, becoming promptly what all brooks are, a gay, irresponsible vagabond of valley and wilderness. Let us take it for a boon companion and follow it in all its windings and doublings and tricksy surprises. A brook is the most changeful, bewitching, lovable thing in God's good world. It is never in the same mind or mood two minutes. Here it creeps around the roots of the birches, with a plaintive little murmur and sigh, as if its heart were broken. We feel that we must sympathise with its old sorrow and nameless woe. But listen, a curve further on and the brook is laughing, a long, low gurgle of laughter, as if it were enjoying some capital joke all by itself; and so infectious is its mirth that we must laugh too and forget old sadness as the brook forgets.

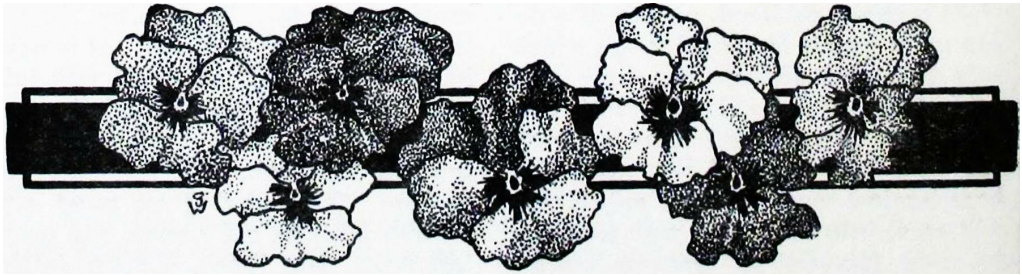
Here it makes a pool, dark and brooding and still, and thinks over its secrets with a reticence savouring of its maternity; but anon it grows communicative and gossips shallowly over a broken pebble bed, where there is a diamond-dance of sunbeams, and no minnow or troutling can glide through without being seen.

Sometimes its banks are high and steep, hung with slender ashes and birches; then they are mere low margins green with delicate mosses, shelving out of the wood. Here we come to a little precipice, the brook flings itself over undauntedly in an indignation of foam and gathers itself up rather dizzily among the mossy stones below. It is some time before it gets over its vexation; and it goes boiling and muttering along, fighting with the rotten logs that lie across it and making far more fuss than is necessary over every root that interferes with it. But the brook is sweet-tempered and cannot be angry long; and soon it is twinkling ever so good-naturedly in and out among the linked shadows, and presently it leads us out of the woods into the meadows.

It is a spring evening and the earth smells good. All the birds, which have been so busy nest-building through the day, have gone to sleep, except the robins, which are just beginning to whistle, clearly, melodiously, enchantingly, as they never whistle at any time save just after a spring sunset. “Horns of elfland” never sounded so sweetly around hoary castle and ruined tower as do the vesper calls of robins in a twilit wood of spruces and across dim green pastures lying under the pale radiance of a young moon.

The frogs sing us homeward. From every pool in the valleys and swamp in the forests come their “flute-throated voices.” In that silvery, haunting chorus the music of all the springs that have been since the days of Eden finds its ever-renewed reincarnation.

Here the wood gives us a last sweet amazement for its guerdon. Before us is a young poplar, the very embodiment of youth and spring in its litheness and symmetry and grace and aspiration. Its little leaves are hanging tremulously, but are not yet so fully blown as to hide its delicate development of bough and twig, making poetry against the spiritual tints of a spring sunset. It is so beautiful that it hurts us, with the pain inseparable from all perfection. Why is it so? It is the pain of finality, the realisation that there can be nothing beyond but retrogression? Or is it the prisoned infinite in us calling out to its kindred infinite expressed in that visible perfection?

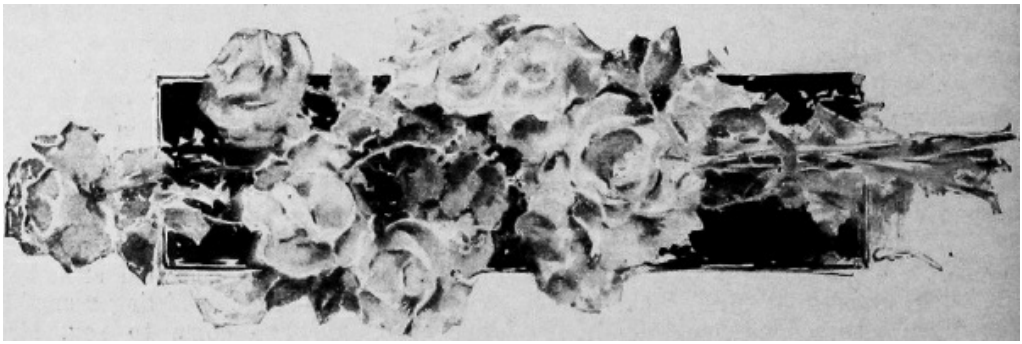


A Winter Dawn

First published *Munsey*, December 1899.

Above the marge of night a star still shines,
And on the frost rimmed hills the somber pines
Harbor a chilly wind that crooneth low
Over the glimmering wastes of virgin snow.

Thro' the dim arch of orient the morn
Comes in a milk white splendor, newly born;
A sword of crimson cuts in twain the gray
Banners of shadow hosts, and lo, the day!



The Little Gable Window

First published *Designer*, May 1907.

There's a little gable window in a cottage far away,
Where a child in purple twilights used to softly kneel and pray,
While across the marge of evening fell the darkness, and the stars
Peeped in tender benediction over heaven's silver bars.

Softly thro' the gathering shadows breathed that little, tender prayer,
For the undimmed faith of childhood knows a far diviner air.
God was good and so was mother, sunny moments stretched before,
And the after dreams were colored by the hues the future wore.

There's a little gable window in a cottage far away
Where a maiden used to linger at the closing of the day,
Face as fresh and fair as May-time, lips of laughter, eyes of blue.
Dreaming lightly of the future with a heart sincere and true.

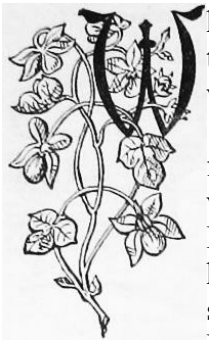
All the winds that blew to meet her sang of happy days to be
When the rose of life should blossom in a land beyond the sea.
Hand in hand with love eternal all the future way seemed fair;
In that little olden cottage Youth had never met with Care.

Ah, the years have brought me sorrow—I am tired and weary now,
There is silver in my tresses, there are lines upon my brow,
And my heart is filled with longing just once more to kneel and pray
By the little gable window of that cottage far away.

The 1890’s

Our Charivari

First published in *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, May 9, 1896.



hen Jerry Boirier, Uncle Lyman's French servant-boy, told us there was to be a charivari at Roderick Brown's that night, we were wild to go.

"We," were Allison Hillier, of New York; Algernon Keefe, from Nova Scotia, and myself, Fred Harvey, from Quebec. We were cousins, and we were spending our vacation at Uncle Lyman Harvey's farm, on Prince Edward Island. We were having a splendid time, but we were chiefly notorious for our scrapes. Our average was two and a half a week, and Aunt Maria said, time and time again, she never had a minute's peace, lest one or the other of us should be brought in a corpse. And I'm obliged to confess that we generally got into trouble through our own headstrong doings and willful disregard of Uncle Lyman's advice. He was very patient, except in cases of outright disobedience; but he warned us solemnly every day, that we would learn a lesson sooner or later, if we didn't mend our ways. And Uncle Lyman's words came true to the letter, though we used to wink and grin at each other whenever his back was turned.

But about this charivari! Ever heard of one? Well, it is an old French Canadian custom, and is kept up in a good many places in Canada yet. Whenever there's a wedding the young fellows of the settlement call at the house, dressed in every queer costume they can contrive, with horns and bells and so on, and keep up a racket for hours.

When a charivari is well-conducted and respectable it is real fun. Sometimes the costumes are well got up and the charivariers don't do anything worse than make a noise; and mostly the people of the house invite them into the kitchen and treat them with cakes, which the bride herself comes out and hands around. Then they go off, peaceably and orderly. That's one kind of charivari. But there are two kinds, as we afterwards discovered.

Well, we were crazy about the affair, but when we asked Uncle Lyman's permission we got a decided "No!" He told us he didn't approve of charivaris, anyhow, and he knew from what he'd heard that this was going to be one of the worst kind. A lot of roughs from the "back road" were going, and there'd be liquor in the crowd, and we'd be certain to get into trouble.

Uncle Lyman isn't one of the coaxable kind, so we went off pretty sulky, and sat down on an old bench behind the barn to hold an indignation meeting.

"Say, you fellows, *I'm* going to that charivari yet!" This was my contribution.

"How'll you manage it?" asked Allison. "If we could hit on a plan, I'd go in for it, for it's likely the only chance we'll ever have of seeing a real charivari. It'd be no end of fun to tell the folks at home."

Then we made our plans in cold blood. We agreed to smuggle the necessary things up to an old shed back of the barn, during the day, each being responsible for so much. Algie was to get the lantern, two horns, an old tin pan and a pot—to get black off of, you see.

I agreed to bring two old dresses of Veronica's—Veronica Gallant was Aunt Maria's big, fat French girl—and Allison was to get Jerry's working clothes. Jerry and Veronica had gone home. It was a holy day, so we had a fine chance.

Every now and then through the day you'd see a boy sneaking into the house when Aunt Maria wasn't round, and rushing out again by the back way with something. We knew no one would go near the old shed. How to get out at night bothered us most.

Uncle Lyman not only locked all the doors at bedtime, but carried the key off with him, because he'd discovered that Jerry had a habit of getting up and going out apple-stealing after every one was in bed.

All the downstair windows made too loud a noise in opening to think of getting out of them, for uncle and aunt slept on the ground floor. The only upstairs one that would serve, was a little one in the clothes-room; it opened on the steep kitchen-roof at the back of the house.

We resolved to climb out of this, slide down the roof and jump off on a pile of seaweed that had been used for banking in winter and hadn't been removed.

When we went to bed at night we could hear horns blowing up all the roads, and it just made us tingle. It was a dusky, starlit night, and a new moon was low in the west, looking like a little crescent of reddish gold.

After what seemed a dreadful long time, Allison and I concluded uncle and aunt were asleep, and we got up. When we crept into Algie's room, of course he was sound asleep—and such a time as we had to wake him! And then he was sleepy and stupid for half an hour.

We took our shoes in our hands and tiptoed down the hall to the clothes-room door. Then Allison tripped on a rug and fell against the door. It flew open with a bang, and his shoes went skating over the floor. We were sure every soul in the house would be up at the noise, but, as all was still, Allison got up, and after we had a laugh we got to the window.

I thought we'd never get it up. It stuck, and Allison shoved and shoved. All at once it gave way, and went up so suddenly he nearly went through it. We fired our shoes down first, giving them a good fling to send them clear of the

roof, and then Allison went.

He slipped out and went down the roof like an eel. We heard him jump, and then whistle softly, as a signal. It was Algie's turn next. He crawled out boldly, but the roof was slippery from the dew, and first thing I heard him give a scramble and a yell, and then he was gone!

I heard him and Allison giggling below, so I knew he wasn't hurt, but I thought Uncle Lyman would certainty hear that yell, and for quite ten minutes I didn't dare to climb out. When I did I forgot about the window; and when I had wriggled half-way down, the contrary thing fell with a force that fairly jarred the house. I suppose things sounded worse to us in the dark and silence, but at the time I couldn't see why every one didn't wake up. I lay there quaking, till I heard Allison below.

"Say, you up there! Are you going to get down to-night?"

So I crept down and jumped off on the seaweed.

When I got it all out of my mouth and ears, I said:

"Have you fellows got all the shoes?"

And it turned out they couldn't find one of mine. So we had to waste about fifteen minutes rooting around for it, till we discovered Algie had it with the rest, after all.

I relieved my feelings by saying:

"Well, you idiot!"

And we started, taking a short cut through the spruce grove, and nearly tearing our eyes out on the low boughs. Just then old Gyp, who was chained in the orchard, began to bark furiously, ending off each series with a long, quivering howl.

"I'd like to choke that dog dead," snarled Allison.

I don't want to give you the impression that Allison was always this bloodthirsty, mind. Generally he was quite amiable, but his patience had been tried that night.

Gyp had stopped barking when we reached the shed, and we lit the lantern and hurried to work. Algie put on Jerry's trowsers, hitched neatly to his shoulders, and turned up to his knees, Jerry's coat wrong side out, and an old straw hat. Then he blacked his face and hands with pot-black, and took a tin pan.

Allison and I had a fearful time getting into Veronica's dresses. They were a mile too big for us, and no matter how much we tucked them in at the waist, we were sure to trip and fall every minute, and have to pick each other up. It's a mystery to me how girls ever get round.

I blacked my face and hands, but Allison was too nice for that; so he put on a headdress he had made of foolscap. It came down over his face and went up in a big peak with two long horns. He had blacked it in stripes, and looked

perfectly wild in it.

We laughed at each other for a spell, and then took a horn apiece and started. When we got to the house it was pretty late, and the charivari was in full swing. We agreed to keep together; but as soon as we mixed with the crowd, we were quickly separated.

There was a big crowd, and such an array of costumes you never saw. They all had torches of birch-bark and burning brooms, and such yelling and horn-blowing and pan-hammering! I got jostled around rather roughly, and, besides, I was beginning to be doubtful.

Some of the fellows were acting pretty wild; they had liquor, that was plain to be seen, and there was a good deal of fighting and pelting rocks at the house. And they kept getting worse. I was out of breath, blowing my horn, and, after I had been kicked and cuffed and knocked down once or twice, my taste for charivaris was a thing of the past.

Then some one fired a pistol, and I said to myself, "I'm for out of this," and looked around for the boys. I was just despairing of finding them, when the crowd opened before me and I saw Algie standing, bare-headed, at the other end of the space. He started across and got in the way of a big charivarier, who lifted his foot and kicked the child—Algie was only a little fellow.

Before I could move, Allison sprang out and struck the bully fair in the face. Then I shouted and sprang forward. Some one tripped me, and I fell; the next minute the whole crowd closed over me, mad with liquor, hooting and fighting. I thought the life was being trampled out of me, and then I felt some one grab me by the arm and drag me out. It was Allison; his headdress had fallen off, and he looked white and scared.

"Let's run," he panted.

"Algie!" I gasped.

"Waiting for us up the lane! Quick, now, before they see us!"

We ran pell-mell up the lane, Algie falling into rank as we passed him, and if you've ever tried to run in a girl's dress, you'll know it was a serious time. At the road I just dropped down to get my breath and take off that dreadful skirt.

"Tell you, we're lucky to get out of that," puffed Allison, as he struggled out of his. "Uncle was right, as he always is. What fools we've made of ourselves! You're a brick, Fred! That fellow would have downed me—he was a regular tough."

"I guess we're quits," I said, feebly. "Algie, did that chump hurt you?"

"My leg's pretty sore," he admitted. "I wish we'd minded Uncle Lyman."

Allison and I did, too; but that didn't mend matters, so we started across the fields on the run. We were going at a furious rate, when we came spang up

against something. It was a barbed-wire fence, and we hadn't seen it in the dark. Allison and I weren't hurt, as our heads came above it. But it took Algie right across the face, and he said he was killed.

We knew he must be badly scratched, but the only thing to do was to get home as soon as possible, and we had to go around by the road. We didn't talk much, but when we got to the seaweed again, we stopped and looked at each other, and Allison said:

"Well!"

It looks flat on paper, but I never realized before how much expression could be crowded into a single syllable.

In all our scheming it had never occurred to us to ask how we were going to get up and in again.

There was simply no way for it; we felt that we were sold. There was only one thing to do. Allison and I might have braved it out till morning, but Algie's face had to be attended to. We marched around to the door and knocked. Soon we heard steps, and Uncle Lyman opened the door, holding the lamp above his head and peering out in wonder. The wonder changed to blank amazement when he saw us.

We pushed each other in and stood there, a sorry trio—black, torn, ragged, hats gone, and blood all over Algie's face.

Uncle set the lamp down and went to the hall door.

"Maria," he called, "get up and come out here, will you?"

Then he said, sternly:

"Now, boys, I want to know the meaning of this!"

We stammered through it, piecing out each other's remarks, shamefacedly. By the time we finished, Aunt Maria came in, and she took Algie in hand, while Allison and I went out to scrub ourselves.

"What do you suppose Uncle Lyman will do?" questioned Allison, as he helped me wash the back of my neck. "Pack us off home to-morrow?"

"Like as not," I answered, dolefully. "It'll serve us right! But I'm sick of this sort of thing, and I'm going to turn over a new leaf."

"Same here," said Allison, energetically.

And we went in to face our doom.

But Uncle Lyman said not a word; he simply handed me the lamp and pointed to the stairs.

"We'll catch it to-morrow," whispered Allison, consolingly, as we went upstairs.

We were three pretty humble boys as we slipped down to breakfast next morning. We ached from our soles to our crowns. Allison had a black eye. I was all bruises. Algie came in after we did, and his face looked dreadful, and yet so comical—all patched with sticking-plaster. I didn't intend to laugh, but I

happened to catch Allison's eye—nothing could keep that boy down long—and I snickered right out. Then I was more ashamed than ever.

Aunt Maria sat with her lips shut forbiddingly, but we were nearly through breakfast before Uncle Lyman spoke. Then he asked:

"Boys, have you had enough of this kind of fun?"

We said we had.

"Will you ever do the like again?"

"Never!" we all said; Algie said it twice.

And that was every word Uncle Lyman ever said, even when Jerry came in, and said a man had been seriously hurt the night before.

But we kept our word. Uncle Lyman had no reason to complain of our obedience the rest of the summer. He referred to the affair but once again. That was when he saw us off at the station. Just before the train started he came over to the edge of the platform.

"Boys," he said, "you've had some queer experiences this summer. Now, which one are you most ashamed of?"

As the train glided out we poked our heads out of the car window.

"The charivari!" we all replied together.

Our Practical Joke

First published in *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, August 8, 1896.

Ever since we could remember anything, Win Halstead and I had spent our vacations at Grandpa Richardson's farm. We were cousins, but as he lived in Maine and I lived in New Brunswick, we were together only when we went to the old farm in summer. We looked forward to it all winter.

Just as soon as school closed and we had stacked our dog-eared text-books in the darkest corner of the attic we went to grandpa's. It was a jolly place for boys—big woods quite handy and a capital trout-pond, and a shore where they fished for mackerel. Win and I used to put in two months of solid fun before we went back to foot-ball and Latin verbs.

There was nobody at the farm but grandpa and grandma and the hired man, but it wasn't the sort of place you'd get lonesome in. There was always something to do. If there wasn't, we did it anyway.

Grandpa kept us straight in essentials, and was pretty indulgent, though he detested my slang and what he called Win's "Yankee twang."

Grandpa was a rabid old Scotchman, one of the regular "Scots wha ha," and he hated anything that didn't smack of the heather.

We went down this summer expecting to find things as usual, and they were at first. Win and I were both fifteen and no smarter than we fancied ourselves. We had a fairly good opinion of our own acquirements—I don't know that other people shared it—and above all, we didn't want to have any one else bothering around.

So that, when grandpa told us that another cousin of ours was coming to spend his vacation at the farm, Win and I kicked each other under the table; and when grandma said he was sickly and was coming down to see if the sea air would do him any good, we nudged with our elbows. His name was Reggie Talbot, and he was only twelve.

After dinner Win and I went out to a bench under the apple trees and talked it over. We were pretty mad. Here we'd planned so much fun for the summer and now this child was coming to spoil everything, for, of course, he'd want to be at our heels all the time and tagging around wherever we went. And, most likely, he'd be one of the whining, petted kind, and want as much looking after and humoring as a baby.

The more we talked it over, the worse we made him out, and at last we got worked up into a white indignation and felt as if we were very much-abused boys, who ought to have lived when martyrs were appreciated.

We grumbled about it all the afternoon, but by bedtime we had reached the stage of resignation. We said if our vacation was spoiled, it *was* spoiled, and the statement was wonderfully consoling.

After we went to bed we compared our mental photographs of Reggie. Win thought he had red hair, eyes between gray and fishy-blue, and a squint. I leaned to the opinion that he was dark, and that he stuttered. After much discussion we decided we would see him when he came.

By next day Win got so far as to say that, since Reggie was coming, he wished he was there and had it over. When grandpa went to the station for him after dinner, we put off our fishing excursion on the carefully-explained grounds that it looked like a thunder shower, and stayed around home.

We were at the door when grandpa and Reggie drove up. Win said he looked exactly as he expected him to. I couldn't understand that, since Reggie was pale and freckled, with mouse-gray hair and shy, brown eyes.

He was the thinnest boy I ever saw, and his legs were no bigger than broom-sticks. His appearance wasn't exactly taking, but you never can judge of a person by their looks.

Before a week was out, Win and I began to think we had been rather previous in counting our vacation spoiled. In fact, after we got used to Reggie we admitted he was a valuable addition.

He wasn't a bit troublesome or in the way, and such an obliging little chap —really quite useful. Win and I found it very convenient to have some one to run our errands and do lots of things we used to have to do ourselves.

He was the most innocent youngster! Everything Win or I said he believed as gospel, and when we discovered this we got some fun out of it. We would spin the most amazing yarns about our school and home life, piling up statements regardless—positively awful stretchers—and Reggie would stand before us, looking gravely up, and taking it all in, unsuspectingly and admiringly. I suppose it was dreadful. Neither Win nor I would have told a lie in earnest for the world, but we never thought how really wrong it was to impose so on Reggie's innocence.

We thought we saved our consciences when we winked at each other over his head. Not that we were bad to Reggie, you know. We were real kind to him, but we did tease him a good deal.

There was another thing for which we poked fun at him. He was dreadfully afraid of the dark, and he believed in ghosts, pure and simple. You couldn't coax Reggie to go anywhere alone after dark—no, not for anything—and grandma always had to leave a lamp burning in his room till he went to sleep. And, mind you, he was no coward, either. By daylight he was the spunkiest boy I ever saw.

There was as much spirit in his thin little body as Win and I had put

together, and he would go right through with things that even we would stop to think over. Win and I said it was a pity such a spunky boy should be spoiled by one fault, and we fixed up a plan to cure him, as we thought.

It was agreed that I should decoy Reggie to the shore after tea and keep him there till dark. Then, coming home, we were to pass the sheep-house—it was in a dismal spruce grove back of the barn—and Win was to appear in the door dressed as a ghost. Then I was to yell and run, as if I were frightened to death. We expected Reggie would beat his record for speed, and then we'd have a laugh at him and shame him out of his nonsense about ghosts.

We devised a costume for Win, and everything worked beautifully. After tea, I proposed to Reggie that we go to the shore for a swim, and he agreed, as unsuspicious as a lamb.

We had a pretty good time at the shore, watching the fishing boats through a spyglass and diving off the rocks. Reggie did some perfectly reckless things in this line. I just have to own up I wouldn't dare attempt them.

He was all right till sunset, and then he got anxious to go home. I put him off by saying I wanted to wait till the mackerel boats came in, and kept him there, on one pretext or another, till I thought it was dark enough. Then we started.

When we got up on the capes, Reggie was terrified to find how dark it really was—there was always a sort of lemon after-light reflected from the water that kept the shore quite light long after it was dark above.

He clung tight to my hand, shrinking closer and closer; and I knew that every tree and fence-corner we passed was just bristling with ghosts for him, and once, when a harmless old white cow got up suddenly from where she had been lying by the fence, I felt him trembling like a leaf. I began to feel real guilty and uncomfortable, with Reggie's cold, clammy little fingers clinging to mine, and I would really have backed out, only for the thought of Win.

Win said afterwards that, while he was waiting, he felt real remorseful, too, but stuck to it on my account; so there it was. But I hardened my heart, and when we reached the barn-gate, I whistled to warn Win, and, sure enough, as we came around the shed-corner, there he stood, in all his ghostly glory! And you never in your life imagined a more unearthly sight than he presented!

If I hadn't known what it was, I believe I should have taken a fit. As it was, I was actually creepish. He had a long white sheet pinned around him, and a pillow-slip, stuffed stiff with shavings, on his head. This brought his face about in the middle of his body, seemingly, and he had rubbed matches over it till it shone and flared fearfully.

Win made a noise to attract Reggie's attention—a dreadful hollow sort of groan and howl combined—he'd been practicing it all the afternoon out behind the barn, where nobody could hear him—and I shouted and ran. I went so fast,

that I couldn't stop till I got nearly down to the house. I pulled up, puffing, and had just time to wonder why Reggie wasn't at my heels, when I heard Win calling, "Guy! Guy!" from the barn.

Something in his voice made me go back quicker than I had come, if that was possible. I never want to feel again as I felt when I got up there. I've heard people wondering how a murderer must feel; I know as near as I want to!

There lay Reggie, just where he had dropped, in a limp little heap, with Win on his knees, in that ridiculous rig, begging him to speak.

"He isn't—*dead*!" I gasped.

I just went cold all over. It seemed to me whole years and centuries before Win got up, shakily, and said:

"No, no! His heart's beating. Oh, Guy, here! Let's carry him in, quick!"

Win took his feet and I took his shoulders and we marched down to the house and into the kitchen, with Reggie's white face hanging over my arm.

Grandma was setting bread and grandpa was reading an amusing Scotch story out aloud to her. He sprang up as we stumbled in, breathless and trembling. Grandma screamed and said she'd always expected it.

"Boys, what is this?" asked grandpa, in the tone he reserved for state occasions.

We never heard it more than two or three times in our lives, but those two or three times were sufficient. We stammered a few words. Grandpa waved his hand to the door.

"Go out," he said.

We went, dumb and repentant, and sat on the door-step till they brought Reggie to. We gripped each other in joy and shame, when we heard the poor child give a gasp and say, in a shuddering wild voice:

"Oh, don't let it catch me—don't!"

"You poor dear!" grandma sobbed. "No, no! Those miserable boys!" and carried him up stairs.

Win and I were still skulking around when grandpa came out; and such a solemn talking-to as he gave us! He didn't say anything more than our own consciences had said, but it sounded worse, put into words in cold blood. He pointed out what a mean, cowardly thing it was to scare a little fellow like Reggie, who was delicate and timid, instead of protecting him all we could, and showing forbearance to his little weaknesses.

He said Reggie's mother was a widow, and Reggie was all she had to love; and now, perhaps, we'd made him sicker than ever, and given him a fright he'd never get over.

Grandpa said he noticed before several times that our behavior to Reggie wasn't all he could wish, but he hoped it was more thoughtlessness than any real meanness, and that this would be a lesson to us. I tell you, when he went

in we were pretty sober. Win said he felt like a downright sneak. I said I guessed there was a pair of us.

It seemed to us we could never wait till morning. As soon as we knew Reggie was awake, we slipped in. The poor little chap was lying in bed, as white as the pillow, but he sat up when he saw us. Win and I just dropped on the edge of the bed and each of us took one of his thin little hands.

"Oh, Reggie," stammered Win—my face was just as hot as fire. I couldn't have spoken to save my life. "We were regular sneaks! Can you ever forgive us?"

"Of course," said Reggie. "Why, I know you didn't mean it to be so bad, you fellows. Honest, I don't mind. I know I'm a goose."

And he smiled up at us. We just sat there in silence for awhile till grandma came in and sent us out, saying Reggie was to stay in bed all day, and she hoped we were ashamed of ourselves.

Win and I went out to the apple tree bench and made a solemn vow that our first practical joke should also be our last. We had had enough of ghosts in all conscience! and we both said Reggie was a brick.

Our Uncle Wheeler

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In reality he was our great-uncle, and we were very much in awe of him.

The rare times when he came to visit us—usually popping down unexpectedly at some particularly inconvenient moment—were periods of misery for us lively boys, for Uncle Wheeler was a very precise old gentleman, fidgety when boys were around, and with all an old bachelor's decided opinions as to the training and behavior of those unavoidable evils.

Consequently, as Rod used to say, we were "as unhappy as a cat on hot bricks" when Uncle Wheeler came.

He had befriended and aided father more than once in troublous times, for he was really kind-hearted at the core, and hence we were instructed to regard him with gratitude and respect. He was always "Uncle Wheeler" to us. Our other uncles were Uncle Tom, Dick or Harry, but we would as soon have thought of calling Uncle Wheeler "Uncle James" as of saying "hello" to the minister.

Rod and I were the oldest of our family, being fifteen and fourteen respectively. We were hearty, growing boys, and found it very hard to "tone down" during Uncle Wheeler's sojourn.

Nevertheless, we tried our best, for we really liked the old man, in spite of our fear of him. When it was decided that Rod should go to college if it could be managed, Uncle Wheeler wrote to father and mother a letter in which he denounced the project as "absurd nonsense," and railed at it for three pages. On the fourth he announced his intention of paying Rod's way through college if he were really bent upon going, and hoped he wouldn't disgrace the family.

Rod was jubilant; but it behooved him to be very careful, for Uncle Wheeler was extremely touchy, and sometimes got offended at very trifling things. Therefore we made up our minds to be more than usually sedate and proper on the occasion of his next visit.

About two months after this letter, Rod and I received an invitation to a party at the house of one of our schoolmates. During the afternoon Sydney Hatfield, a cousin of ours, arrived and decided to stay over night, as he was going to Tracy's, too.

Mother intended to put him in the spare room to sleep; but about dusk a cutter drove up to the door, and in it were the three Winsloe boys from Bracebridge, who came in and said they were also bound for the party and would afterwards remain with us until the next day.

We were a big family, all told, so that mother said to us, just before we left:

"I think, boys, you'd better take Sydney up to your room to-night and let the Winsloe boys have the spare room. We can accommodate you all if you won't mind a little crowding."

Lou Winsloe said uninvited guests ought to be thankful to be taken in at all, and for his part he thought it jolly to sleep three in a bed, if it was a big one, and we all drove off to the party in high spirits.

It was late when we returned, and of course everybody was in bed. Mother had left a light burning for us, and we tip-toed in cautiously, so as not to disturb the sleepers.

While we were putting away our coats I noticed Rod and Dave Winsloe talking earnestly, and when I went out to lock the back porch door Rod followed me.

"Say, Art, Dave's nervous; he's afraid of the ghost and doesn't want to sleep in the spare room. Of course he's a ninny, but arguing won't do any good. What's to be done?"

Dave Winsloe was a delicate boy of nearly fifteen, and we always regarded him as "babyish." He was extremely sensitive, and his nervous whims had to be indulged.

I don't know how he'd got wind of "our ghost," but he had. I may here remark that our spare room had the reputation of being haunted during the sojourn of the family who had preceded us. None of us had ever seen or heard anything worse than ourselves in it, and never felt in the least disturbed. We had good, healthy nerves and didn't worry about spooks.

But I knew Dave couldn't help his terror, so, feeling sorry, I said:

"Well, the three Winsloes had better go up stairs to our room and you and Syd and I will take the spare room. We're equal to any ghost who may be on the hunting trail to-night."

This arrangement suited all hands, so we showed the Winsloes up stairs and separated.

Our house was an old-fashioned one, and the spare room opened off the end of the parlor. The parlor was a long, narrow room, and the bedroom was also long and narrow, so that from the parlor door to the extreme end of the bedroom, where the bed was, was quite a distance.

Syd, Rod and I went into the parlor and found it deliciously warm, as there had been a fire in the stove. We supposed mother had lit it to warm the spare room for the Winsloes, and we thought it rather a good joke that Dave's ghostly terrors should have put him out of a warm sleeping room.

We undressed by the fire quietly enough, for we were tired; but when we were ready for bed, Syd, who was always up to mischief, had a brilliant idea.

"Say, you chaps, let's start from the hall door and see which will get into

bed first."

Rod and I thought it would be good fun, so we didn't make a noise. So, having taken a vow of silence, we put out the candle, for the moonlight was streaming in at the windows, ranged ourselves by the hall door, and Syd gave the word, "Go!"

The bedroom door was open, so we flew down the parlor, shot through the door and the spare room, and the whole three of us, with one spring, bounded on the bed at the same instant.

There was one awful moment in which we realized what had happened, and then a wheezy, sleepy, well-known voice puffed out:

"Why, bless my soul, what's the matter?"

It was Uncle Wheeler!

We had jumped upon that bed pretty quick, but we jumped off three times quicker, dashed out of the room and scuttled through the parlor, never stopping for breath until we reached the kitchen.

Rod and I wished the floor would open and quietly let us into the cellar. Syd, being a stranger, of course didn't appreciate the situation so keenly.

"Say, you chaps, that old duffer must have got his breath most lammed out of him. Who is it?"

"Uncle Wheeler," groaned Rod. "And, oh! what *will* he say? How ever did he come to be there, and *why* didn't mother leave some way for us to know?"

Just then we heard a gasp and sigh and a sort of groan in the little breakfast-room off the kitchen.

We all jumped.

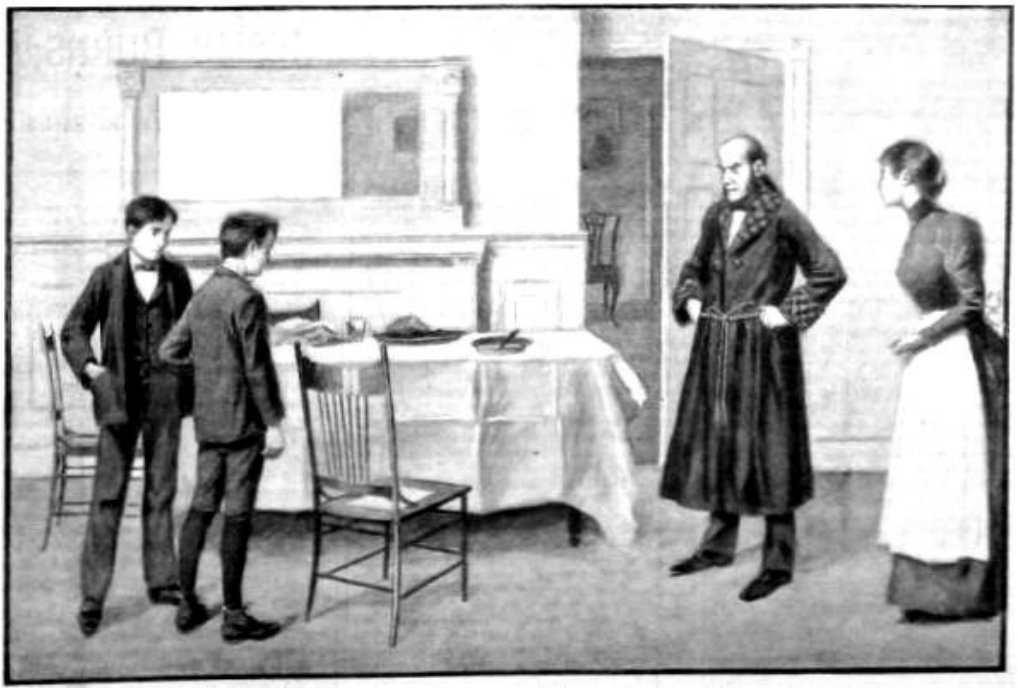
"Great Scott! Is that one of Dave Winsloe's ghosts?" exclaimed Syd.

But I had got a lamp lit, and by its light we saw our eleven-year-old brother, Tad, come shuffling out of the breakfast-room, rubbing his eyes.

"Say, you fellows, have you got back? Mother told me to sit up and tell you—"

"Tell us what?"

"That Uncle Wheeler'd come, and she'd put him in the spare room, and that the Winsloe boys must have your room, and you chaps would have to sleep in the kitchen loft. I meant to keep awake—honest, I did—but I got so tired, I went in there and lay down on the lounge. I guess I went to sleep."



"UNCLE WHEELER GLANCED AT US BOYS, AS IF HE KNEW WE WERE THE GUILTY ONES."

"I guess you did," growled Rod. "You've done for us now."

And after each of us had rated the still stupid and half asleep Tad soundly by way of venting our ill humor, we crept off, shiveringly, to the kitchen loft.

We were too tired and cold and cross to talk it over then, but by dawn Rod and I were sitting up in bed, discussing our mishap in whispers, so as not to waken Syd.

"Nothing worse *could* have happened," lamented Rod. "Uncle Wheeler will be piping mad; you could hardly blame him, I suppose. What a rousing scare he must have got! But he won't listen to any excuse, and not a blessed cent need I expect for college if he finds out. Some men would just look on it as a joke, but Uncle Wheeler isn't that sort."

After forlornly admitting that we'd got into a scrape beyond doubt, we got up, put on some old clothes and went down to sneak Syd's suit out of the parlor for him, for, needless to say, we hadn't stopped to get our clothes in our stampede of the night before.

On our way through the hall, we met the Winsloe boys tiptoeing down stairs, much to our surprise, for it was barely daylight.

"What's the rush?" asked Rod, with an attempt at hilarity. "Been seeing any ghosts, Dave?"

"It's beginning to rain," announced Lou, "and it's setting in for a big thaw,

so we decided to get up, rouse you out if we could and start just as soon as possible. You know it's a long drive home, and a wretched road at the best of times. It'll hardly be passable in a thaw."

They passed on out to the stables. Rod and I looked at each other, both struck by the same idea.

"Nobody else will be stirring for an hour yet," said Rod, voicing my thoughts rather shamefacedly. "We'll light a fire and get some grub for the boys, and they'll be gone before mother or Uncle Wheeler come on the scene. They were supposed to be going to the spare room, and if we just hold our tongues, and get Syd to do the same, Uncle Wheeler will think it was the Winsloes."

"But Tad?"

"Tad didn't appear till too late, so that won't give us away; and he was half-asleep, and I'll bet a cent he'll never remember how many of us were there or that we hadn't our clothes on. It hardly seems fair, though, to put it on the Winsloes."

"That won't hurt. They're nothing to Uncle Wheeler, and he doesn't even know them, so it won't do them any harm, while it would do us whole heaps."

We talked it over and decided to go ahead. I left Rod to light the fire, while I went up, wakened Syd, explained the whole affair and easily got him to promise silence.

"We're not going to tell any fibs, of course!" I said, virtuously. "If anybody asks us who it was, we'll have to tell straight out; but not likely any one will, and we'll just keep quiet. See?"

Syd thought it a good joke, and agreed to keep mum. The Winsloes came in; Rod and I got them a cold breakfast and they started off.

Just as they drove away, mother came out at the hall door, and Uncle Wheeler, in dressing gown and slippers, emerged from the sitting room. He just looked as grumpy as Uncle Wheeler could look—and that is saying a good deal.

Mother didn't see him at first, and merely asked us why we were up so early and where the Winsloe boys were. We explained, and then mother saw Uncle Wheeler, and said she hoped he'd slept well and found his pillows high enough for him.

"Slept well!" growled Uncle Wheeler. "I wonder if you, or any one else, Amelia Jane Millar, could sleep well, if, just when you had dropped off to sleep, after a long and arduous journey, you were suddenly awakened by half a dozen great, lubbering louts of boys coming down on you, like an avalanche, in the dead of night? I ask you how anybody could sleep well under such circumstances, madam?"

And Uncle Wheeler glanced at us boys, as if he knew we were the guilty

ones. Mother was greatly distressed.

"Oh, dear me! The Winsloe boys went in, after all. *Didn't* Tad tell you that Uncle was there?"

"Tad went to sleep," said Rod, promptly, nudging me with his elbow, for fear I'd put in a word too many and complicate matters, "and didn't wake up till too late. When he appeared, the mischief was done. You might have known he couldn't keep awake, mother."

"There was no one else to leave," replied mother; "and I warned him not to go to sleep. I'm *very* sorry this should have happened, Uncle Wheeler."

Uncle Wheeler barely answered.

The Winsloe boys had gone, so he couldn't come down on them, and he had no excuse for blaming any one, except Tad—who kept religiously out of the way that morning—so he felt defrauded of his rights.

He was as snappish and crusty as he could be all through breakfast, and kept making remarks about boys being out late at nights and gadding about to parties and coming home to disturb respectable folks at unseemly hours. *He* was never guilty of it, in his young days, and he felt very sorry to see that his nephews were: and, as for those three fools that had wakened him up, he'd like to teach a lesson to boys who hadn't enough sense to get into bed properly, but must race and tear like a pack of wild cubs.

There was no doubt that Uncle Wheeler was in a fearful humor, and Rod and I realized that we had had a narrow escape.

Syd Hatfield, having no particular interest at stake, enjoyed the whole performance immensely, and afterwards remarked, in the seclusion of the kitchen loft:

"It's a jolly good thing for you chaps that your respected uncle doesn't know that it was you who disturbed his peaceful slumbers. He doesn't seem particularly amiable this morning."

But, for all our success, I really didn't feel comfortable, and Rod looked awfully glum. Pretty soon he came out with it.

"I feel like an out and out sneak, Art," he confessed. "I never did anything like this before, and I never will again. We've deceived mother and Uncle Wheeler, and all I wish is that we hadn't."

"Same here, Rod," I said, heartily, for Rod had just put my own disquieting reflections into words.

Syd stared at us.

"You're a pair of geese! *I* think it is all a capital joke. Why, you didn't *say* a thing—never even stretched the truth itself; and it can't hurt the Winsloe boys one single mite."

"That isn't the question," replied Rod. "It's what *we've* done. I feel kind of dishonorable, but I suppose there's nothing more to be said now."

Still, we did feel mean. Uncle Wheeler got over his ill-humor by next day, and was as good as gold. Everything went well for a week outwardly, but Rod went about kind of grim and sulky, and as for me, I felt somehow or other that I was a pretty mean, sneaking sort of chap.

Rod and I had both been brought up to be strictly truthful and above board in everything, and we felt that we had come short of mother's standard. It wasn't that our evasion was going to harm any one else, but we had simply lost our self-respect. Syd had gone home, so we hadn't him to bolster up our consciences, and we got regularly blue and moody.

One night Uncle Wheeler had another cranky fit on. The wind was northeast and his rheumatism was always bad in a northeast wind. Finally, he remarked to mother:

"I'd a letter to-day from Henry Winsloe, the father of those rascals. He wants me to accommodate him with a loan for a short time. I shan't; I've worked hard for my money, and I'm not going to risk it in doubtful loans—not if he is honest and hard up. I don't propose to help a man that can't bring his boys up better than he's done."

And Uncle Wheeler poked the fire viciously. The memory of the tousing-up he'd got that unlucky night was still vividly present with him.

Rod and I went softly out, leaving mother trying to intercede for Henry Winsloe, with no very good success, and went to our favorite roost in the kitchen loft.

"Here's a mess," said Rod.

"A bad one," said I. "What's to be done?"

"Done? Make a clean breast of it to Uncle Wheeler, of course. It'll ruin my chances with him, but I'm not going to have other people suffer for what isn't their fault."

"If we'd only told him at first!" I said, mournfully. "But even if he could forgive us for jumping over him, he never will for bluffing him about it. He'll think we were just fooling him for pure fun."

"It's a blue show," said Rod, gloomily, "but we deserve it—so I'm not going to flinch. After all, I don't know that I'm sorry we have to. I've felt like a regular sneak this week. Uncle Wheeler will be in a fury, of course, but I think worse of how mother will feel. She hates any crawly business."

We made up our minds to beard the lion in his den as soon as possible. The afternoon of the next day we screwed up our courage and marched straight into the parlor, where Uncle Wheeler was writing letters before the table.

He shoved up his specs and looked at us sourly.

"What do you youngsters want?" he demanded, gruffly.

We both knew by experience that it doesn't do to beat about the bush with Uncle Wheeler. You have to come straight to the point and say what you've

got to say.

Rod took a header right in.

"We've come, Uncle Wheeler, to tell you what we should have told you before. It wasn't the Winsloe boys who woke you up the other night. It was Syd Hatfield and Art and I."

Then we waited for the outburst. Uncle Wheeler gazed at us over his specs quite calmly. We knew he had a dozen different ways of getting mad, and this might be one; but, if so, it was brand new.

"It was you, was it?" he said, at last. "You young scamps—and you've the face to come and tell me so! And why did you say it was the other boys?"

"Please, sir, we didn't," I ventured to say. "Mother just thought it was, because she had told them to go there. But Dave was scared of the ghost; so we changed rooms. Syd wanted us to race and see who'd get into bed first—that's all. We didn't know anybody was there, and we are awfully sorry. We were kind of scared, too; so we thought it wouldn't be any harm to let you all think it was the Winsloes. But it wasn't right, and we've felt mean ever since."

Uncle Wheeler glared quite fiercely.

"What do you think you deserve?" he asked.

And Rod spoke up manfully:

"Uncle Wheeler, we deserve a sound scolding for deceiving you, and we will get it when mother finds out. But as for the rest, it was only in fun, and I don't think any one ought to regard it as a serious crime, although it was very silly of us. Most people would merely look upon it as a joke."

"Oh, they would, would they?" said uncle, grimly. "Perhaps, when you get to be my age, young man, and don't find it so easy to get to sleep as you do now, you won't consider it much of a joke to have three great boys come sprawling over you in your first doze."

"We're sorry we disturbed you, uncle," said Rod, firmly, but respectfully, "and we apologize for not owning it up right off like men. That's all we can do, and I hope you'll forgive us."

"Humph! Go out, and tell your mother I want her."

That was all the satisfaction we got, but we went gladly, for we had escaped wonderfully well.

Mother went in, and was closeted with Uncle Wheeler for half an hour. When she came out, she looked amused over something, and though she tried to be severe, it was a failure.

"You deserve a scolding, boys, but I promised your uncle I'd let you off this time. He really seems in a good humor over it all, but I wouldn't advise you to repeat the experiment."

"What's he going to do about Mr. Winsloe?" broke in Rod, anxiously.

"He's going to help him, I think, since he found out the boys are not such

‘louts’ as he thought them.”

Rod and I felt a good deal better then, you may be sure. Uncle Wheeler went home the next day, but he parted from us kindly, told Rod to be ready for college in the fall, and to remember mother’s training in straightforwardness, and finally left an envelope in our respective hands. We found a twenty-dollar bill in each of them.

“Hurrah for Uncle Wheeler!” said Rod. “He’s a brick!”

A Missing Pony

First published *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, October 17, 1896.

I never see a sorrel-colored pony, with a faded mane and tail, without remembering a night adventure that Sam Richards and I once had on account of just such an animal.

It happened long ago, when I was teaching school in a well-to-do country district called Maberly.

I boarded at old Ezra Burke's, and I chummed a good deal with his hired boy, Sam Richards.

I was a mere boy myself at the time, being barely eighteen, and Sam was a few months my junior. He was by no means an ordinary hired boy, as the status of hired boys went in Maberly, but was several grades higher in the social scale.

Sam was an orphan, and had been well brought up with an uncle's family. Upon the death of his uncle, a few years previous to the date of my story, Sam was thrown upon his own resources.

But he had any amount of pluck. The only thing he knew anything about was farming, and he stuck to it.

"I don't believe in trying to fit a square peg into a round hole," he once said to me. "I like farming, and I didn't know how to do anything else, so I didn't try. Of course, I don't mean to be a hired boy all my life. But so long as I am one, I intend to be the very best it is possible to be."

I liked and respected Sam. He was an active, intelligent lad, with a cheerful way of looking at things and unlimited good nature. All the Maberly people were his friends, and never dreamed of looking down on him because of his occupation.

Sam needed all of his good nature to get along with Ezra Burke. I never knew a more disagreeable, exacting, fault-finding old curmudgeon. It was always a wonder to me how Sam could put up with him at all.

It was nothing unusual for old Ezra Burke to have three or four different hired boys in one season. Few of them could endure his unreasonableness, and the few who could generally found themselves peremptorily discharged for some trifling reason. This was Sam's second summer with him—a phenomenal record in Maberly chronicles.

He looked with sour disapproval on my intimacy with Sam. I was never a favorite with old Ezra, and I fancy he imagined I did not exert any favorable influence over Sam.

One evening Sam was ordered to take back to Isaac Gardner a cart which Ezra Burke had borrowed. I intended to go up to Gardner's along with him and borrow Isaac's two-wheeled gig, in order to make a short trip to the nearest town on the following day.

At dusk we went out and hitched Major into the cart. Major was a sorrel pony, which Mr. Burke had bought a week before from Stephen Pollock, a farmer over at Maple Ridge, the next district to Maberly.

We did not know much about him, but he seemed a quiet, inoffensive little animal, with not enough spunk to get into mischief.

Old Ezra came out just as we were ready to start, and, finding we had taken Major, he flew into a furious temper and abused us roundly in most unmeasured terms. Had we taken any other horse it would have amounted to the same thing.

He had been in an unbearable humor all day, and was just in the mood for a tantrum. He ended up with a peremptory command to unhook the pony instantly and take another horse.

Sam, who had listened to it all with praiseworthy calmness, respectfully replied that the black mare's leg was so lame it was impossible to take her—she had sprained it, if I remember aright—and that the gray horse and the bay colts were away in the back clearings, where it would take a good hour to go and get them. Consequently, either Major must be taken or the cart must be left where it was.

Old Ezra grimly succumbed to these unanswerable arguments, but he seemed to cherish a grudge against Sam for the stress of circumstances, and evidently blamed him for it all.

"You look out what you do with that pony," he growled, as he shuffled off. "I darsn't trust you. If anything happens to him, I'll send you packing before morning."

Sam and I smothered a laugh over the old fellow's crustiness, and rattled off down the lane in Isaac Gardner's road-cart.

We were in high spirits, and it was a delightful evening, somewhere along between haying and harvest, with an exhilarating sparkle in the air and a cool breeze.

It was about a mile to Isaac Gardner's, where the post office was kept, and which was a general rendezvous in the evening. Several of the boys from adjacent farms were in the habit of dropping in to discuss news or play games with the jolly crowd of Gardner boys and girls.

Sam and I frequently went over in the evenings to play checkers with Belle and Gertie Gardner, and eat platefuls of their August apples and homemade taffy.

This evening, after we had unharnessed Major from the cart, and put it

away in the shed, we went in as usual, leaving our pony securely tied—as we fancied—to the orchard fence.

There were a number of our friends there, and, as we were all very merry, it was not until eleven o'clock that we dispersed.

We all went out in a jolly mood, playing boyish pranks on each other, and calling back joking messages to the Gardners; but Sam and I sobered down when we reached the spot where our pony should have been, but was not. The bridle was hanging to the fence, but Major was gone.

At first we accused some of the others of having loosened him for a trick; but, as they all solemnly protested their innocence, we concluded that the pony had somehow contrived to free himself, and had taken French leave.

Isaac Gardner came out with a lantern, and we searched the yard and outbuildings thoroughly, but Major was not forthcoming.

"It's too bad!" said Sam, in a vexed tone.

"Nonsense!" replied Isaac Gardner, banteringly. "Surely, two strong young fellows like you don't mind a mile's walk on a night like this? Your pony wanted to teach you a lesson on keeping early hours, and has gone home before you. You'll find him there when you get back."

"I hope we will," rejoined Sam, seriously. "I wouldn't care if I were sure that he *had* gone home. But you know Mr. Burke bought him only last week, and he belonged to Stephen Pollock. He hasn't seemed contented since we bought him, and I'm afraid he's gone back to Maple Ridge, instead of home."

However, there was nothing to do but go home and see. We bade the rest goodnight, and tramped moodily off.

Sam said little, but he was visibly anxious. Old Ezra's threats were never empty ones, and, if Major did not turn up safe and sound, Sam would undoubtedly suffer for it.

"Cheer up, Sam," I said. "We'll find the pony home when we get there all right. Anyhow, he can't have done anything worse than gone back to Maple Ridge, and he'll be safe there. Old Ezra won't discharge you for that."

"Won't he?" responded Sam, gloomily. "You don't know old Ezra yet. He's the biggest crank alive. Why, he sent his last man off with an hour's notice, because he accidentally dropped a bucket down the well one day. It's been nothing short of a miracle that he's kept me so long. I wouldn't stay with him, except that he pays better wages than most, if he *is* a crank."

We kept a sharp lookout along the road for Major, but saw nothing of him. All was silent when we got home. The family had long since gone to bed.

Sam and I went straight to the barn-yard, and searched the premises thoroughly, even going through every building in the hope that Major had got home before old Ezra went to bed, and had been put in.

There was not a dark corner on the place which we did not explore; but we

were not rewarded by finding the sorrel pony. Plainly he had not come home.

We met at the well and gazed at each other blankly, in the pale light of the late-rising moon.

"Major's gone back to Maple Ridge," said Sam at last, "and the only thing to do is to go straight there after him."

"Sam," I protested, "go to Maple Ridge at this hour of the night! You're crazy! Why, it's twelve o'clock now, and it's six miles over there and back. What time would it be before we got home? If that miserable pony has gone there, let him stay till morning. It won't hurt him. Let's go to bed."

"No!" replied Sam, decidedly. "I didn't expect you to come, Fred, of course. You go in and go to bed. But go I must, and will! I know old Ezra better than you do. If Major isn't in his stable by daylight, my place isn't worth a continental."

"If you're bound to go, Sam, of course I'll go with you. I wouldn't think of doing otherwise if it's necessary. Let's start, then. We've no time to lose. It'll be rather a lark, after all."

We went, after I had overcome Sam's objections to my troubling myself. Our walk, though long, was not unpleasant. The moon cast a mellow, hazy light over the fields and road, and the night breeze was cool and inspiriting.

Most of our way lay through woods of young maple—a second growth, leafy and luxuriant, intersected by many woodland streams, whose liquid gurgle came musically to our ears in the silence of the night.

We walked along over a mosaic of light and fantastic shadow, occasionally cutting across a pasture field or an overgrown blueberry common, wet with dew.

In no very long time we found ourselves at the Pollock farm at Maple Ridge. All was dark and silent.

"I knew they'd be all in bed, Sam," I said. "What are you going to do now?"

"You didn't suppose I was going to rouse them up at this hour, did you?" returned Sam. "You forget that I was hired here two summers ago, and I know every nook about the place. If Major is here, he must be outside somewhere, or in an open shed, for he couldn't get in anywhere. I know where to look. Don't make a noise."

Sam made a speedy and careful search about the place, with precisely the same result as before. We did not find Major.

Sam was getting decidedly worried, for he had been quite sure the sorrel pony would be there. We stopped in the open moonlit yard in front of the barn to discuss our next move.

"Go back home, I suppose," said Sam, dejectedly. "It beats me where that pony has got himself to. This is getting serious. *What* will old—Good

gracious!"

A series of angry, snarling barks burst out of the shadows at the end of the barn; the next second a huge, dark body, with cruelly-gleaming teeth, came bounding across the yard.

"Run!" exclaimed Sam, taking to his heels at the word.

And run we both did, with all our speed, to a big fir tree behind the barn, up which we scrambled in headlong haste.

Not a minute too soon, either, for the dog was close at our heels, and sprang with a vicious snarl at my boot as I drew myself up into a place of safety beside the breathless Sam.

"Gracious! what an escape!" he panted. "That brute would have torn us in pieces, I believe. I clean forgot all about him, like the addle-pated idiot I am! Mr. Pollock keeps him for the benefit of orchard-raiders, and he's the most vicious beast in the dog line you ever saw. He must have broken his chain. We're safe at present, anyhow."

"But how are we to get out of this?" I asked.

"Wait till I get my breath, and we'll discuss that," said Sam, philosophically.

And I waited, perforce, wondering how on earth we were ever to free ourselves.

The dog had settled down on his haunches under the tree, and evidently meant to stay there. At our slightest movement he bounded and snapped. He was a huge brute of a mastiff, and could almost have chewed us up at a mouthful.

The boughs of the fir were very thick and close, so that our position was an extremely uncomfortable one.

"I suppose," said Sam, "we had better try shouting first, and see if we can wake anybody up. Probably Mr. Pollock will shoot us for orchard-thieves; but that will be preferable to being eaten alive, or dying a lingering death here by cramp."

We shouted accordingly. I venture to say that no two boys of our size ever made more or louder noise in a given time than we did. The dog helped us by howling furiously, and we whooped and shouted for about a quarter of an hour. Then I stopped in despair.

"Can't keep it up any longer, Sam. My voice is all gone, and I am as hoarse as a crow. The people in that house have died or emigrated. We've raised a racket that would wake the seven sleepers."

Sam, who was shouting with undiminished power and energy, stopped also.

"It's no use," he admitted, cheerfully. It was characteristic of Sam that the more desperate a situation got the more cheerful he became. "The house is too

far away. Besides, old man Pollock and his wife are both deaf as door-nails, and the hired man must be away. Well, Fred, what is our next move? Any suggestion will be thankfully received."

"I've none to make, Sam. My brains won't work in so cramped a position as this."

Sam twisted himself around and looked up the tree. After a short scrutiny, he said:

"You see, those big branches up there hang right over the barn. Can't we climb out on them and swing ourselves down to the roof?"

"What better off would we be? The roof is fourteen feet from the ground. And if we could get off, the dog's here."

"Hold on, Fred. I confess my landing you in this scrape doesn't argue much for my common sense, but I'm not *quite* so idiotic as all that. You only see one side of the roof. There's a pig-sty built against the barn on the other side, and one roof serves for both. It slopes down to within five feet of the ground. If we could get down off it, we'd be all right, for there's a big pig-pen underneath with a high board fence all around it, and the dog can't get at us. Then there's a door opening from the pig-sty into the barn, and we could wait there till the dog got tired and went back to his kennel. Then we might get out on the other side of the barn and slip off."

It sounded feasible if we could only get on the roof. I didn't know anything about the intricacies of Stephen Pollock's barns, but Sam appeared to be thoroughly at home.

"I'll try it," I assented, heartily. "Anything's better than this. Who'll go first?"

"I will. Watch how I do it. If I fall off and break my neck, or get chewed up by the dog, hang on where you are."

He climbed up and out along the swinging bough. The dog jumped in a frenzy of rage, and howled furiously. Sam swung himself down on the end of the bough and dropped lightly to the roof.

He saved himself from slipping down its steep side by clutching one of the staging brackets that ran in rows across it. The barn had been recently shingled, and the staging brackets had been left on it—fortunately for us.

"All right," said Sam. "It's not so hard. Come on."

I tore innumerable rents in my best black suit as I struggled up through the thick branches, and my hat fell off into the very jaws of the eager foe. I have never seen that hat since.

But at last I found myself on the roof beside Sam, and slowly and with a good deal of difficulty—for some of the brackets were rather rickety—we climbed up to the top and down the other side.

"I'll drop first," said Sam.

And he did, landing squarely among a group of fat porkers who were snoozing comfortably in the corner of their pen, and who careered blindly about with terrified squeals, while the dog rampaged around outside the pen, and added his voice to the general uproar.

Sam got up as I came sprawling down, narrowly escaping being carried off his feet by the frenzied dash of a big black porker, and we shook hands in silent congratulation.

Then we stumbled through the pig-sty, falling over things in the dark, and alarming some more pigs—Stephen Pollock must have kept an immense number of pigs—and finally made our escape through a door into the barn.

"Tell you it's lucky I was hired here and know all the ins and outs of it," said Sam, complacently. "Now we'll take our bearings. There's a window over there looks out on the dog-kennel. We'll watch cautiously till he goes and then we can get out of that door opposite. It opens from the inside fortunately."

At this point he stumbled again and fell over something with a clatter. He picked himself up with a growl.

"What's the matter?" I asked, stifling a burst of laughter. "You seem unsteady tonight, Sam. If you weren't a member of the S. of T., in good and regular standing—"

"Shut up!" interrupted Sam, impatiently. "This is no joke. Here I've tumbled into old Stephen Pollock's collection of paint cans. Oh, what a mess! Smell the turpentine, will you? I've got paint all over myself. Confound that Major! But if this isn't just like old Pollock—setting paint cans around just where a person will fall into them!"

"Don't be unreasonable, Sam. I suppose that, if Mr. Pollock had known we were going to favor his barn with a midnight visit, he'd have put his paint out of the way."

Sam never could stay provoked long. He went off into a shout of laughter, and we perched ourselves upon the wheat-bin and watched the kennel for what seemed an age.

"What if that dog doesn't go back?" I suggested. "What'll we do then? Stay here till morning, and have Mr. Pollock coming out and demanding if we are burglars or oat stealers?"

"He won't demand," said Sam, with a grin, which the moonlight rendered absolutely ghastly. "He'll knock us over the head first and inquire afterward. That's old man Pollock's way. But there goes that dog at last. Now for it!"

We stole across the barn carefully, unfastened the door and stepped out. The coast was clear.

"It would serve old Stephen right for keeping such a dog if I were to leave this door open," said Sam, as he conscientiously put a stick against it; "but I won't, since he built such a good pigpen fence."

After we had crept cautiously out of earshot, we took to our heels and did not slack up until we reached the main road.

We were considerably worse off than when we left it, but sound in limb, which was more than we had expected.

Sam's anxiety returned as we trudged home.

"I guess I can go home and pack up," he said. "I *wish* I could find Major."

"Don't mention that wretched beast again," I said, crossly. "Isn't it all on his account we've got into this miserable scrape? Look at my clothes, will you? They're ruined, and so are yours, all for that rat of a pony. I wouldn't go through this again for a dozen Majors."

By the time we got as far as Isaac Gardner's the eastern sky was rimmed with silver. As we passed by the orchard fence, Sam stopped and said, with great earnestness:

"Well, I am blessed!"

And there, calmly gazing at us from the corner of Isaac Gardner's orchard, where the faint light of early dawn and waning moon shone over his damp sorrel sides, stood Major.

I never saw anybody so disgusted as Sam Richards.

"I never once thought to look behind the copse of cherry trees, in the first place," he said. "The next time Ezra Burke calls me a fool, I'll believe him."

We went in and captured the meek, unresisting Major, and borrowed Mrs. Gardner's clothesline to lead him home.

When he was finally safe in his stable it was open daylight, and all the east was rosy and fire-streaked.

Old Ezra got up fifteen minutes later, and found Sam and me leaning meditatively over the barnyard fence. He did not address us, except by giving an inarticulate "huh!" as he passed by, and we did not feel called upon to relate our exploits to him; so we left him to suppose that we had merely been attacked with an acute spasm of early rising.

Major kept his own counsel, and the story never leaked out.

It is now several years since I saw Sam Richards last. He was then a well-to-do farmer, with a comfortable home, presided over by the Belle Gardner of other days, and we had a hearty laugh over the recollection of the night we spent hunting for Major and frightened old Stephen Pollock's pigs over at Maple Ridge.

A Pastoral Call,

And How It Brought Happiness to a Disunited Family

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Mrs. Kennedy turned from the window where she had been smilelessly watching the golden-red glow of sunset flush with transitory softness and splendor the harsh, bare outlines of the late autumn landscape. She was a spare little woman with a slight stoop, and a quick, nervous step. Her gray hair was drawn tightly back from her lined forehead and twisted into a hard little knot behind. Her eyes were keen and shrewd, her thin, long lips were tightly, even obstinately set. Her face was sallow and wrinkled. She looked much older than she was.

"There's some one coming up the lane, Miranda," she said. "I think it's the new minister. If it is go and open the parlor blinds and show him in there. I don't want to see him a mite," she muttered vindictively, after Miranda had shuffled out into the hall. "I know what he's coming for—just to rake those old bones over again, I haven't a doubt. I'm sick and tired of it. The last minister soon found out I wasn't going to put up with his interference. He learned to hold his tongue about in the end, I guess. Now it'll have to be all done over again. I wish folks would mind their own affairs. What business has a man, just because he is a minister, to go poking and prying into what doesn't concern him! I'll let that young man know it, too, if he says much. He'll think it his duty to rebuke me if he's heard of me—and of course he has. Gossip and scandal is all that crowd down at Pawtucket live on."

She passed her hands over her hair and straightened her starched, white apron. Then she listened attentively.

"Yes, it is him. I'd kind of hoped it wasn't. Well, he'd better mind what he says to me."

She shut her lips in a way that boded no good to the young man who was at that moment sitting by the parlor window, where the warm rays of the sunset fell over his boyish face, pale and thin, as if from long study. His eyes were

large and dark, with a singularly earnest and spiritual look; his mouth was mobile and sensitive. He looked very young—younger than he really was, and he was only a little over twenty-one. Mrs. Kennedy coming in, defiant and rigid, felt a sort of protesting anger that this beardless boy should have any right to criticise or disapprove of her actions. She shook hands coldly with him and sat down by the other window, where the harsh, grey light on her face brought out all its hard, uncompromising lines.

The young man felt vaguely that she brought with her a spirit of hostility. She sat upright, the angularity and stiffness of her whole appearance in keeping with the arrangement of the little, square room.

The chairs were set in a prim row along the walls; the mats were laid precisely; some faded photographs in old-fashioned frames adorned the walls, and over the mantel hung a cheap chromo of the prodigal son. The windows were draped with straight, stiffly-starched, white muslin curtains, so crisp and crackly that one expected them to snap off at a touch.

He wondered what he should say to her but she spoke first.

"You're the new minister over at Pawtucket, I suppose," she said stiffly. "I'm pleased to see you. Perhaps you find it cold in here. These fall days are real chilly."

"I'm not at all cold, thank you, Mrs. Kennedy. I know it is a rather late hour for a call, but I wished to visit all the families along this road to-day, and this is the last house. You are quite a distance from any neighbor."

He smiled at her as he spoke—a rare, sudden smile that irradiated all his pale, scholarly face with a warm magnetic glow. The Rev. Cecil Douglas was still too young to have learned how much that sweet, sympathetic smile did for him. Perhaps when he learned its value its charm would be less potent. People thawed out, unconsciously, under it. Children smiled back to it with the perfect unreasoning confidence of childhood. Hard-working, unsentimental men and women felt their hearts warm to their boyish pastor when he looked into their eyes with that clear smile. Even Mrs. Kennedy felt its influence.

"I do live considerably out of the world, I s'pose," she said less rigidly. "Not that I mind—it keeps me from getting into rows and quarrels with other folks. Pawtucket people ain't angels—I s'pose you've discovered that. I don't set up to be better than others, but I keep to myself. You look kind of young to be a minister."

The young man flushed sensitively. "I look younger than I am," he said, "but I am young—very young and very inexperienced. I often wonder how I dare undertake the responsibilities of such a position as mine. My heart is in my chosen work—I desire to be not unworthy of my high calling. I need all the patience and prayerful sympathy of my people. A minister can do a great deal sometimes, but the means of his usefulness is limited by the spirit of those

whom he is appointed to teach and be taught by. I have a great deal to learn—I am willing to begin at the very beginning—I hope—I am sure—that you will all help me in my work."

Mrs. Kennedy was quite silent. She had not expected this, and had no answers ready. The last minister had been in Pawtucket for fifteen years. He was an old man and a good man, but he was very different from this. He had grown a little too dogmatic and severe in his long experience with the contrary-minded in Pawtucket. The Pawtucket people were not easy to get along with. In his own mind he had considered Mrs. Kennedy to be a hard, worldly minded woman. She had felt and resented this. Pawtucket folks heard with relish of certain verbal conflicts between Mrs. Kennedy and the Rev. Dayton—conflicts in which Mrs. Kennedy had held her own with such spirit and energy that the poor pastor was fain to resign her to the dominion of her own evil nature. Mrs. Kennedy herself had grown to have a chronic spite against any and all ministers. She had been thinking with a certain relish, as she sat there, what she would say to her caller if he should try to unlock the door of her skeleton closet. She felt disconcerted that he had taken so different a course.

The young minister looked compassionately at the pinched, discontented face opposite him. He felt instinctively that this woman required help if he were able to give it, or if she would take it when offered.

"You live all alone?" he said.

"Yes, you may say so. A servant-girl ain't much company. I'm as good as alone."

"So is my mother now," said the young man softly, "all alone—and I am so far away from her. She misses me, I know, and I miss her more than words can say. She is such a dear, good mother—the best ever a boy had, I think. I suppose every boy thinks that of his mother, though. You have no sons, Mrs. Kennedy?"

Mrs. Kennedy stiffened herself up and looked at him with angry suspicion. She had an odd resemblance to a watchful irritated cat, ready to pounce at any movement. But she saw nothing save kindly interest in the minister's open face.

"Yes, I have *one* son," she said deliberately, "or I *had*, I don't consider him as a son now after the way he has behaved. It's a wonder you haven't heard. His name is Walter Kennedy. He lives in that little shanty away down at the corners. You can see the end of it beyond that bush."

She pointed defiantly out of the window behind him. Her eyes were angry and her breath came faster.

"I was there this afternoon," said Mr. Douglas, slowly. He felt surprised and was not sure of his ground. "I did not know you were his mother. He has a

very sweet wife and child."

"That ain't nothing to me," retorted Mrs. Kennedy acridly. "I ought to know how sweet she is, I guess. You needn't talk—I've had enough lecturing on that subject already. I don't want ever to have anything to do with them again. I know what it is to have an ungrateful child. Walter Kennedy and his wife can go their own way for all of me. I don't want to hear nothing about them. I haven't no dealings with them and don't want to have."

She paused with a cowering exultation over her boldness in speaking so to the minister. She expected a severe, shocked rebuke, but none came.

"I am sorry," he said simply. "Perhaps things will be better some day."

"You don't know much about the Kennedys if you think that. We mean a thing when we say it. I didn't drive Walter away. He went of his own accord, so I guess I won't ask him to come back again in a hurry."

She stopped abruptly, and looked at him suspiciously, "It's queer you haven't heard about it before this. Ain't that what you came here for—just to lecture me about that affair?"

"Mrs. Kennedy, I did not even know you had a son. You need not tell me anything about it if you do not wish to!"

"Ah! I dunno if I care. I ain't ashamed of my part. Somebody else'll tell you if I don't, and they'll put more to it. Some of the Pawtucket folks have great imaginations. Walter's father died when he was a baby—he was our only child. I brought him up, and I did as well as I could for him. I was a good mother to Walter if I do say it. I worked hard and saved for him. I won't say he wasn't a good son, too—he was; I wouldn't ask for a better. I never heard a cross word from him.

"Then he got married—he married Esther Willis. I was dead against it from the first, but Walter wouldn't listen to me. I hadn't nothing against Esther, but she weren't brought up to be a farmer's wife. She didn't know how to work. She was as pretty as a picture, and just as useless. She was a flighty thing, with a lot of high-falutin' ideas. It was nothing but trouble after Walter brought her here. I ain't saying the blame was all on Esther's side. I s'pose I ain't any too easy to get along with. A woman that's been at the head of a house for thirty years don't feel like knuckling under to any young chit. Esther hadn't no consideration for me. She come between me and Walter—that's what she did. She set him against me—me, his mother that had slaved for him. He always took her part. Everything she did was right. He never made any allowance for me. I wasn't going to stand it—I wonder who'd expect me to! The house was mine, and so was the farm. I told them that one day, but I didn't suppose—well, they just went. That high-stepping wife of Walter's couldn't swallow my saying that. He had a bit of land down at the Corners, and he put up a shanty on it and took Esther and the baby down there. I told him if he went out of my

house he went out of my heart and life. He had his warning. And I told Esther I'd never forgive her for taking my son away from me. She made out she was sorry—I knew she was just as glad as could be in her heart.

"That was two years ago, I ain't ever spoke to either of them since, and I don't ever mean to. I've got on well enough since they left, and I've had some peace of my life. I don't know why I'm telling you all this. You ain't like Mr. Dayton, though. He used to make me mad. He said it was wicked and sinful to show such an unforgiving, unchristian spirit. I s'pose it is wicked. Everybody's a good deal wickeder than they let on. Some show it more than others—that's all the difference. I ain't going to be trodden on and then be as meek as Moses, I can tell you. I s'pose you think I'm unnatural and inhuman, too. Mr. Dayton did!"

She threw the last sentence at him defiantly. Her thin little body trembled; her knotty, toil-worn fingers were tightly interlaced. He reached forward and took one of the rough, unsightly hands in his own slender white one. It was an impulsive movement as of a son seeking to soothe his mother.

hy should I think so, Mrs. Kennedy?" said Mr. Douglas gently. "Everybody makes mistakes. I am only very sorry for you all. You have suffered; perhaps your son has, too. He loved you—he must miss you bitterly."

"He doesn't," said Mrs. Kennedy, with an ominous stiffening of her upper lip. "He doesn't care—he's got Esther; that is all he wants."

"No, I don't think that is all he wants. He was a good son, you say. A good son never ceases to love his mother, Mrs. Kennedy. I am sure that your son repents what has passed, even if he has given no sign. If you were to go to him and say"——

"Mr. Douglas, it ain't any use. You mean well, but you don't know. We ain't that kind of people. We never give in. I don't want to give in, for that matter. If Walter can get along without me, I can get along without him."

"Mrs. Kennedy, I had a letter from my mother to-day. There were little blisters on the paper where her tears had fallen. She wrote: 'I miss you so much, my son. I miss your voice, your face, every hour. No one can fill your place.' All good mothers are alike, I believe. Mrs. Kennedy, didn't you miss your boy when he went away?"

For a minute there was no answer. Then she spoke in a low voice:

"Yes, Mr. Douglas, I did—I do. I miss him dreadful—dreadful. I never said so before to a living mortal, but it's true. Sometimes I feel as if I could give most anything to have them all back—Esther and all. She wasn't a bad little creature in some ways. I s'pose I was hard on her. She was very young. I might have made more allowances. I guess I was just jealous—Walter thought so much of her. And then—their little baby—such a dear little thing as that

baby was. They called it Ellen after me—Esther suggested that. I haven't seen it for two years. It used to love to have me nurse it and fuss round it. I did set a heap of store by that child. I ain't never talked like this to any one before, Mr. Douglas. I was real mad when I saw you coming. I know the Pawtucket crowd think I'm awful hard. I s'pose I am. It's in my family. We're all as hard as flint. I ain't very happy, though. If Walter would only let on he cared—but he doesn't."

"I believe he does; I know he does. It would break my heart if my mother were angry with me. I am sure your son feels the same. I am glad you have given me your confidence. I shall pray for you. I will ask my mother to pray for you. You love your son still; go to him and tell him so, and you will find that his mother has never lost her place in his heart."

There was a silence in the dim room. The last faint gleams of light fell over the bowed gray head by the window. He was a wise and clear-sighted young minister in spite of his youth; he knew when enough had been said. He read the twenty-third psalm and made a simple, earnest prayer. Then he went away with a cheery good-by.

Mrs. Kennedy went with him to the door and watched him as he walked erectly down the garden path with the rough wind of the autumn night swirling the wrinkled, brown leaves about his feet.

She did not go back into the house. Instead, she carefully closed the hall door behind her and sat down on the step, wrapping her red knitted shawl tightly about her sharp shoulders. She sat there in the dark for a long while. Her thin, pinched face looked more thin and pinched than ever in the faint, cold light of the fall evening.

All the warm, red glow of sunset had faded out of the sky. There was only one savage, fiery streak that ran low along the west, against which a row of grim fire came out with black, spectral distinctness. The sky was all curdled over with little rolls of gray clouds, between which a few pale stars glimmered uncertainly. The chilly wind moaned around the house and the maple by the door tossed its gaunt branches wildly, as if some passionate, ghostly thing were wringing its fleshless hands in agony. The row of Lombardys at the foot of the garden stood up like a line of rigid sentinels. The gate creaked dismally as it wavered to and fro in the raw gusts, and the leaves went eddying fitfully up and down the paths in weird, uncanny dances of their own. The whole outdoor world was bleak and unlovely in its leaflessness and gloom. To the old woman crouching on the doorstep it seemed the outward type of her own lonely, loveless life. She shivered and drew her shawl closer around her.

"It's awful cold and raw to-night," she muttered, thinking aloud, as was her habit since she had lived alone. "I believe it'll snow before long. I wish it would—I'm sick and tired of those old bare fields. I dunno what makes me so

miserable to-night. I dunno what there was in that young minister to stir me up so. He didn't *say* much—he only looked it. I dunno but what he's right. I wish he was—I wish Walter *did* care. It *was* mostly my fault. I was a cantankerous, fault-finding old thing. I needn't have been so hard on Esther. I guess Mr. Douglas's mother wouldn't have been. I'd do different if I had the chance over again. I just wonder what Walter *would* say if I were to go right down there now. I guess he'd stare. I s'pose Esther wouldn't let him speak to me, though. I guess she's pretty bitter—I s'pose it ain't much wonder if she is. I believe I would go if I thought it would be any use."

Walter's light gleamed suddenly out away down at the foot of the long hill. She looked at it a minute uncertainly. Then she got up in a quick, decided way and went into the house.

It was very dark and silent. Miranda had gone out. There was nothing alive in the house but herself. She lit a candle and went into the bedroom off the parlor. It was a small and immaculate apartment. She looked at herself in the scroll-framed mirror by the pale flickering light. "I look awful cross and disagreeable," she muttered, "and I'm fearful wrinkled. It's all come these last two years. I guess I don't look much like the minister's mother. I know what she's like as well as if I saw her. She's one of them little women with soft, scrimpy hair and brown eyes like his. And she'd wear something soft—gray silk, maybe—and have a lace ruffle at her neck and her smile will be like his. No, I guess we *don't* look much alike."

She smiled bitterly at her reflected self. In fancy she saw the sweet mild face of the minister's mother beside her own. Could that far-away, unknown woman ever treat her son as *she* had treated Walter?

"There's a big difference in mothers," she said aloud. "I'm on the wrong side of the difference, too. It's late to learn it now—but perhaps not too late. I shall go and see Walter. If he *does* care anything for me I shall find it out. If he doesn't I'll find *that* out too, and so much the better." She put on her best bonnet and shawl. She blew out the light and put the matches by it on the table ready for lighting. She locked the front door and put the key under the step.

"Miranda'll find it there. But I guess I'll be back before she is. I won't stay long maybe. I guess I'm an old fool to go. But I don't want to look in that minister's eyes again and not be able to say I've done my part. I'd hate to have him contrasting me with his own mother. I declare I'm scared to go. I wonder what they will think. I expect Esther'll look me over in that top-lofty way of hers. If I stay here much longer thinking of it I'll get too nervous to go at all."

She went down the path with a little determined rush. The wind swirled her black skirt about her, and the leaves fled elfishly before her feet. There was a short cut down through the fields to the Corners, and she took it, hurrying breathlessly along, as if trying to get ahead of her own thoughts and fears.

It was very dark and bleak. The moon had not risen, and the night was full of weird, eerie sounds—the creaking of boughs above her, the moaning of the wind in the dark tree-tops, the nestling of dead leaves, the vibrations of strips of dried bark on the rail fences.

"I never was out in such a ghostly night," she panted timorously. She was out of breath when she got to Walter's door. She paused, panting. "I don't dare knock," she murmured. "S'posing Walter should come, and when he saw who it was, shut the door in my face! Or if Esther should come! I've a notion to go right back." She hesitated, wavering off and on the steps. A dark silhouette came out against the white blind; it was the restless curly head of a little child. She rapped on the door.

There was a moment's silence within, and then the sound of coming footsteps. The door opened, and Walter stood in the doorway, peering curiously out. The rush of light over his shoulder fell on the little shrinking figure and the anxious, uplifted face. Walter's look of curiosity gave way to one of astonishment and alarm.

"Mother, is it you? Is there anything wrong?"

"No, no, Walter, nothing," she said hurriedly. The naturalness of his words gave her courage. "It's only—I got so lonesome up there; Miranda went out, and I thought I'd run down and see you."

"Come right in, ma," said Walter, heartily, but dazedly. He stepped aside to let her pass. The room was warm and lighted. The tea-table was spread, and Esther was sitting at it. She was a young, pretty woman with a rather careworn face. She got up and came over to meet Mrs. Kennedy.

"Why—I declare, mother! I'm glad to see you. Sit up to the fire. It's real chilly out to-night, isn't it? I shouldn't wonder if we'd have snow. We're just at tea, you see. I suppose you've had yours over hours ago. Walter was away and we waited for him. Maybe you'll sit in and have a cup of tea with us?"

She spoke nervously and hurriedly, as if trying to bridge over an awkward situation gracefully. The baby was holding her dress and peering around her at its grandmother with its round, dark eyes. Walter stood foolishly in the background. He felt in the way.

"I should think you'd feel more like turning me out of doors, Esther," said Mrs. Kennedy tremulously. "I expected nothing else. I guess you ain't overjoyed to see me."

Esther's lips were quivering.

"Don't talk so, mother, we ain't got no hard feelings, Walter and me. Let me take your bonnet."

"No," said Mrs. Kennedy resolutely, "not till I've said what I've come here to say, Esther. I'm real ashamed of the way I've acted to you. I was a mean, spiteful old thing. It ain't much wonder you and Walter got your backs up. I'd

do different if I'd another chance. If you and Walter can just forgive me"——

Esther knelt and put her arms about the bowed figure.

"Don't, mother! I've been so ashamed, too. I didn't behave right, mother. I've done some thinking since I came here. I guess I've got a little more sense. I ain't never forgot how you said I'd come between you and Walter. It was true and I had no right to. I was real sassy and nasty to you. And Walter—he's most fretted to death. You don't know how bad he's felt. I've coaxed him to go up and see you but he said it was no use. I didn't dare go alone. Pawtucket folks said you was so bitter against us."

She laid her head in the older woman's lap. Mrs. Kennedy stroked the fair waves of hair with gentle fingers.

"I'm real glad you and me's friends again, Esther. I've missed you awful. Seemed as if I never could get over wanting to see that blessed baby around the house. It's awful lonesome up there. I wish you were all back. We wouldn't quarrel again."

Walter came forward and put the baby into his mother's lap. Then he stooped and kissed her. That kiss meant much, for Walter was not a demonstrative man. He had not kissed his mother since childhood.

It was quite late when Mrs. Kennedy went home. The wind had died away; the moon had risen, touching the hills with silvery glory and casting twinkling shadows of bare boughs and twig-tracery over the wood path. Mrs. Kennedy stepped along briskly and cheerfully. A light was gleaming from her house up on the hill. There was a smile on her face as she thought of the near future—the future which she was to share with Walter and Esther and the baby. And in the background of her dreams glimmered the ideal of a sweet, approving face—a face with tender brown eyes, framed in waves of soft, silver-sprinkled hair.

"I guess the minister's mother would be glad if she knew all her son has done for me," whispered Mrs. Kennedy softly.

[THE END.]

Old Hector's Dog

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His name was Tray, and Old Hector truly thought, I believe, that he was the most wonderful dog in the world, as well as the handsomest—for love is blind, and Old Hector loved Tray. The dog was all he had to love.

Nobody in Swamp Hollow knew very much about Old Hector, as he was commonly called, although he had lived among us for more years than we boys could count. He was always Old Hector to us—nothing more—a morose, surly old man, with a gruff voice and a chronic scowl.

He lived by himself in a little cabin on a back road, and made his scanty living by day labor in summer and shoe mending in winter. He had no kith or kin in the world, as far as we ever found out, and the only living creature that belonged to him was Tray—a dog so unlovable that nobody but Old Hector could have endured such an animal about his premises.

We Swamp Hollow boys had vowed mortal enmity to Tray—partly because we all heartily detested Old Hector, and partly because Tray himself never lost an opportunity of being disagreeable.

He was a lank yellow cur, with torn ears and the merest apology for a tail. He had fought with and maimed nearly every other dog in Swamp Hollow, and was even accused of sheep raiding. But this was never proved, and I think we did Tray an injustice there.

Wherever Hector went Tray followed him, shuffling along, with his ears hanging down, and his eyes watching out for stray cats or any other promising game.

We boys had discovered that the surest way to annoy Hector was to tease Tray. Nothing made him so angry—and to "make Old Hector mad" was one of our objects in life. Nevertheless, we were rather frightened of him, and took care to keep out of his reach.

Why we detested the poor old man so would be hard to tell, for he had never done us any harm, or interfered with us in any way, except by abusing roundly any one he caught shying a stone at Tray. I, for my part, am now thoroughly ashamed of the pleasure I used to take in tormenting the old fellow.

But I had got in that summer with a certain crowd of Swamp Hollow boys who were not the best companions in the world for me. They were locally known as "Roaders," from the fact that they all lived along what was known as the Swamp Hollow Road—a locality somewhat off caste—and numbered about a dozen, all between twelve and fifteen years of age.

They were a rowdy set, and at the bottom of most of the mischief that went on in Swamp Hollow.

If anybody in the village offended one of them, he generally found his windows broken, or his orchard raided, or his cows turned into his wheat field, not long after. The guilt could seldom be brought home to any one in particular, but the Roaders came to be in bad repute in Swamp Hollow.

It is not to my credit that I got mixed up with them, but the fact remains that I was, although I was always regarded with suspicion by most of them. They thought me off color and "Miss Nancyish," and I was only tolerated among them on account of my chumship with Ted Thompson.

Ted was the ringleader of the gang, and, to a certain extent, they were under his control, although Ted was really not at all responsible for their worst outrages. He was fond of playing pranks, but he was always against wanton destruction of property.

Ted had a bad reputation in Swamp Hollow, and perhaps he deserved it, but I always liked him. He was about fifteen, and had had a rough bringing up. He was generally in mischief, and got the blame of all the Roaders' outrages, whether he was a sharer in them or not.

Still he was kind-hearted in his own way, and generally stood up for the weaker side manfully. He certainly had considerable influence over the Roaders. He was a good friend, but a bad enemy, and he had taken a bitter hatred against Old Hector.

One night somebody had thrown a stone through Old Hector's window, while he was at supper, smashing the panes and some of the few dishes on the table.

It probably was a Roader, but it certainly was not Ted. He denied it stoutly, and I never knew Ted Thompson, with all his faults, to tell a deliberate lie.

But Old Hector had seen him prowling around the road that evening at dusk, and fixed on him as the culprit. The next evening several of us were hanging around the blacksmith's forge, Ted among the rest, when Old Hector and Tray came along.

I do not think the old man intended to stop; but Ted could not resist the temptation to shy a stone at Tray, who promptly yelped, and Old Hector turned furiously on Ted.

He stormed at him for fully five minutes, and finally ended up by dealing him a stinging cuff on the ear.

Ted attempted no reprisal at the time, for there were no Roaders handy to back him up, and he knew that public sympathy was against him. But he laid himself out for the remainder of the summer to make Old Hector's life a burden to him.

I am bound to say he succeeded. He was never at a loss for some new and

original device, but his main idea of revenge centred in Tray.

He had made up his mind to get possession of Tray by fair means or foul, and though he refused to tell us what he would do with him, we all supposed that Tray's career would be abruptly closed.

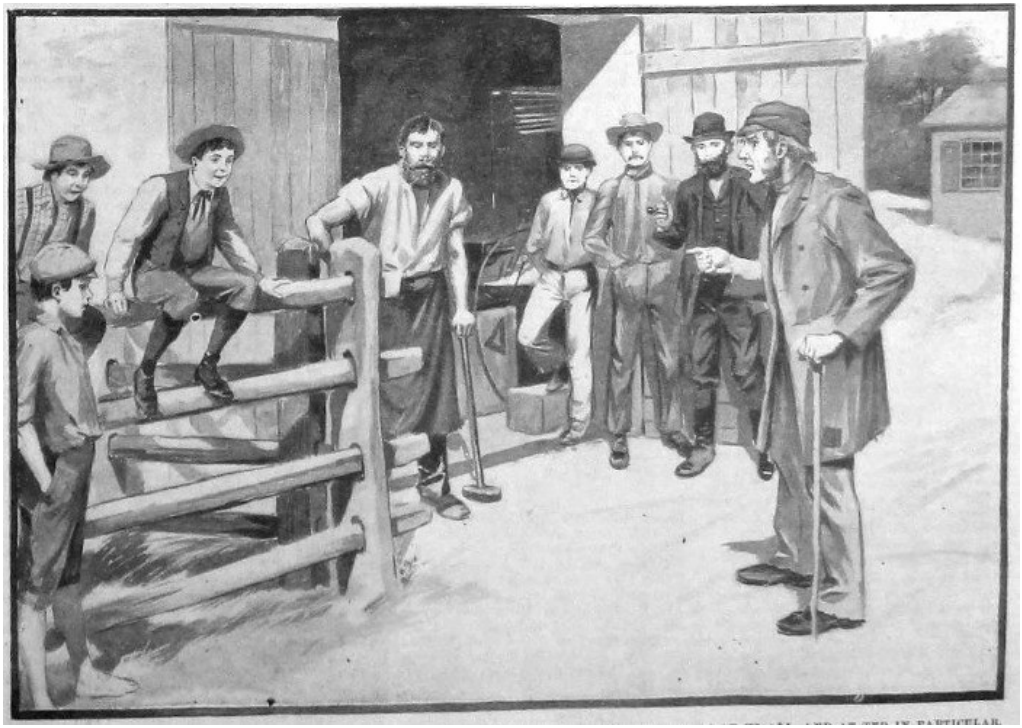
It was, however, no easy matter to ensnare Tray. He was never seen abroad without his master, for he seemed to be instinctively aware of his unpopularity, and no one, not even the most reckless Roader, dared venture within twenty yards of Old Hector's dwelling in daylight. Tray was never seen outside after dark, and slept on a mat by the old man's bed.

But Ted declared that he would get him if it took all summer. Some of the Roaders suggested putting poison around where Tray would find it, but Ted scorned this idea. It was "sneaky," he said. Ted had his own code of honor, and, such as it was, he lived up to it, although he did plenty of things I thought shady. Between abducting and drowning Tray—as I believed Ted meant to do, although he had never said so—and poisoning him off, I did not see a great deal of difference. But Ted appeared to, and stoutly refused to have anything to do with such a proceeding.

"And don't any of you chaps try it on, either," he warned the Roaders. "This is *my* affair. I've got the grudge to settle against Old Hector, and I don't want any of the rest of you poking in and spoiling my fun. D'ye hear that?"

The Roaders heard and governed themselves accordingly, while Ted bided his time with a patience worthy of a better cause.

One day Old Hector made a trip to town to buy some of his scanty supplies. For a wonder he left Tray at home, owing, as we afterwards found, to the animal's having a sore foot, locked up in his little kitchen.



"DID ANY OF YOU-UNS SEE MY DAWG HEREABOUTS?" DEMANDED OLD HECTOR, GLARING SAVAGELY AT US ALL, AND AT TED IN PARTICULAR.

Ted Thompson found this out in some way and had no idea of letting so good a chance slip. He hunted up a Roader or two, who could keep a secret, and with their assistance got into Old Hector's kitchen by the shed window, secured Tray with a rope and gunny-bag and lugged him off with them.

I was not with them, so I knew nothing of the affair until Old Hector came down to the forge that night to hunt for Tray. He had missed his pet whenever he got home and was in great distress of mind.

As usual there was a crowd about the forge, and Ted Thompson his black eyes shining with some secret delight, was sitting on the fence. Several Roaders were hanging around to see the fun.

"Did any of you-uns see my dawg hereabouts?" demanded Old Hector, glaring savagely at us all, and at Ted in particular.

The smith replied:

"No! Haven't laid eyes on him. Have you lost him?"

"He's gone," said the old man in a strange, piteous tone. "I dunno whar. I left him when I went to town to-day, and when I come home he was gone. He never went off of his own accord, I'm sure. Poor Tray! I b'leeve some of you boys thar know whar he is. Ef you do, tell me whar. He ain't never done you

any harm."

The old man's appeal touched me. I had never seen Old Hector in so gentle a mood before. His distress and grief were very real and keen, but Ted's eyes only glistened more maliciously.

"I guess you won't ever see that old yaller dorg of yours again," he called out, tauntingly. "He's gone for good, he is."

Old Hector made a quick step towards him, but the wary Ted dodged.

"What have you done with him, you imp of evil?" cried the old man. "I might a-known it was you. Tell me whar he is!"

"Well, I guess I don't. I ain't responsible for the whereabouts of your old cur. You can go and hunt him up."

"Oh, tell me whar he is," pleaded Old Hector, with wonderful patience. "He never harmed you—the poor dawg! Surely you hain't killed him, have you?"

Ted winked with inexpressible impudence.

"Tray is gone—you can make up your mind to that—and he won't come back in a hurry, neither. Next time you box peoples' ears that haven't done anything to you, you can think of Tray."

"So you did it out of spite," said Hector, his anger mastering his grief. "I'll learn you!"

He made a dash at Ted, but the latter leaped from his perch with a mocking whoop and went flying down the road.

The Roaders, finding themselves deserted, also took to their heels and disappeared after their leader in a cloud of dust.

The other men sympathized with the old man and promised to help him find his dog if they could. Some eyed me suspiciously, for my intimacy with the Roaders was well known, but I was not molested.

I, too, felt sorry for Old Hector. That evening I met Ted about dusk, and tried to find out what he'd done with the dog.

Ted grinned.

"You'd like to know now, wouldn't you, sonny? What'd you do if I told you—run and blab?"

I indignantly disclaimed all intention of blabbing, and after awhile Ted became more communicative.

"You won't tell?"

"No, I'll never breathe a word."

"Honest?"

"Honest."

"Well, the dog's alive. I've got him chained up in a safe enough place—never mind where. I ain't going to tell you *that*, because you're too soft-hearted. Old Hector's mind would be kind of at rest if he thought Tray was

dead, so I mean to keep him stirred up. Look here! I'm going to stick this up on Hector's door after dark."

"This" was a half-sheet of paper, upon which Ted had scrawled the following:

> "To Ole Hector: My deer sir, your dog ain't dead, but heed be a heap better off if he was: he ain't very happey. You won't ever see him again. Yours respectfully,
>
> "Ted Thompson."

"That will make the poor old man feel bad, Ted," I objected. "He'll think you're ill-treating the dog. You're not, are you?"

"No, I ain't, you silly. The dog's as well off as ever he was. I just wrote that to tease Hector. It'll put him in a stew."

"What are you going to do with Tray?"

But Ted, not having found me as sympathetic as he expected, got on his dignity. He refused to say more, and we parted.

For the next week, Old Hector's state of mind ought to have satisfied the most inveterate seeker after revenge. He could do nothing but go about mourning for his loss and seeking pitifully for some trace of Tray. Ted and the other Roaders kept well out of his way. I had not seen one of them since my last recorded interview with Ted.

There came a change at the end of the week. As I was not one of the parties interested, I think I had better give you the story in Ted's own words, as he told it to me, when I went to see him.

He was lying on the sofa, with his ankle bandaged up and another bandage around his head.

"You see, Hal, it happened this way:

"Last Monday night, after dark, I went up to take that wretched Tray something to eat. We had him chained up in that old barn of Maloney's, back of the woods. Nobody ever goes near it, because they say it's haunted. So it is, I guess—by us Roaders.

"Well, we had him there, and I fed him well, anyhow. I'll bet he'd better meals, and more of them than he ever had at home. I really meant to let him go back after a while, when I'd made Old Hector miserable long enough.

"Coming back, I took a short cut across the fields, back of Hector's. It was awful dark, and I had to go through Patterson's sheep pasture. You know he had a well dug down in the hollow for his sheep. It ain't a very deep one, but just the same a fellow wouldn't jump down it for pure fun. It went dry this summer, and before that he kept it covered up with boards.

"I'd clean forgotten all about the well, and I was running full tilt across the

hollow, when—ker-blunk! I just felt myself pitching headlong, and when I came to my right senses, there I was, at the bottom of Patterson's well.

"It wasn't very deep, as I've said, and nothing in it but mud, so I wasn't killed; but my head and face were all cut and my ankle felt dreadful.

"I didn't know what I had done to it, but I was afraid it was broken. The blood was running all over my face, and I thought I'd die there, all alone in the dark.

"I knew I couldn't get out, and I might yell all night and nobody'd hear me. I tell you, Hal, I felt pretty bad, and, upon my word, the thing that worried me most was that poor old Tray!

"I did wish I'd never touched him, I can tell you. It seemed an awful mean trick, all at once, especially when I remembered poor Old Hector's trouble about him.

"I huddled up there, feeling as if I was going to die right off. I shouted as loud as I could, now and then. Nobody came, of course. I think I was there about an hour. I couldn't move, because my ankle hurt so; and, oh, how my head did ache!

"All at once, just as I'd had another spell of shouting, a light flashed overhead, and next minute I saw—who do you suppose? Why, Old Hector, peering down at the top, with a lantern close to his face.

"I was glad to see any one, but you'd better believe I thought my chances for getting out of the well weren't very much better than before, and small blame to him if they hadn't been.

" 'Who's down thar?' he asked.

"I hollered back that it was Ted Thompson and that I'd tumbled down and broke my ankle. I honestly expected to see him march off, then and there; but the old fellow said:

" 'You poor boy! How am I to get you up out o' that? Can you hold on till I run down home and get a ladder? I'll be as quick as I can.'

"I said I could, and off he went. In no time he was back with a ladder. He poked it down just as careful, and down he came, too.

" 'Poor little chap!' he said.

"And he picked me up as if I'd been a baby—you know how strong he is, Hal—and so carefully and tender-like, he hardly hurt me a bit, and, somehow or other, he climbed up with me and we got out.

"Then he carried me all the way down to his cabin and laid me on his bed. He was just awful good to me, Hal. He got hot water and washed the blood off my face, and then he poked around my ankle and said he didn't think any bones were broken, and he bound it up. And—do you know?—when I'd flinch, there'd actually be tears in his eyes. He couldn't have fixed me up better or petted me more if I'd been Tray himself.

"I didn't dare to mention Tray at first. You bet I felt small. Here I'd been plaguing the life out of Old Hector for months, and breaking his heart by stealing his dog—and this was how he was paying me back. I just felt mean—there's no use in talking. I'd never have believed Old Hector could be so kind. He wasn't a single bit cross or gruff. He did everything he could to make me easy, and then he said:

" 'Now I'm going to run down and let your father know whar you are and how you're fixed. How'd you come to fall into Patterson's well, anyhow?'

"I just made up my mind to make a clean breast of it there and then. I said I'd been up to Maloney's barn to feed Tray.

"Old Hector gave a big jump.

" 'Is Tray alive? Is he—is he?'

" 'You bet he is!' I said—'and likely to live. I've looked after him well, and I've doctored his foot, too. I'd never have taken him if I'd known—I'm awful sorry—but he's all right. Please do forgive me!'

"Just fancy, Hal, if any of the Roaders had heard *me* asking Old Hector's pardon!

"Do you know, the tears actually ran down his face!

" 'Poor old Tray! Safe—safe!' was all he could say at first.

"He was just overcome with joy, and he didn't say a cross word to me. He went down to our place, and dad came after me with a cart and got me home somehow.

"I gave Hector the key of Tray's padlock, and he shuffled off to Maloney's barn to get him. I'd have given a pile to see the meeting. Anyhow, he's got Tray again.

"Do you know, the old fellow has been down every day to see how I am getting on, and he's not a bad sort at all? I'm ashamed of my cuttings-up, and I'm going to reform, sure's you're alive! Don't blab all this to the Roaders, though, Hal."

Ted kept his word. Indeed, he really became quite intimate with Old Hector, and frequently accompanied him on his fishing and gunning expeditions.

The rest of the Roaders also, although they always remained shy of their ancient enemy, were influenced by Ted to such a degree that they gave up molesting Old Hector.

Hector himself, perhaps through his liking for Ted, grew much more sociable, and we found that under his gruff exterior was hidden a warm, kindly heart. He never had much use for any Roader except Ted, but to the more respectable of the Swamp Hollow boys he became quite friendly.

Ted gradually weaned himself away from his old associates, and eventually became such a peaceable, well-behaved boy that people forgot that he had ever

been a Roader at all.

As for Tray, I regret to say that his disposition remained the same. He was snappish and unamiable till the end. But as that was his constitutional misfortune we overlooked it and refrained from molesting him.

When he died of old age, Hector mourned him sincerely, and he and Ted buried him under the old willow in Hector's yard. And as a proof of the changes Time can bring, a number of us Swamp Hollow boys went to the funeral.

A New-Fashioned Flavoring

First published in *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, August 27, 1898.

When Mrs. Clay went to pay a long-promised visit to her sister it was not without some misgivings that she left her household in charge of Edmund and Ivy.

To be sure, Ivy could be trusted; she was fifteen, and had been her mother's right hand for years. But Edmund, who was sixteen and ought to have had more sense than Ivy, but hadn't, was prone to tricks and nonsense; and all the rest of the little Clays, a round half dozen in number, were noted for the numerous scrapes they contrived to get into daily.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Clay stifled her doubts and went away for a week, burdening Edmund and Ivy with so many charges and reminders that they forgot half of them before she was fairly out of the gate.

Edmund was deputed to kindle fires, chop wood, feed the pig, bring in water, and, last-but-not-least, he was to look after the youthful Clays and keep them in order.

Ivy was to do the housework and see that the children were kept comparatively clean and mended and keep a wary eye on things in general.

"And if anything dreadful should happen," warned their mother, "be sure to send for me at once. Be careful of the fires, Ivy, and, Edmund, never you try to light one with kerosene. I expect in the end to come home and find the house burned to the ground or half the children killed."

"That isn't the right spirit to go on a visit in, mother," said Edmund. He was sitting on the edge of the wood-box, whittling over the floor. "Just make up your mind to enjoy yourself. Don't worry about us. We'll be all right. I give you my word everything will go swimmingly. I'll keep the kids straight—and Ivy, too, if she gets fighting. You can depend on me, mother."

"I know just how much dependence is to be placed on you, Edmund," replied his mother, severely; "now, do behave yourself while I'm away, and don't call your brothers and sisters 'kids.' "

"Well, I'm sure I can't call them lambs, anyhow. Just listen to that"—as a crash and a scream sounded in an adjoining room. "Fan and Reeve have 'gone over' on the rocking chair again. There won't be a whole piece of furniture left in this establishment by another month."

Altogether, as has been said, Mrs. Clay did not leave home in a very easy state of mind. Nevertheless the Clay household got on wonderfully well. Edmund behaved himself tolerably well and attended to his man-of-the house

duties with praiseworthy diligence. Moreover, he kept the younger Clays within reasonable bounds and refused to aid or abet them in making nuisances of themselves.

He studied hard in the long evenings after Fan and Reeve and Kitty and Jo and Frank and Bobby had been tucked away in their beds and Ivy had taken her knitting and sat down in the little sitting-room.

"I'd put more heart into it if I thought it would come to anything," he said mournfully; "but it won't. No college for me! I'll have to leave school in the spring and pitch into earning my own living and helping you folks along. It's tough on a fellow to be poor. Don't I envy Scott Dawson! He's going to college next fall."

"It's too bad you can't go, Ed," said Ivy, sympathizingly. "You're ever so much smarter than Scott Dawson. But I don't suppose we could ever manage it."

"I know that well enough. Let a fellow complain a bit, will you? It eases me. No, I won't whine when it comes to the point. I'll get all that done beforehand, and you'll see me grinning over the counter as if I were the happiest fellow in the world. If we were not so awfully poor, Ivy, or if the good old days of fairies and three wishes hadn't gone by, what would you go in for?"

"Music," answered Ivy, with a little sigh. "Oh, dear me! I'd just love to be a good violinist. But that costs money, too; so I needn't think of it."

"If that blessed Uncle Eugene of ours wasn't such a miserly old crank," continued Edmund, "he might help us along a bit. He isn't much like a story-book uncle, is he, Ivy? I'd like to meet him just to see what he's like."

"I wouldn't," said Ivy, emphatically, "if he's as cranky and particular as mother says he is. And he behaved abominably to father when they had that dispute over the property. No, I don't want to see Uncle Eugene. If I did I should be apt to flare out and tell him what I thought of him. It's a mercy there's no fear of us seeing him. He wouldn't come here for anything."

"You don't know. It's always the unexpected that happens," replied Edmund, oracularly. "Wouldn't it be a joke if he were to come now, when mother is away. If the kids—I beg your pardon! I mean my hopeful brothers and sisters—behave as they usually do when we have company, how it would horrify him. Old bachelors generally know all about how children should be trained, and I've no doubt Uncle Eugene's an aggravated specimen."

The Clays were undeniably poor. Mr. Clay had died some five years before, leaving his family but scantily provided for. Mrs. Clay had hard work to make both ends meet. Being a woman of resource and thrift, she accomplished it, but luxuries were unknown in the little household. Yet they were happy in spite of their poverty. Edmund's college course had to be given

up. He was to take a position as clerk in a dry goods store in the spring. Ivy had her own deprivations, of which she said little. She buried music dreams in the recesses of her heart, and made over her dresses and wore her hats three seasons with smiling sweetness.

I think, on the whole, they enjoyed life quite as well as richer people; only, as Edmund said, a little more cash would not have been an overwhelming inconvenience.

"I tell you what, Ivy," said Edmund, on Saturday afternoon, as he banged down a load of wood with a deafening crash, and sent a shower of dust over the dishes Ivy had so carefully wiped, "I'm glad mother's coming home Monday, when all's said and done. We've got along tip-top, to be sure, but the cares of being at the head of family affairs have weighed me down so heavily this week that I feel like an old man. We've been fortunate so far in that we've had no visitors. But they'll be sure to come to-day—just our Saturday luck!"

"Mercy! I hope not. I'm so busy. I'm determined that mother shall find this house in spic and span order when she comes home, so I'm having a grand rummage. This cupboard has to be put to rights, and I've fifty other things to do. And I've got the most dreadful cold in the head. I can scarcely breathe. Goodness, Ed! That's never a knock at the door."

"But it is! Ten to one it's Aunt Lucinda Perkins come to stay over Sunday."

"Ed, you must go to the door," said Ivy, with dismayed remembrance of her wet apron and generally disorderly appearance. "And whoever it is show them to the sitting-room. Don't dare to take anyone into the parlor, for Reeve and Robby got in there this morning to play shop before I discovered them, and it's in an awful mess."

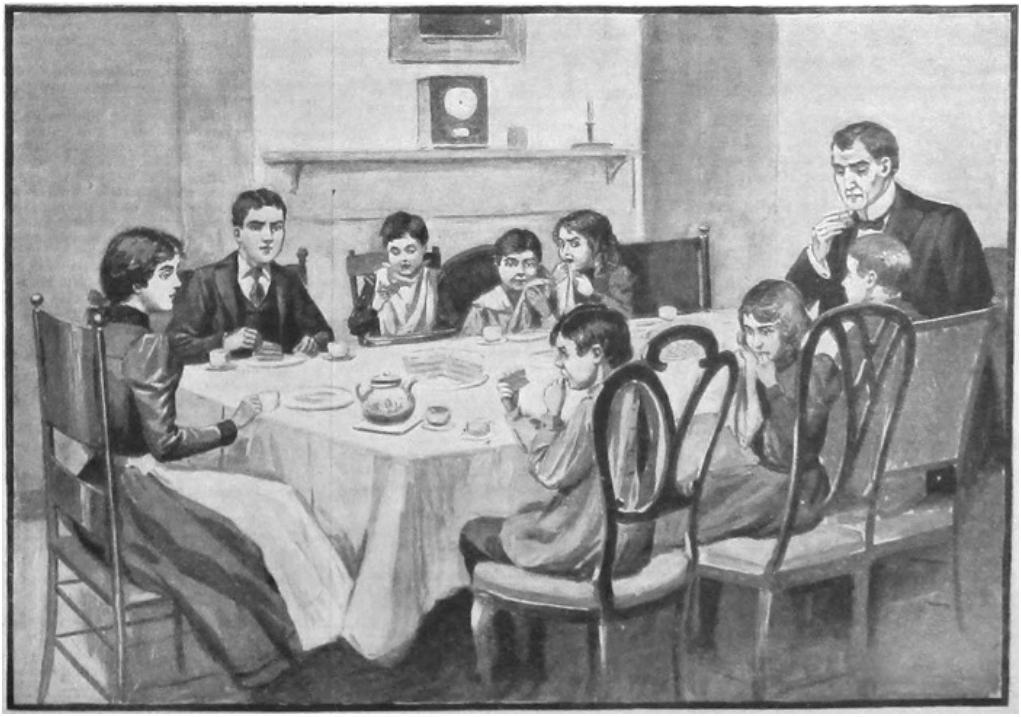
Ivy listened anxiously as Edmund went to the door. The visitor's tones were masculine, and she breathed a sigh of relief that it was not Aunt Perkins, anyhow; but her complacency was of short duration.

When Edmund had shown the caller into the sitting-room and returned to the kitchen, Ivy divined that the "something dreadful" had happened at last.

"Ivy, the Philistines be upon thee," said Edmund, with a solemnity belied by his dancing eyes—eyes that plainly indicated his enjoyment of the whole situation.

"Is it Aunt Perkins, after all?"

"It's worse than ten Aunt Perkinses. Ivy Clay, in that room, at this very minute, sits our respected Uncle Eugene."



"WHY, IVY, WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THE LAYER CAKE?"

"Mercy on us," exclaimed Ivy; and then collapsed, sitting down on the wood-box.

"Don't take a fit, sis. When I opened the door there he stood as grim as you please. 'Is your mother at home, boy?' he asked. 'No, sir; she isn't,' I replied. 'Well, I'm her brother-in-law, Eugene Clay,' he said, 'and I've come to see her as I have to wait a few hours here for my train.' Whereat I gasped out, 'Oh!' and towed him into the room, feeling decidedly faint. My part's done. Now, Ivy, it's your turn. Sail in gracefully and bid him welcome to the house of Clay."

"In this mess? I can't," declared Ivy.

"Well, no; you'll have to fix up a bit—brush your hair, and so forth. Do the thing up in good style, Ivy. I'm going to peek through the crack and watch the interview."

"Edmund," implored Ivy, beginning to recover her equanimity, "don't do anything dreadful now, will you? Don't make me laugh or anything like that?"

"Bless you, no! I'll be a model nephew. I'm properly scared, I tell you. Don't I look pale? All I'm afraid of, Ivy, is that Uncle Eugene will get alarmed and run, for all the kids are in the room above his head, and are making a most unearthly racket. If some of them come crashing through the ceiling, it's no more than I expect."

"Oh, Ed, do go and make them stop. My head is just in a whirl. Oh, if mother were only home! Do help me out of this scrape like a dear boy. What does he look like?"

"Who? Uncle Eugene? Oh, he's not too savage—more civilized looking than I had expected. Well. I'll go and make those little Clays up there tone down before his nervous system is utterly wrecked. You 'pretty' yourself up, Ivy, and beard the lion in his den as if you liked it. Don't let him suspect what a martyr you are to family ties."

Poor Ivy hurriedly brushed her rebellious curls into place, replaced her soiled apron by an immaculate white one, and, with her heart in her mouth, but looking very pretty and housewifely, nevertheless, contrived, she never knew how, to get into the sitting-room and say:

"How do you do, Uncle Eugene? I am glad to see you," hoping she would be forgiven for the atrocious fib.

"Are you?" returned Uncle Eugene grimly. "So your mother isn't home, hey?"

"No; she's visiting Aunt Mary. She expects to be home on Monday."

"Was that your brother who opened the door?"

"Yes. That is Edmund, my older brother. Won't you take off your overcoat, sir? Of course, you'll stay to tea," said Ivy, devoutly hoping he wouldn't.

"Well, yes; I suppose I will, if you'll get me an early one. Train leaves at 4.30. I can't wait over. Sorry your mother is away! How many are there of you?"

"Eight."

"Humph! I should have thought there were four times eight by the noise that was going on overhead when I came in. So you're housekeeper at present? You look like your mother."

Uncle Eugene slowly divested himself of his handsome light overcoat. He was a tall man of about fifty, with grizzled hair and a clean-shaven face. He had a hard mouth and deep-set eyes.

Ivy, with a covert glance around the room, was thankful to see it was comparatively neat. A sudden calm had succeeded Edmund's entrance overhead. His measures, whatever they were, must have been sudden and effective.

"There," said Uncle Eugene, depositing himself comfortably in a rocker by the fire, "that will do. I daresay you're busy, so don't let me detain you. You needn't think you're in duty bound to entertain me; in fact, I'd prefer you wouldn't."

Thus abruptly dismissed, Ivy gladly left her grim uncle to the charms of solitude and hastened to the kitchen, where she found Edmund scrubbing the

hands and faces of all the little Clays, not one of whom dared whimper under the operation, for they realized that Edmund meant business.

"Hello, Ivy! You didn't take long to dispose of him. Did he bite?"

"Oh, don't, Edmund! This is no joking matter."

"No, indeed! It's a serious case. Don't I look as if it were?"

"Ed, he's going to stay to tea, and he wants it early. What can we give him to eat?"

"What other people eat, I suppose. Or has he some abnormal appetite that craves—"

"I mean there's nothing baked in the house only loaf bread. I was so busy this morning I thought I wouldn't make cake. And I've heard mother say what an epicure Uncle Eugene was. I'm going right to work to make a layer cake; it won't take long, but I shall have to hurry. And there is the quince preserve. That'll have to do. You'd better go in with him, Ed."

"Not I. I'll have to fly round to the grocery for butter. Do you want anything else?"

"No; don't bother me," replied Ivy, who was scurrying in and out of the pantry with a bowl and a flower-scoop. Edmund proved himself a tower of strength. He finished putting the little Clays in order and then went around to the grocery with a rush.

On his return he found Ivy whipping up her cake energetically.

"It's all ready for the flavoring, Ed. Just hand me the bottle of vanilla out of the pantry, will you? It's on the second shelf."

Edmund dived into the pantry and returned with the vanilla bottle, rushing off again to settle a noisy dispute between Frank and Bobby in the hall. Ivy measured out and stirred in a generous spoonful of vanilla, filled her pans and triumphantly banged the oven-door upon them.

"Now, I do hope it will turn out well. I'll whip up a bit of frosting for the top. What a blessing those children are behaving so well! If they only keep it up at tea-time!"

Ivy began to set the tea-table, stepping briskly in and out of the room. She saw with dismay that Jo had strayed in somehow and was actually perched on Uncle Eugene's knee in earnest conversation with him.

Now, Jo Clay was six years old, and, not having arrived at years of discretion, was justly regarded as the infant terrible of the family. He could not keep either his own secrets or those of other people, and Ivy was on thorns, for there was no knowing what revelations Jo might be making to Uncle Eugene. She hoped devoutly that he had not overheard any of her or Edmund's remarks, for they would be fatally sure to be recounted.

In vain she surreptitiously beckoned Jo out of the room. Jo refused to heed her, and once Uncle Eugene saw her and said:

"Leave him alone. We are all right." After which she gave up in despair, although in her pilgrimages in and out she caught scraps of Jo's remarks about "moosic" and "Ed wanting to do to tollege," that made her groan.

Ivy set the table daintily, with spotless cloth and shining china, and put an apple geranium in pinkish bloom in the centre. The loaf-bread was cut in the thinnest of slices, the quince preserve was dished in an old-fashioned cut-glass bowl, and her cake came out of the oven as light and puffy as down.

"Just the best of luck, Ed," said Ivy, delightedly, as she clapped the layers together with ruby jelly, whisked the frosting over the top and sprinkled grated cocoanut on it. "Isn't that pretty? I hope it'll taste as good as it looks. Now, Ed, I'll take in the tea and you take in the children and get them settled in their places. Keep an eye on them, too. I'll have enough to attend to. And, oh, Ed! Jo's been sitting on Uncle Eugene's knee for an hour, and I know he's been telling him a fearful lot of stuff. Why couldn't you have decoyed him out?"

"Didn't dare! I'll bet Uncle Eugene knows everything about our family kinks by this time. Never mind! Come on! 'Charge, Ivy, charge! We'll win the day,' were the last words of Edmund Clay."

Edmund marshalled the little Clays soberly in and arranged them in order at the tea-table. Uncle Eugene sat down and Ivy poured out the tea with fear and trembling. But all went well at first. The tea and preserves were good and the children behaved beautifully.

Uncle Eugene said absolutely nothing. He evidently considered silence to be golden. Then Edmund, in obedience to a nod from Ivy, gravely passed the layer-cake to his Uncle, after which it went the rounds of the appreciative little Clays. Ivy took none. She was too tired and worried to eat; but Edmund helped himself to a generous slice.

When he had tasted it he laid down his fork, rolled up his eyes, and opened both his hands in exaggerated dismay for Ivy's benefit. Bobby Clay followed with "Why, Ivy, what's the matter with the layer-cake?"

Edmund silenced him with such an awful look that none of the others dared open their lips, though each, after the first mouthful, left their cake uneaten on their plates. Uncle Eugene, however, appeared to taste nothing unusual, for he gravely ate his cake with an impassive face and finished the last crumb.

Frank sat to the right of the agonized Ivy, too far away to explain, but by his pantomime he conveyed the fact that something serious was the matter.

Finally she took a peek of the triangle of cake on Reeve's plate next to her. She gave a gasp, a look at Edmund, and then, sad to relate, burst into a ringing peal of laughter, which, coming after the dead silence, was electrical in effect.

She caught herself up with a scarlet face, and in quick transition felt so much like crying that she might have done so if Uncle Eugene had not abruptly pushed back his chair and announced that he had had enough.

Ivy fled to the kitchen, whither she was followed by Edmund, with all the little Clays swarming after him.

"Ivy," demanded Edmund, tragically, "what in the world did you put in that cake? Never tasted anything like it in the cooking line before."

"Oh, Ed, how could you do such a thing?" cried poor Ivy, hysterically. "I can never forgive you. And after promising you wouldn't play any tricks, too!"

"Me!" exclaimed Edmund, too surprised to be grammatical. "Goodness, what have I done?"

"Oh, don't pretend innocence! I suppose you thought it a very smart trick to hand me out a bottle of anodyne liniment to flavor that cake with, but I call it mean."

Edmund stared at her blankly for a minute, and then flung himself on the sofa and went off into a burst of laughter that made the kitchen re-echo.

"Oh," he cried, "Ivy Adella Clay! You don't mean to say you flavored that cake with anodyne liniment? Ho, ho, ho! If that isn't an original idea! I always knew you were a genius, Ivy."

"How could you, Edmund?"

Edmund sat up.

"Ivy, I give you my word of honor I didn't do it on purpose," he said, solemnly. "I thought it was vanilla—honest, I did. Why, it was in a vanilla bottle, and it's just the same color."

"Yes; don't you remember Reeve broke the liniment bottle last week and I put what wasn't spilled into an old vanilla bottle. Oh, dear me! This is dreadful!"

"You're to blame, then? Why didn't you put it out of the way? How was a fellow to tell? And how is it you didn't smell it?"

"I couldn't, with such a cold. Oh, Edmund, what must Uncle Eugene think?"

"Dear knows," said Edmund, going off into another paroxysm. "I suppose the poor man will think we were trying to poison him, unless he happened to recognize the taste. Fortunately, the liniment is for internal as well as external application, so nobody will die. Well, this is the latest! Flavoring a cake with anodyne liniment! Well done, Ivy."

"Will we—do you think we ought to say anything to Uncle Eugene about it?"

"Goodness, no. Perhaps he didn't suspect anything amiss. He ate every crumb of it, so doubtless he imagined it was the newest thing in flavoring extracts. Your reputation as a cook would be gone forever if you let him know, Ivy."

"Well," said Ivy, disconsolately, "it's done now, and it can't be undone. Fortunately, as you say, it was harmless. But the whole thing is simply

dreadful. What will mother say?"

"Accidents will happen, even in a well-regulated family like ours. Go and clear off the ruins, Ivy, and feed that liniment cake to the pig. Uncle Eugene will never be any the wiser."

Alas! When Ivy summoned up enough courage to return to the room and attack the table, what was her horror to find Jo delightedly telling all the details to Uncle Eugene!

Ivy caught the fatal word "lin'ment," and mentally collapsed.

She must apologize somehow.

"Uncle Eugene," she stammered, with a scarlet face, her confusion not calmed in any degree by a glimpse of Edmund gesticulating wildly in the back hall, "I'm very sorry—that cake shouldn't have tasted as it did—I meant to put in—vanilla, but Edmund made a mistake and—somehow—well, I put in a spoonful of anodyne liniment instead. It won't hurt anyone—you know—it's sometimes taken internally——"

"But not in cakes," came in a stage whisper from the back hall.

Ivy gave up trying to explain, and, in spite of her efforts, gave vent to something that couldn't be called anything but a snicker. As for Uncle Eugene, his eyes twinkled quite genially, but all he said was:

"Accidents will happen."

And Ivy went out, considerably mystified as to what effect the disclosure had had on him.

Soon after he looked at his watch, said it was nearly train time, and put on his coat. He shook hands with Ivy and Edmund, told them to tell their mother he was sorry not to have seen her, and relieved the Clay mansion of his unwelcome presence.

"Thank goodness!" said Edmund, emphatically, when he had seen him safely out of the gate. "The old crank has gone. I guess he won't come back in a hurry. I should say liniment-flavored cake was an excellent preventative of unwelcome guests. What an opinion he must have of us! You are always doing something brilliant, Ivy, but you've surpassed yourself in this exploit."

When Mrs. Clay returned home on Monday she listened to the tale with a curious mixture of dismay and amusement.

"I wish I had been home," she said. "I can't think what induced him to come. He once said he'd never darken our doors again. I suppose I ought to be thankful to find you all alive and sound of limb, but it's a pity Uncle Eugene should have come when I was away. I expect he's gone for good, now, Ivy, after what you gave him to eat, poor man. I know how Uncle Eugene would regard anything like that."

But she didn't! Next week a letter came from her brother-in-law—short and abrupt, as was his fashion, but the contents were satisfactory.

It ran:

"Sister Martha:

"Doubtless this will impress you. I called at your house last week and found you away. However, your son and daughter entertained me very hospitably and I was much pleased with them both, but especially with the girl. The boy, I take it, is somewhat mischievous and likes to tease his sister. I dare say they think I'm a crusty old fellow and they are right: but I desire to make amends for the past if you will let bygones be bygones. I am a lonely man and I want to have some interests outside myself. Edmund and Ivy did not tell me about your concerns, but I picked up an inkling from little Jo. Tell Edmund he is not to go into that store, but to prepare for college next fall and I will put him through. I have nothing else to do with my money and you must gratify me in this whim. As for Ivy, you may tell her she is to take music lessons and I will send her the best violin to be had. She is a good, housewifely girl. Tell her also that her liniment cake seems to have had an excellent effect on her cranky old uncle for it appears to have made him well all over, even to his bones and marrow. I may pay you another visit soon.

"Until then I remain yours respectfully,

"EUGENE CLAY."

"Uncle Eugene is a brick," exclaimed Edmund, breathlessly, "a regular brick! I repent in sackcloth and ashes of anything I ever said to the contrary."

"He is splendid," said Ivy, with shining eyes. "To think I am to have music lessons—and a violin. It is too good to be true."

"You may well be grateful. It's not every uncle who would behave so handsomely to a girl who gave him liniment cake to eat. What an advertisement this would be for that liniment firm if they got hold of it. A liniment warranted to cure, not only every known bodily ailment, but those of the mind and heart as well! They'd make their fortune. Mother, say something! Relieve your feelings in some way!"

"I say, 'Long live anodyne liniment!' " said Mrs. Clay, laughing. "Your experiment has turned out well this time, Ivy, but I wouldn't advise a repetition. Uncle Eugene was always kind at heart, although peculiar. And now, to prevent any further mistakes, I'll go and put that new-fashioned flavoring of yours out of the vanilla bottle into a more orthodox one. The next time Uncle Eugene comes I'll make the cake myself."

A Brave Girl

First published in *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, July 19, 1899.

Aunt Em was the heroine of this story and it was she who told it to us on her last visit here.

We were all sitting around the fire one evening, when Clive, my older brother, came in and said it was the darkest night he had ever been out in.

I said I was glad I hadn't gone over to see Kitty Martin that evening, as I had intended, since I would have had to come home alone.

"You wouldn't have been frightened to do that, would you?" said Aunt Em.

"Yes, I would have been scared to death," I admitted frankly. "I'm the biggest coward that ever breathed.

"Aunt Em.—Clive here would tell you that."

Mother smiled across the table at Aunty.

"Madge would never be able to do what you did for me one time, Emmy," she said.

"Oh, yes, she would. I was frightened enough, Alice—and you know what a dreadful coward I had always been before that night."

Clive and I had scented a story by this time and we gave Aunt Em no peace until she consented to tell us. I shall try to give it as nearly as possible in her own words.

"It was thirty years ago," said Aunt Em, settling comfortably back to her knitting, "but I'm sure I shall never forget a single incident of that night if I live to be a hundred. I was fourteen years old and your mother here was eight. We were living on a farm in one of the loneliest, dreariest, back-country places you could imagine.

"Our nearest neighbour lived three miles away and we were almost surrounded by woods. About six miles away was a little village called Cross Roads—quite a stirring place we thought—with a church and store. Father and mother made frequent trips thereto, but Alice and I rarely went out of sight from our own farm. We did not even get to school and not often to church. We had no playmates and were often lonely. Our family consisted of father and mother, we two girls and 'old Aunt Maragret' as we called her. She was really no relation at all, but a trusted nurse and servant combined and was as much a part of our household as any of us.

"We girls were blindly petted and spoiled by her. Looking back now, I cannot say I think she was a judicious friend by any means, for she told us so

many tales of fairies and witches and ‘spooks’ that our heads were full of such nonsense. I, in particular, grew to be dreadfully afraid of the dark. You could not have persuaded me to go into a room without a light, and the mere idea of venturing out of doors alone after nightfall would fill us with terror. I knew I was very foolish for I did not really believe in Aunt Margaret’s stories at all, and I honestly tried to conquer my fears; but I could not succeed although I was very much ashamed of myself.

“One day father and mother started on an expedition to the nearest town about thirty miles away. They intended to remain over night and return the next day, leaving Alice and me in Aunt Margaret’s care.

“I was very busy all day, for there was an extra amount of work for me to do, and left Alice to the care of Aunt Margaret, who was complaining greatly about her rheumatism. Alice had always been a rather delicate child and subject to attacks of croup. It was a cold day for the time of year, with a raw east wind blowing. Alice went out too much in the forenoon and would not wrap herself up. At dinner time I noticed she had a cold and Aunt Margaret insisted on her staying indoors the rest of the day.

“She did not seem any worse by night, but Aunt Margaret took her to bed with her, insisting that she could keep her covered up warm better than I could.

“I went to my own little room over the kitchen and soon fell asleep. I slept soundly for I did not know how long, when I was suddenly awakened by a glare of light in my eyes. Aunt Margaret was standing by my bed with a lamp.

“ ‘Oh, Aunt Margaret, what is the matter?’ I exclaimed in fright.

“Aunt Margaret set the lamp down on the table and wrung her hands in a manner that convinced me something serious had happened.

“ ‘Oh Alice has the croup?’ she moaned, ‘and she’s dreadful bad—all fevered up and clean out of her head. I’ve done all I could, but ’tain’t no use. She’ll die on our hands and not a soul to go for a doctor or anything—and me all crippled up with rheumatiz. Oh, what’s to be done?’

“During Aunt Margaret’s distracted speech I had been dressing as quickly as my trembling fingers permitted. A great dread was tugging at my heart. Was Alice really in danger—my little sister whom I loved so dearly?

“Something must be done—but what? And who was to do it?

“I took the lamp and hurried into the other room, followed by Aunt Margaret, who hobbled after me, crying and lamenting dismally. She seemed to have lost her usual clear-sighted calmness altogether. Alice was her pet and the sense of her danger quite unnerved our old nurse. I realized that the whole responsibility rested on me; and I felt very helpless. Inexperienced though I was, I saw at once that Alice was dangerously ill. She tossed to and fro and coughed incessantly with a hoarse choking sound. Her eyes were glaringly bright and she did not seem to know me at all.

" 'Oh, Margaret,' I said piteously, 'is she going to die? What can we do?'

" 'Oh, child, I don't know. I've tried every remedy I know of. I didn't want to wake you till I had to. If we had only someone to send for Dr. Long.'

"I tried to think calmly. Our nearest neighbour was three miles away. Father and mother had taken the team to town, and I could not drive the only horse left, a wild young three-year-old.

"The doctor lived at Cross Roads—six miles away by the roundabout main road. But there was a shorter cut, not more than two and a half miles, or three at the most, through the woods directly back of our farm. I knew the road well; it was used for wood hauling, and we went through it when we went berrying in the wild lands back of Cross Roads.

"I must go for the doctor—and I must go by that dark, lonely wood-road. There was no help for it; there was no other way; but you cannot realize how terribly frightened I was.

"Margaret stared at me in amazement as I hastily slipped on my jacket and hat.

" 'Where are you going, child?'

" 'For the doctor. I'm going through the woods, and I'll be as quick as I can. Do everything you can for Alice and keep up the hot applications.'

"I went over to the bed, kissed my little sister, then ran down stairs and slipped back the bolt of the door.

"The night was very dark and our lantern was broken. A frantic terror took possession of me and my trembling limbs refused to move. I could not go. I could not face that dark, lonely walk, bristling with unknown horrors. I can smile at myself now, as you do; but I could not subdue my fears then.

"Then came the thought: 'If you do not go for the doctor Alice will die,' and it nerved me with a sort of desperate courage.

"I stepped out, shut the door and started resolutely in the direction of the woods.

"It was, as I have said, very dark, but after I had been out a few minutes my eyes got accustomed to the gloom and I could see my way.

"I had to cross two large fields before I reached the wood road. I climbed the fence and fairly flew over the dew-wet grass. The trees along the fences were terrifying in their dim shadowy outlines; when a cow got up suddenly from a corner my heart gave a painful bound. The far-off bark of some prowling fox sent the cold shivers up and down my spine.

"I arrived at the wood-road out of breath and paused in fresh fright. The gloom under the trees was intense. There were so many eerie and mysterious sounds coming and going in the darkness, too—the groaning of the wind, the swaying of the branches and the leaves, all thrilled me with terror.

" 'Now, Em. Carter,' I said aloud—and the faint sound of my voice in that

great empty darkness was as terrible as anything else—'you know perfectly well there is nothing to hurt you, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You've been through this wood dozens of times in daylight and you never saw anything worse looking than yourself. You know there is no such thing as a ghost. Your sister is dying and you are skulking here afraid to take a step to save her life.'

"By the time I got through with this monologue I felt braver and I plunged in desperately and hurried down the dark wood road.

"I really yet cannot think of that experience without a little shudder. To me the forest seemed fairly alive with a stealthy, uncanny life.

"I was fast, but my thoughts were faster, and every ghost or bogie story Aunt Margaret had ever told me flashed across my memory. I dared not turn my head lest some dreadful thing should be dogging my steps—although it would have had a lively race of it, for I was going at a headlong pace.

"Several times I tripped on roots and fell. Once I struck my face against a stump and cut my cheek. I could feel the warm blood trickling down as I scrambled up and ran on, but it seemed a very trifling thing compared with my mental agony.

"But at last I did get through the wood-belt and came out back of the Cross Roads village. I had still quite a distance to go, over blueberry commons dripping with dew and so overgrown with young maple that I came near losing my way; but somehow or other I pushed through, following a cow track, and reached the fence along the main road.

"I climbed over it, but somehow in my hurry my foot slipped on the top longer and I fell heavily to the ground. I sprang up at once but staggered back with a cry of pain, for it seemed as if a knife had been thrust through my ankle. I had sprained it somehow when I fell. I could not bear my weight on it for a minute, and at first I felt as if I were going to faint. But my physical pain drove my ghostly fears out of my mind, and I set my teeth firmly. There was only one thing to do and I did it; I got down and crawled, slowly and sobbingly, on my hands and knees along the roadside to the doctor's house, feeling as if I must give up with every wrench of my ankle.

"I crawled up to the door and rang the bell. It seemed hours to me before I heard steps inside; then the door opened and Doctor Long's kindly face appeared.

"He carried a lamp, and as the light fell over me he fairly jumped—as well he might, for my face was all blood-stained, my hat gone, my dress torn to tatters, and I was sobbing and gasping wildly.

" 'Bless my heart!' exclaimed the doctor. 'Emmy Carter here at this hour of night and in such a plight! Child, where did you come from, and what is wrong?'

" 'Oh, please, sir,' I gasped brokenly; 'Alice is dying with croup—won't you come at once! There was nobody home but Aunt Margaret and me—and I've run through the woods—oh, won't you come right away? I'm afraid I sprained my ankle—jumping over a fence—down there.'

" 'I do declare,' said Doctor Long, and he picked me up as if I had been a baby and carried me into his office. He insisted on bandaging up my ankle before he would attend to anything else, and he wanted me to stay there while he went up to our place. But I declared I must go back with him, so he harnessed his pony as quickly as possible, lifted me into the phaeton, and we started back. It seemed to me that drive would never end, but it did, of course, and we got home before Aunt Margaret thought I had time to get to the cross-roads. The doctor looked very grave over Alice. He was barely in time, he said; a very little later would have been too late.

"It was morning before Alice was out of danger; then Doctor Long found time to ask me how my ankle was. I had not thought much about it, as I lay helplessly on the sofa and watched Aunt Margaret and him working over my sister; but when I knew Alice was safe I began to recollect my own mishaps.

" 'It feels as if somebody were sticking needles through it,' I said, 'and that isn't exactly pleasant. How long am I going to be laid up?'

" 'Oh, not very long,' said the doctor cheerily. 'It's not a bad sprain—and Alice is all right, thanks to you, my brave girl.'

"I felt myself getting very red. 'Oh, I'm not brave at all,' I cried. 'I'm an awful coward, Doctor Long. If you knew how terribly frightened I was. At first I was sure I couldn't go at all—and every step I took I was sure some dreadful thing was just on the point of catching me. I don't believe I could do it again.'

"The doctor laughed and said something about Shakespeare's definition of bravery. Do you know it Clive?"

"The brave man is not he who feels no fear,
For that were stupid and irrational,
But he whose noble soul his fear subdues
And bravely dares the danger nature shrinks from,"

quoted Clive, glibly.

"Yes, that was it," said Aunt Em, "but I told him that couldn't apply to me, for I didn't subdue my fear—I only just went somehow in spite of it. But that night cured me. I never was frightened in the dark after that. My ankle was all right in a few days and father and mother said some very nice things to me. But my sweetest reward was the knowledge that I had really saved Alice's life."

We all drew a long breath as Aunt Em finished her story, and her stocking together.

"Aunt Em, you were a brick," exclaimed Clive with boyish enthusiasm.

“I could never have done that, Aunty,” I said.

“I think you could if need arose,” said Aunt Em. “I would have been sure I could not do it either. But you never know what you can do until you try.”

A Double Joke

First published *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, January 21, 1899.

Well, the sun is setting, so I suppose that signifies that we must be trudging. It almost takes the edge off a fellow's fun to have to walk four miles to and from it!"

"You know you'd walk three times as far for as glorious an afternoon's skating as we've had to-day, Phil, so what's the use of growling? We always have to pay a certain price for our fun in this world, old fellow, and in this corner of it especially. For my part, I rather enjoy a tramp home over good roads on a night like this."

A "night like this" was a clear, crisp winter evening, frosty and sharp without being unpleasantly cold. The sun was just setting behind a ridge of pine-fringed hills in the southwest, and the gleaming sheet of ice before the boys, covered with an intricate tracery of skate tracks, reflected all the tints of the sky that was a vast lake of cloudy crimson and melting crocus and transparent rose. Up on the hill behind them the spires and roofs of a small village came out with clearest darkness against the arc of color. It was named Forest Hill, but Phil Burgess and Bert Lawrence, who had been spending the afternoon in having what they termed "a glorious skate," did not belong there.

They came from "over Ashbury way," as the Forest Hillites would have said, with a fine inflection of disdain. Ashbury was a settlement about four miles east of Forest Hill, and was just as good as the latter in every particular, except, as Bert would have said, it was "overlooked when skating arrangements were made." There wasn't, in the length and breadth of Ashbury, any kind of a place for skating, unless the miserable little saucer of ice in Cole's field could be called so. It served as a place for new beginners and girls to practice on, but for the real article the Ashbury boys were forced to betake themselves and their skates over to Crystal Lake, at Forest Hill.

There was no love lost between the Ashbury boys and the Forest Hill boys, and that famous ice had been the scene of more than one spirited brush between the two factions, in which victory perched now upon one standard and now upon the other with an impartiality that kept the balance pretty even. But Phil and Bert had had the ice all to themselves that day, and had enjoyed themselves immensely.

Bert, at the conclusion of his last sentence, sat down and dragged his skates off. Phil went off for a final twirl.

"I suppose it's time we were going," he said, regretfully, "but I'll have one

more spin anyhow."

When it was over he rejoined Bert and the two chums started off across the snowy fields. On the crest of the hill Phil paused to look back and saw a dozen or so dark figures descending the opposite slope.

"Jing!" he exclaimed. "There are the Hillites now! Won't they have a glorious evening; it's going to be moonlight. I've a half notion to go back. What say, Bert?"

"Not I," declared his chum. "There'll be nobody over from Ashbury, and those Hillites are mad yet over the licking we gave them last week. We're in a huge minority and we'd be sure to get into a row."

"Don't know as I'd care if we did," said Phil, moving on, however. "I feel exactly like having some excitement—just in the mood for doing something wild!"

This, I am afraid, was not at all an uncommon mood for Phil, or Bert either, for that matter. They were in mischief every day of their lives, and although it was generally harmless, yet they were growing up into big boys now, and some of their pranks had gone rather too far. They were simply average boys, neither scamps nor saints, and their tricks were mostly the outcome of mere boyish thoughtlessness and spirits. Still, habit makes character after awhile, and Bert and Phil were at a somewhat critical period. As old Jim Carpenter, the Ashbury oracle, remarked sagely:

"Those two lads want a stopper put on them right off, before it gets too late." No body had as yet applied the "stopper," however, or seemed likely to. Their last escapade—untying and retying in a different place all the horses and carriages hitched to the church fence when a lecture was going on inside, so that when the people came out on a night so dark that it was dated from, the scene of confusion was one that made history—had been a good deal talked about. But no serious damage had been done, and as it couldn't be positively proved that it was they who did it, they got off scot free.

Old Jim Carpenter's theory was the correct one. Bert and Phil were in need of a little kindly and careful advice and repression just at this turning point in their teens. This they were not likely to get. Phil lived with a mummy-like old uncle, who concerned himself over nothing earthly but the making of money, and let his nephew grow up as he would; and Bert's father was an easy-going mortal, who found a refuge from all responsibility in the indisputable assertion that "boys will be boys."

"Nobody wants them to be turnips or cabbages," he said. "Bert's all right; he'll tone down in time. Bless me, I never saw anything so funny as old Johnny Stone flying around the other night hunting for that old sorrel nag of his."

The boys had walked two miles and were just entering on the strip of fir-

woods that marked the boundary between Ashbury and Forest Hill, when a tinkle of bells behind them made them look around. A cutter with a solitary occupant was coming around a curve in the road, and Phil recognized the turn-out.

"There's Doctor Taylor coming, Bert, with that little mare he bought down at Oakvale last month. Take a good look at her as she goes past. I tell you she's a dandy. She can just walk away from anything in Ashbury or Forest Hill, either. I'd give almost anything just to get a spin behind her."

Phil's wish was gratified more speedily and surely than wishes generally are in this work-a-day world. The little mare and the cozy cutter came to a prompt standstill, and the doctor called out cheerily:

"Jump in, boys. The cutter holds three."

Nothing loth, the boys jumped in and away they went at a speed that Phil declared next thing to flying.

"What do you think of Bonny Queen?" asked the doctor, proudly.

"Is that her name, sir? Well, I think it just suits her. I never saw anything to equal her before."

Phil spoke honestly. The little mare was a beauty—clean-limbed and satin-coated, with a record for speed which no horse in Ashbury could touch. The doctor smiled, well pleased.

"I'm as proud and fond of her as if she were one of my family," he said. "She's never had a blow in her life, and never will, I hope. I let nobody drive her but myself—she's rather a nervous little animal, and doesn't like strangers. Well, here we are at the Hall. There's a meeting of the shareholders here to-night, and I promised I'd attend. But I don't care about leaving Bonny Queen out this frosty night—and I haven't a blanket with me either. I guess I'll go on home."

But just at this juncture Squire Clay came along.

"Good evening, doctor. You're going to stay, of course."

"I am not sure," said the doctor, hesitatingly.

"You must," said Squire Clay, decidedly. "We can't do without you."

A few minutes' conversation aside resulted in the doctor's turning to the boys.

"It's only a mile to my place," he said, "and I want you to take the Queen home for me. Don't drive her too fast. Gordon is home and he'll attend to her. Will you?"

Would they! Well, they just guessed so! To drive Bonny Queen for a mile through Ashbury with everybody envying them—what a wind-fall!

"BONNY QUEEN WAS ON HER METTLE AND FAIRLY FLEW."

"I wouldn't trust a horse like that with those two for a good deal," commented Squire Clay, when the cutter was out of earshot. "They don't know what mischief to be up to next, either of them. It's said they were at the bottom of that affair at the church the night of the lecture, too."

The doctor looked troubled, but it was too late. Phil and Bert were already out of sight, and Bonny Queen was prancing along the road on her slender feet as if she knew her own value. It was a perfect night. The sunset glow still lingered in the west, and the moonlight was becoming brilliant. Every boy in Ashbury seemed to be on the road, and the sight of Phil Burgess and Bert Lawrence driving Doctor Taylor's "Bonny Queen" made a sensation which our two heroes enjoyed to the utmost.

"I wish it were half a dozen miles, instead of one," said Bert.

The remark was like a match to powder. Phil had not yet worked off his mischievous mood. Just before them was the corner where the road to Sevenoaks branched off at right angles. That, coupled with Bert's remark, sent an idea scintillating through Phil's brain with dizzying impulse.

"Let's make it six miles," he said, promptly.

"How?"

"Let's just drive over to Sevenoaks Corner for the fun of it, before we take the Queen home. The doctor will never know. It'll be a capital joke."

Bert thought so, too.

"But what if the doctor should find it out?" he said, doubtfully.

"Oh, he won't—not for a while, anyhow. We can be back long before that meeting will be out, and the Taylor boys will suppose we've just come from the hall. Of course, it will leak out in time, but we'll have had our fun and all will be well over."

And to put the matter beyond discussion, Phil turned Bonny Queen down the Sevenoaks road and gave her free rein.

Neither of the two boys stopped to think at all seriously over what they were doing. It was in their eyes "a good joke," and there was fun to be had besides. But it was something a little worse than any of their past tricks, for there was a principle of honor involved in this. They were betraying their trust. But they did not see it in this light at all. They were enjoying themselves recklessly. To be sure, they felt a little anxious at first, but that feeling soon wore off. The evening was moonlit and frosty; Bonny Queen was on her mettle and fairly flew. Phil tingled with excitement to his very finger tips, and sent the mare along at a pace that would have broken the doctor's heart if he had seen it.

"Can't she just go, though! Bert, what wouldn't you give for a horse like that? Doctor Taylor doesn't half drive her—he's so afraid of hurting her. Won't we make a sensation at the Corner, though?"

Sevenoaks Corner was six miles from Ashbury; there was a store at the corner which was the evening rendezvous of all the Sevenoaks boys.

The place was in rather bad repute. Careful Ashbury fathers and mothers did not like to see their sons go over that way in the evening. The Corner boys were reported to be a tough lot. Phil and Bert had no business to be there, and they knew it; but they had scraped up an acquaintance with the boys there, and went over all too often. Phil had not underrated the sensation their appearance driving Doctor Taylor's celebrated "Queen," whose fame had reached Sevenoaks, would make at the Corner. When they drew up before it with a curve and prance and a clash of silvery bells, the loafers in and around the store swarmed about them with noisy admiration and questions.

The boys told their story with gusto; in the eyes of the Sevenoaks contingent their exploit was regarded as a "cute trick." No body in the crowd noticed a dark figure standing silently on the front porch of a house next to the store.

When the boys had finished their story and the Cornerites had looked the "Queen" over admiringly, Oliver Bates, the son of the storekeeper, said: "Well, tie up and come in for a while, boys. You're cold—and in no great hurry, I suppose?"

Even Phil was a little dubious about doing this. Now that the first sparkle

of excitement was over, he began to feel slightly uneasy, and he felt it would be risky to leave Bonny Queen unguarded at the mercy of all the rag-tag and bob-tail of Sevenoaks who might be skulking around. Phil suddenly realized that if anything should happen to the animal it would be a serious case for Bert and him.

But Oliver coaxed, and the Cornerites sarcastically inquired if he was afraid they'd put the mare in their pockets if he left her, and the end of it all was that Phil and Bert hitched Bonny Queen to the post and went into the store, while the dark, quiet figure aforesaid still lingered in the shadow of Mr. Bates' front porch.

The boys did not mean to stay long; but there was much to hear and relate. Mr. Bates was genial, and the store warm; and finally Oliver treated the crowd to peanuts and candy all around, so that it was all of half an hour or more before Phil and Bert bethought themselves of Bonny Queen, standing blanketless in the frosty air after her hot drive.

"It's time we were off," whispered Bert, anxiously. "If we don't hurry, the doctor will be home before we are, and we'll get into trouble. Come on, Phil."

"All right," responded Phil, as he demolished his last peanut. "I'm ready. Now for a two-forty spin back to Ashbury."

Out into the sparkling moonlight went the noisy crowd.

Bonny Queen was gone!

Phil and Bert stared dazedly at the post, at first quite incapable of realizing what had happened. Then the horror of it broke upon them.

"Bert," gasped Phil, in a voice utterly unlike his own, "where—is—the horse?"

It was a question Bert could not answer, nor anyone else, apparently. There did not seem to be a soul in sight around the corner except the crowd who had come out of the store. But the horse and cutter had vanished, leaving not a trace behind.

"She must have got loose and started home," said Oliver Bates, consolingly. "No body would have dared to take her."

Phil and Bert were not so sure of this. They knew that there were several toughs in Sevenoaks who were capable of having done it. What in the world was to be done? They found out just then the worth of corner friendship. Their hail-fellows-well-met of the past half hour melted away as if by magic. They had no desire to be tangled up in any Ashbury scrape about Doctor Taylor's horse. Oliver Bates was almost the only one who stayed to advise the alarmed boys.

"The best thing you can do is to go straight home," he said, "and see if the mare has gone home. If not, you can get help to hunt her up. But I think you'll find her there."

Phil and Bert looked at each other miserably. A six miles' walk home was not a pleasant prospect, certainly; but that wasn't a circumstance to the disappearance of Bonny Queen. Perhaps, if you had searched Sevenoaks and Ashbury and Forest Hill and all the outlying and adjacent districts and villages, you might possibly have found two limper, cheaper, more thoroughly frightened boys than Phil Burgess and Bert Lawrence just about that time, but I doubt it.

In their hearts the boys did not believe that Bonny Queen could have got loose of her own accord; she had been too well tied for that. But some Cornerite or other might have loosened her for a trick, and she might have gone home. At any rate, as Oliver said, there was nothing to do but go and see; so they started.

Neither of them ever forgot that walk.

"You can call it only six miles from Sevenoaks Corner to Ashbury, if you like," said Phil to me afterwards, "but it was ten times six that night."

They were too disgusted and scared to talk it over. In grim silence they tramped along, filled with gloomy forebodings. They had plenty of time to see their "joke" in its true light, with all its alarming possibilities.

When they finally reached the Ashbury road it was half-past nine o'clock. They decided to go straight to Doctor Taylor's, and took a short cut across the fields thereto.

There was a light in the stable yard, and as the boys rounded the corner of the shed they saw a sight that made their hearts give one wild bound of relief and amazement.

Before the carriage house door Edgar Taylor was unharnessing a horse from a cutter; and by the light of the lantern Gordon Taylor held, both Bert and Phil recognized Bonny Queen.

The boys, standing in the shadow of the shed, had not been noticed by the Taylors; and in the calm night they heard plainly what Edgar was saying to his brother.

"Those two smart boys drove up just as I came out of the house. I knew the Queen at sight, and you'd better believe I wondered what on earth they were doing there with her. They didn't see me, and when their cronies came out I heard the whole story. At first I thought I'd march right out and face them; then I thought of a better way, since they seemed to be so fond of a joke. When they went in and left poor Bonny Queen tied there—in a reek of perspiration, too, mind you—I just waited till all was quiet, took off her bells, and drove away.

"I called down at Kerdy's for a while, and then came home. I'll bet a hat those chaps are feeling small enough to crawl through a knot-hole by now. It'll give them a jolly good scare, and they richly deserve it. They might have

ruined Queen, driving her like that. But, luckily, she hasn't a scratch."

"Are you going to tell father?" asked Gordon.

"Not just now," was the reply. "It would worry him. He wouldn't believe but what she was hurt. He'll hear the story in a few days, of course, but it will be all over then. But I'll give those two boys a piece of my mind when I see them that they won't forget in a hurry"—and Edgar led the mare into the stable.

Outside, Bert looked at Phil and Phil looked at Bert.

"You could buy me for a cent," said the former.

"I'd give myself away for nothing," said the latter. "Let's go home."

And home they went. They did not do much talking, but there is every reason to believe they did some hard thinking. When they parted at Bert's gate, Phil said:

"We're a pair of fools, Bert.

"That's a fact, Phil. The joke's dead against us this time. I don't feel as if I wanted to play any more."

Of course in a day or so the story drifted over from Sevenoaks, and Phil and Bert were chaffed unmercifully. But they kept very quiet, and when Edgar Taylor met them and proceeded to give the promised piece of his mind, they took it so humbly and repentantly that he did not come down on them half as heavily as he had intended.

In due time the tale reached the doctor's ears, and horrified him not a little. But, as it was all well over, he said nothing, rightly deeming that the boys had been already well punished.

And they had. The "stopper" had been applied, with good results. Bert and Phil gave up playing jokes, and turned their attention to the cultivation of good behavior, which was the more easily done in that their visits to Sevenoaks Corner were cut short at once and forever. They never dared go there again, for the Cornerites would have tormented their lives out.

As Phil said, "Single jokes are funny enough, but when it comes to double ones, you don't appreciate the point quite so cheerfully."

A Country Boy

First published *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, January 8, 1898.

That's just what I am, sir—a country boy—
And mine is a life that is full of joy.
The city is jolly enough to see,
But the country, sir, is the place for me.

Dull, you call it? I think you'd find
Life on the farm would change your mind.
I've time for sport when my chores are done,
And the fun you've worked for is real fun.

It's jolly to skate on winter nights,
When the sky is agleam with Northern lights!
Talk of your rinks—but the pond below
Grandfather's barn is the place to go.

The coasting over on Red Spruce Hill
Can't be beaten, say what you will:
And a snowshoe tramp when the moon is out
Is the best thing going, beyond a doubt.

In summer I fish and swim and ride,
And roam at will in woodlands wide:
Hunt for berries in long, clear days,
Or go a-nutting in beechen ways.

I'm friends with beetles and birds and bees,
With meadow blossoms and forest trees,
And I know the secrets of shy green nooks—
A knowledge you never can learn of books.

The cows all know me, the horses neigh
For pleasure whenever we pass that way:
And as for old Rover, whate'er I do,
Isn't half the fun if he's not there, too.

I'm as happy and glad as a boy can be,
And I know that this is the place for me.
The world may be wide and the city gay,
But the farm is just where I mean to stay.

Relatives

Uncle Dick's Little Girl

First published *American Agriculturist Weekly*, August 15, 1903.

Uncle Dick reached up to the apple tree above him, and pulled a long, sinuous bough, picked out with delicate, rose-hearted bloom, down to him, with a caressing motion. Through the little gap thus made in the big pyramid of blossom was seen a far-away glimpse of the harbor on the western side of the Four Winds peninsula. The sun had lately set, and the harbor was like a great ruby cup filled with fire and glamor. On the other side of the orchard long fields, fresh with the tinting of early spring, sloped down to the shore of the open Atlantic, long and white, where a calm ocean slept bluely and sighed in its sleep with the murmur that rings forever in the ears of those whose good fortune it is to have been born within sound of it. Back landward were the wooded pine hills where the twilight was already hanging thickly and would presently overflow and trickle down on the lowland homesteads and orchards of Four Winds. But the harbor glow would linger long, and it was always a sight worth seeing when the great stars came out in the clear-swept arch of sky above it, like jewels in some huge, overturned crystal flagon of night.

"When these blossoms have given place to fruit, I'll have my little girl with me again," said Uncle Dick tenderly.

He looked through the boughs to the harbor, and his gentle brown eyes filled with a light that was not of the sunset or the lustrous water. The smile that came to the sensitive lips, veiled in the sweep of a silken, silver-sprinkled brown beard, told that Uncle Dick's thought was a very pleasant one.

Two of his listeners smiled at each other—the tolerant, significant smile which expresses our slightly amused recognition of some harmless fallacy in our friends.

"Do you really expect that she'll come back to Four Winds after all these years, Uncle Dick, and her such a great lady now?" said Martin Baker, perhaps thinking it wise to soften any blow the near future might have in store for this Uncle Dick, whom everybody in Four Winds loved, even those who, safe in their hard shell of protective common sense, laughed in a not unkindly fashion at his dreamy fancies and odd ways.

Uncle Dick released the apple bough and it swung back to its place with a gush of perfume that flooded the cool air like a wave.

"I know she will come," he said calmly. "Bertha Lawrence never forgot or broke a promise in her life. The years will have made no difference in her in that, at least."

"Even so," said Christopher Merriam, "ain't you afraid that she won't be happy or contented here, Uncle Dick? Seven years makes a good deal of difference in folks—'specially seven such years as she has spent, living with rich people and traveling abroad and all that."

Uncle Dick looked at the last speaker tolerantly. A humorous sparkle replaced the musing light in his eyes and his smile was half quizzical.

"I don't think you need be worrying over that, Christopher. I'm not. None of you really know my little girl, although she lived among you 14 years."

He spoke in a tone of quiet confidence. Merriam and Martin, after a few more casual remarks, strolled away, and Uncle Dick was left with Philip Armory, the young minister of Four Winds church, whose manse was just across the road from Uncle Dick's place, and who had fallen into the habit of straying over often to talk with this high-souled, simple-minded old man, with the eternal youth in his eyes and heart.

Mr Armory was sitting on the stone wall under the huge apple tree. When the other men had gone, his blue eyes met Uncle Dick's brown ones with quiet comprehension.

"They're laughing at me, those two," said Uncle Dick with a smile. "They're thinking now, and most likely saying, 'What a fool that old Dick Romney is over his little girl! She'll never come back.' But I don't blame them. They just don't know her, that's all, they just don't know her."

He came over and leaned against the mossy stones. The twilight was thick about them now, and the apple blossoms were dizzily sweet in the dew.

"I don't know her, either," said Philip Armory gently, "but I think she will come back to you."

Uncle Dick nodded.

"Folks think I'm foolish because I talk so much about my little girl. I don't talk half as much about her as I think. I'm thinking of her always—have been ever since she went away seven years ago. She's been in my heart all the time, and I've been in hers! Don't I know? What does it matter that she doesn't write very often, or speak of coming back when she does write? I know she'll come. She'll keep her promise, and keep it gladly, too. If I didn't know that I wouldn't want her to keep it at all."

"How was it she came to leave you?" asked Armory. "I don't think I've ever heard the rights of the story."

"I had a sister once," said Uncle Dick gently. "She was beautiful and good. She married a fine fellow, too, but he took her away from us. He died soon after Bertha was born, and my sister came home here and died, also, of grief. She gave her baby to me with her latest breath. That can't never be undone. Bertha was her mother's gift to me—to me. There's nobody has a right before that. But her father's will had left her under the guardianship of his own

people. They wanted to take her away at once, but I pleaded hard for her, and they agreed to leave her with me till she was 14. Then they took her away. It most broke her little heart. When she went away she took my hand in both of hers in a way she had, and she looked up at me with her whole lovely, pure soul shining out of her great eyes, and she said: 'Uncle Dick, as soon as I am 21 I'll come back to you.' I've never seen her since. They won't even let her write me often. But I am content. Bertha will be 21 in September, and she will come to me then."

Perhaps a shade of doubt showed itself on the younger man's face. Uncle Dick detected it, and laughed in his low, gentle fashion.

"You don't feel so sure? You've heard of her cleverness and her beauty, and what they call her social triumphs? Yes, yes, but you'll see! They'll all see."

As Philip Armory walked home through the purple, softly-scented dusk he recalled all he had heard of Bertha Lawrence. The thought of her had been curiously interwoven with his life and dreams since he had come to Four Winds a year ago. He believed in her, but not quite with Uncle Dick's entire faith. She would come back, but would she be soul-free? Would the life here satisfy her now? Between the child of 14, knowing no home save Uncle Dick's gray old cottage, and the woman of 21, who had spent her seven formative years amid all that wealth and culture can give, what unbridgeable gulf might not yawn?

"I hope there is no disappointment in store for Uncle Dick," thought Armory tenderly. "I have never met a purer, sweeter soul."

As the summer waned Uncle Dick talked less about his little girl than was his wont. His Four Winds neighbors said that he was growing doubtful himself, but Philip Armory knew better. He knew how Uncle Dick was counting the slow-passing days, and his heart was troubled with the fear that there was some sorrow in store for the sweet old man.

"She will not come—or, coming, will be changed," was his unuttered doubt.

But Uncle Dick remained untroubled. His eyes were always tranquil and happy when he spoke of her, as he often did to Philip.

"Merriam was here to-day, Mr Armory. He said he s'posed I'd soon be fixing up the house and getting ready for Bertha. I said no. She would find it as she left it, and it would satisfy her. The Four Winds folks laugh at me and I laugh at them. I know her; they don't you see. That makes all the difference."

A great, although quiet, change had come over Uncle Dick in those purple-hearted days of the late summer. He went about humming scraps of old-time songs, his step was lighter, his deep, kindly voice had a new and richer note of tenderness. He liked to linger in his orchard at twilight and dream of his little

girl. Armory, who often walked there with him, forebore by word or motion to interrupt his charmed reveries. He walked beside him, suiting his younger, stronger step to the old man's. Sometimes Uncle Dick patted his friend's arm and laughed softly. "What a nuisance the old man is, isn't he?" he asked whimsically. "Old dreamer! But, ah, you don't know my little girl, Mr Armory."

"I hope you will know her," he said again; "not as her fashionable world knows her—nor yet as these well-meaning, stupid Four Winds folks know her, but as I know her, in all of her beautiful woman's soul and her noble, loyal little heart. She will be worth knowing. Her mother was a queen among women."

One evening Uncle Dick came to meet Armory with an almost boyish lightness of step; in his eyes was a glow and brightness. He held a letter in his hand.

"Writ on her 21st birthday," he exclaimed. "She will be here in a week's time. God bless her!"

On a September day, when Four Winds in its ripely tinted breadth and length lay basking in the mellow autumn sunshine that spilled over the brim of the valley, through the grim old pines, down to the harbor, cupped in its harvest-golden hills, Bertha Lawrence came home. All Four Winds knew it by night. Philip Armory did not make his customary evening call on Uncle Dick. For one thing, he feared to intrude on the sacredness of this reunion; for another, he was still troubled by the thought that he might see something besides gladness in his old friend's eyes—some perplexed shade of doubt or fear, some token that his dream lacked perfect fulfilment.

But when he went over the next evening he understood that his fear had been needless. Uncle Dick had been right—he, and only he, had thoroughly known his little girl.

They were in the orchard, those two, among the bronzing leaves and hanging boughs bent earthward by their mellow burden. They came to meet him slowly, through a long avenue of fruition with an arch of primrose sky at its seaward end.

Uncle Dick's face was an open book written over with unmarred triumph and happiness. Armory was quick to see that there was no shadow in the old man's eyes, and equally quick to realize that, as far as the girl at his side was concerned, there never would be. Bertha Lawrence had come to her own.

She was very lovely—lovelier than even rumor had painted her—this tall, graceful girl, with the dark, finely-poised head and the clear, untroubled gray eyes. Apart from her loveliness she had the distinctive charm, feminized and subtlized, that Armory had come to associate with Uncle Dick.

She held out her hand with a gesture of fine, frank friendship.

“This is my little girl,” said Uncle Dick, proudly.

“You have justified his faith in you,” said Armory to her with a smile.

“Anyone in whom Uncle Dick believed would do that,” she answered. “His faith is of that rare kind which carries its own fulfilment.”

She turned and held out her hands to Uncle Dick with a sudden, girlish delight that broke through her womanly calm like a gleam of sunlight rippling over a placid sea.

“Oh, how happy I am!” she said. “Everything here is so dear—and you, Uncle Dick, are the dearest of all.”

Uncle Dick took her hands softly in his own.

“My little girl!” he murmured tenderly.

Armory turned away his head, as if from some glimpse of soul communion too holy to be desecrated by stranger eyes. But on his face was the light of one who sees a great glory widening and deepening down the vista of his future.

Aunt Rose's Girl

A Story of Commencement Days

First published *New England Homestead*, June 18, 1904.

Aunt Rose loosened her faded hat strings—They had served as hair ribbons for Ida two summers ago—and leaned wearily back in her creaky rocker. The walk to the store had been a long one and she was warm and tired.

"Deary me," she said, patting the parcel in her capacious print lap tenderly, "I'm all het up."

Belle Gamble gave a little scornful sniff as she looked at the parcel. She was Aunt Rose's cousin by marriage and lived across the road from her. She had seen Aunt Rose coming over the bridge and had hurried in, agog with curiosity to find out what had taken her to the village on such a day. Belle had her own suspicious that Aunt Rose was up to some more foolishness about Ida, and, if it were so, Belle had made up her mind to speak out plainly to her. She was a tall, fair, slatternly woman with a general air of shrewishness about her. Secretly, Aunt Rose disliked her, and when Aunt Rose disliked anyone there was always good reason for it.

"No wonder," said Belle sharply. " 'Tain't a fit day for you to walk to the store. Whatever took you?"

"Oh, I went cross lots and took it easy," said Aunt Rose. "It don't hurt me a mite to get a leetle warm. It's just 'cause I'm so big and fat. Don't you ever get big and fat, Belle; to be sure, you don't look much like it now. Besides," she went on, "I had to go to the store to-day. I couldn't put it oft any longer—I had to get Ida's dress for her commencement. I'd orter gone last week, but my rheumatiz took holt on me. Anyhow, I made it out to-day. Abner Colwell had some real handsome organdies in, and I picked the purtiest one, far's I could see. My girl shall have the best."

Belle smiled sourly as Aunt Rose untied the parcel, and she frowned darkly at the dainty contents thereof—a cream-tinted organdy with a pale pink blossom spray in it. Aunt Rose held it up proudly.

"Like it, Belle?"

"I guess it'll be good enough for Ida—if she'll think so," was Belle's sarcastic rejoinder.

"I was always partial to pink," said Aunt Rose, admiring the pattern and ignoring Belle's slur, "and it suits Ida. Them dark eyes and curls of hers become pink now, I tell you. I got lots o' lace and ribbing to trim it with, too—see. And Lucy Manning's coming to-morrow morning to make it up. Won't

Ida be tickled when she gets it? I didn't lay out to be able to manage it last time she was home, and she thought she'd have to wear her old white muslin f'r commencement. She felt real bad about it, but not a mite worse'n I did. I was more'n thankful when old Mis' Wyand had that extra weaving for me. It just paid f'r the dress. I think I can see my dearie girl up on the platform along o' all them other girls and looking the sweetest of them all."

"Are you going in to see her graduate?" asked Belle, mentally calculating the cost of the dress.

Aunt Rose gurgled with enjoyment. "Goodness, yes. I couldn't let my girl graduate without being there to see, could I, now?"

"D'ye think she'll want to see you?" said Belle, maliciously.

Aunt Rose opened her big brown eyes in mild surprise at Belle's acrid tone.

"Why, of course," she answered.

"Well, I don't then," said Belle, shortly. "What's more, I'm sure she won't, and anybody but you would have eyes to see it, Aunt Rose, but you was always so ridiculous fond and proud of Ida, you couldn't never see her faults, plain as they were to other folks. Ida'll be ashamed of you if you go to see her graduate. She won't want to own you among all her fine friends."

"I don't believe it," cried Aunt Rose in distress.

"Well, it's true. Why, when any of us goes to town and meets her on the street she'll hardly as much as nod to us. Last time she was walking with two stylish girls and she pretended she didn't see me at all. She's a pert, stuck-up thing."

"She isn't," said Aunt Rose, as indignantly as Aunt Rose could speak, "and she really didn't see you that time—she told me so. As f'r her being cool to you-uns, I don't wonder at that. You never was nice to her, none on you."

"You'll see. You've just spoiled Ida, Aunt Rose, ever since you took her out of the asylum—slaving and toiling to dress her better than need be, and educating her to look down on you. She's ashamed of you, that's what she is, and you'll find it out when you go to commencement."

"I don't believe Ida is ashamed of me," said Aunt Rose, with tears in her eyes.

"Oh, very well. When she was home last summer wasn't she always trying to fix you up stylish and get you to stop wearing that old brown hat? Tell me that, Aunt Rose."

"It was because she was fond of me and wanted me to look nice," sobbed Aunt Rose. "I'm such a homely old thing."

"Has she ever asked you to go and see her graduate?" demanded Belle.

"No-o, she hain't," admitted Aunt Rose falteringly. "But," she added, brightening up, "she knew there wan't no need. Why, it's always been

understood. Long ago, 'fore she ever went to the academy at all, we used to talk it over. 'Won't you be proud of me when you come to Linden to see me graduate, Aunt Rose?' she would say."

"That was before she went to town and got in with fine folks," persisted Belle. "Oh, I don't say she won't recognize you. But she'll be ashamed of you, all the same. She's a regular little minx."

"You needn't say anything more about Ida, Belle," said Aunt Rose, firing up at last. "You never liked her, none of you. Good reason why—she was always too purty and smart and I reckon you-uns were all jealous of her. You couldn't any of you be a valedictorian, I cal'clate. If Ida's proud she's got something to be proud of. I ain't a mite afeared she'll be ashamed of me—not a mite."

Aunt Rose sat erect and hurled her challenge at Belle as defiantly as if she believed it whole-heartedly. But after Belle had flounced off, Aunt Rose's spirit failed her. Belle's shafts had struck home. It had never occurred to Aunt Rose that Ida could be ashamed of her, but now she wondered that she had not thought of it herself. Her kind old heart was full of the poison instilled by a jealous woman. She rocked back and forth in her chair miserably, and the tears fell unheeded over her cheeks.

"Ashamed of me? Perhaps she is, perhaps she is," she said aloud in a trembling voice. " 'Twouldn't be any wonder, nuther. I'm a queer-looking old critter and I talk as queer as I look. But I never thought on it before. I wouldn't disgrace Ida afore her fine friends for the world, but it don't seem as if I could give up going to see my girl graduate—and her valedictorian, the purty dear."

Aunt Rose Porter had taken a little girl from the orphan asylum 11 years ago. People wondered over it, saying that she had hard enough work to earn a living for one, let alone two. They wondered still more and heartily disapproved when they saw how the girl was brought up—"never let do any work, but just dressed like a doll and kept at school," they said. "Aunt Rose Porter is a foolish woman."

But Aunt Rose did not worry over what other people thought. She loved Ida with passionate tenderness, and it was her happiness to work hard that the child might have all she wanted. The two had been very happy in the little riverside house, with the tangle of honeysuckle and creeper over the porch and the thicket of sweetbriar beside it.

When Ida shot up into slim, dimpled, pink-and-white girlhood, Aunt Rose sent her to the Linden academy for two years to fit her for a teacher. It cost the old woman more than anyone ever knew of planning and skimping and hard work to do it, but it was done and well done. Ida had lacked for nothing, although Aunt Rose had dressed in patched and faded clothes and lived on the poorest food for two years to manage it. And this one thing she had looked

forward to as her reward—to see Ida graduate. It would repay her for everything.

And now Belle had spoiled it all. Everything seemed to have gone out of life for Aunt Rose. Ida was ashamed of her; the girl she had loved and toiled and sacrificed for was lost to her forever. Yet she would not glance at a thought of blame for Ida.

"It ain't any wonder," she reflected, over and over again, as she helped Lucy Manning sew the lace on yards and yards of foamy ruffles for Ida's dress. "But oh, dear, I wish I hadn't found it out. I wish Belle had held her tongue. I dunno what to do. I feel as if 'twould kill me to give up going to see her graduate, but I don't want to disgrace her or make her feel bad, the poor dearie."

When the dress was finished, Aunt Rose sent it to town by a neighborly chance. She pinned a little envelope among its dainty folds; there was a two-dollar bill in it for Ida to get her commencement bouquet. Aunt Rose had intended to take her a bunch of the big pink roses from the bush at the gate, as they had once planned long ago, but those roses were funny, fat, old-fashioned things, and perhaps Ida wouldn't like them.

Ida sent back a little verbal message of thanks by the neighbor. She was delighted with her dress, but too busy with exams to write, she said. The academy examinations were over, but those of the students who intended to teach were taking the normal school examinations for teachers' certificates. Ida said nothing about Aunt Rose going in to see her graduate, and the older woman's heart felt an added bitterness. She had been secretly hoping all along that Ida would specially mention her coming after all.

"But I must see her graduate," Aunt Rose told herself that night in her forlorn solitude—forlorn now, since it was stripped of all the pleasant hopes and anticipations which had once peopled it for her. "I'll put on my old black veil and sit way back and never go near her. Then she won't have to speak to me before folks, and nobody'll know. I just must see her."

On commencement day Aunt Rose dressed herself for her 12-mile drive to town. She looked at herself in the glass with great dissatisfaction. Her black dress had been turned and pressed so often that it was very shabby, indeed. Her little straw bonnet looked flatter and dowdier than it had ever looked before, and the fingers of her only pair of kid gloves were worn quite white.

"I didn't know I looked so shabby," said Aunt Rose with a sigh. "I never took thought on't before. I must look awful queer to Ida and no mistake. 'Tain't only the clothes, nuther. I'm so big and ornary-looking, with my fat red cheeks. If I was only thin and genteel-looking, like old Mis' Seaman down the river, it wouldn't be so bad. I feel heart-broken and and I look 'sif I was laughing at everything and everybody. There ain't a mite of pleasure in the day

for me, not a mite. And I've looked forward to it for two years!"

Some very bitter tears welled up into Aunt Rose's brown eyes as she tied the rusty old black veil over her face.

She had hired Henry Martin's horse and buggy to drive to Linden. Once she had planned to go early in the morning, hunt up Ida at her boarding house and go with her to the academy, but she would not have done that for the world now. She would not disgrace her girl. She drove to town after her early dinner, and put her horse up at Henry Martin's brother, then she toddled forlornly down to the academy and crept into a seat at the far end of the assembly room.

The room was already quite full. Aunt Rose noticed what a stylish audience it was and how well the women were dressed. In front of her a big, handsome woman, with purple violets in her bonnet and a black lace scarf across her shoulders, was talking to a friend beside her. She had come to town to see her niece graduate, and Aunt Rose, listening, discovered that the niece was Jennie Stirling, Ida's most intimate friend. Oh, no wonder Ida would be ashamed of poor old Aunt Rose Porter, who wove and scrubbed for a living and never had a bonnet with violets in it in her life.

Aunt Rose put up her fat, brown hand and furtively wiped away some tears.

"Wisht I c'd stop crying," she thought in disgust. "Wisht I'd stayed home —no. I don't nuther. But oh, ain't it hard!"

Then the doors on either side of the platform opened and in marched the graduates, the boys on one side and the girls on the other, and took their seats. Aunt Rose looked with a swelling heart for Ida. Yes, there she was, in the front row of chairs, wearing the organdy dress. It became her bright young beauty deliciously. One glance was enough to convince Aunt Rose that her girl was as well dressed as any there, and a little thrill of triumph swept over her in spite of her heartbreak.

"How purty and sweet my dearie girl looks," she thought. "She is the purtiest girl of them all, bless her. What's she looking over the folks so anxious for? 'Pears she's hunting for someone. Can't be me. My goodness, if she ain't coming down here!"

That was just what Ida was doing. After her entrance she had looked longingly over the gay audience; then her eyes had fallen on the homely figure away back by the door. In spite of the screening veil, she knew Aunt Rose at once, and her pretty face brightened with delight. She gave a little impulsive spring from her chair, tripped down the platform steps and hurried down the aisle. The next moment Aunt Rose felt a pair of lace-ruffled arms about her; there was a warm kiss on her cheek over the black veil, and Ida was whispering to her, "Aunt Rose, you old darling, where have you been? I was looking for you all the morning and I didn't know what to make of it when you

didn't come. I was so worried for fear you were sick or something. What have you got on that horrid veil for? Do take it off—I'm starving for a good look at your beloved face. Oh, I've been so busy—there now—oh, you lovely aunty, it's good to see you again! But you mustn't stay back here. You won't be able to see or hear half. Come—there's a good seat up front. Let me take you to it. Oh, you must hurry, dear, for I must get back to my place."

Aunt Rose was really too bewildered to protest. Before she knew it Ida had whisked her up to the front seat, pinned a big rose on her dress and was back on the platform, smiling at her.

The opening numbers on the program Aunt Rose just didn't hear at all. She was too happy for anything beyond simple, blissful existence. Ida wasn't ashamed of her, after all—not a bit of it. Why, she had sought her out before all those fine folks!

"My own dearie girl!" murmured Aunt Rose. "Oh, if that Belle could just have seen her!"

When Ida came out to read her valedictory, Aunt Rose fairly glowed with radiant pride, especially when her girl gave a chummy little nod at her before beginning to read. It was pretty much like any other valedictory, but Aunt Rose thought it the most wonderful piece of literature ever penned.

That commencement was the golden hour of Aunt Rose's life. When Ida stepped forward to receive the governor's gold medal for general class proficiency, Aunt Rose fairly sobbed with joy. A lady beside her, rich in silvery gray silk and a tulle bonnet, looked at her with a smile.

"It makes us old folks feel young again to see our little girls doing so well, doesn't it?" she whispered in a friendly tone. "I've one up there myself. But yours has carried off the highest honors. She is so sweet and pretty, too. You may well be proud of her."

"I am," whispered Aunt Rose back. "Bless her, she is just the girl to be proud of, ma'am."

When all was over, Ida came flying down to Aunt Rose again, her eyes dancing and her cheeks crimson with delight and excitement.

"Oh, Aunt Rose," she cried, "I've a thousand things to tell you. This dress—oh, it was so sweet of you to send it. I know it cost you too much, but I'll make it up to you when I go teaching. And you didn't bring me any roses! I was so disappointed. I wanted to carry those dear old pink roses of ours. I didn't spend your two dollars for flowers—no, indeed! Jennie gave me some of hers. But come, come—oh, Mrs Stirling, how do you do? This is Miss Porter, my Aunt Rose; you've heard me speak of her. Jennie is looking for you, Mrs Stirling. We six girls who've been such chums are giving a little luncheon to our mothers and aunts. It's in Jennie's room across the street, and hurry up, for I'm awfully hungry. Come, Aunt Rose, darling."

They had a gay, delightful little lunch in Jennie Stirling's pretty room. Aunt Rose was the only shabby person present, but nobody minded that a bit and neither did she. Mrs Stirling praised Ida to her, and the lady in the tulle bonnet, who turned out to be the mayor's wife, ate from the same plate as did Aunt Rose, for by some mischance the girls did not have plates enough to go round.

But after all, the best time for Aunt Rose was when she and Ida drove home together through the sweet, dewy, summer dusk, and the girl, with her head on the motherly shoulder, poured out the story of all her triumphs and plans and hopes. When they turned in at the little gate among the roses, Ida gave Aunt Rose's arm a squeeze.

"Oh, it's good to be home again with you, aunty. There's nobody like you. I was just sick with disappointment this morning when you didn't come. By the way, what prevented you?"

"Oh, I couldn't get away any earlier, dearie," said Aunt Rose; she was very much afraid that this was a fib, but she would have died before she told Ida the real reason.

"My dearie girl! She mustn't ever know I doubted her," Aunt Rose said to herself as she took Henry Martin's horse and buggy home. "My dearie girl!"

Margaret Ann's Mother

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Illustrated by Robert A. Graef

adge Hamlin and Howard Sherman came down the long, elm-shaded street together. It was a holiday and they had been celebrating it by a stroll in the park and a look at the bicycle races. Miss Hamlin was sub-editor of the *Ladies' Banner* and was as clever and charming as she was handsome. Howard Sherman was clever, too, if he was not exactly handsome. He was the junior member of a law firm and was known to be well on the way to fame and fortune; consequently, he was much sought after by mamas with eligible daughters. At present he and Miss Hamlin were excellent friends; their fellow-boarders at Mrs. DeHaven's would have unanimously declared that they would soon be something more.

The other boarders were loitering about the porch of Hillside Hall as Miss Hamlin and her escort turned in at the gate. There were Ned Mitchell, the government clerk whom everybody liked, and Fred Owen, whom nobody liked. Then there was Mrs. Austin, the pretty plaintive widow, who had thorns beneath her roses and who didn't like Miss Hamlin, and, lastly, there was foolish, frivolous Nellie Stirling, who was not too foolish to be spiteful nor too frivolous to be malicious and who cordially envied Miss Hamlin.

Miss Hamlin paused on the porch. The group had been laughing, and Ned Mitchell was looking roguish, which was circumstantial evidence that he had been mimicking somebody.

"Oh, Miss Hamlin," said Nellie Stirling, "there's the funniest old body up in the parlor. You should see her. I'm certain her bonnet came out of the ark, and she has a huge carpet-bag beside her. Ned struck up a conversation with her, and he says it was very amusing."

"She isn't a bad old soul, you know," put in Mitchell. "Good and motherly and all that. But her grammar—and her accent! She is shrewd, though—wouldn't give away her name or business. But I fancy the maid made a mistake in showing her into the parlor. Probably she came to call on the cook."

Miss Hamlin had listened indifferently.

"Possibly some country relation of Mrs. DeHaven's," she suggested.

"If so, I should say the poor old soul didn't get a very gushing reception.

She has been sitting there for two hours and looks tired to death."

Miss Hamlin passed on into the library. Mrs. DeHaven met her, looking rather flurried.

"Miss Hamlin," she said, "your mother is here. She came after you went out and said she would wait. She is up in my parlor—I asked her to take off her things, but she said she would rather not until you came."

Miss Hamlin had turned crimson and then pale, but she only said, "Thank you, Mrs. DeHaven," and went swiftly upstairs. But not to the parlor. Instead, she fled up a second flight to her own room, shut the door and sat down on her bed. In the mirror before her she saw herself reflected—handsome, graceful, well gowned. And she saw plainly enough, also, the figure in the parlor below—short and dumpy and bent, in the old scant, ill-fitting alpaca dress, the faded shawl and ancient bonnet—with bony hands and wrinkled face—her mother.

How Mrs. Austin and Miss Stirling would sneer! How Fred Owen would stare with unconcealed and supercilious disgust! And Howard Sherman, the fastidious and critical, what would he think of her mother? Well, he would not forget that he was a gentleman, he would not act as the others would. But he would quietly cease his attentions to her and look elsewhere for a mother-in-law.

Suddenly she got up with a determined face. "I won't do it," she said aloud. "It would spoil everything. I'll go down and put the whole case frankly before mother. She'll see how things are and she'll be quite willing to go quietly away to some nice boarding-house for the night."

She took a step toward the door and then paused. What was it she was going to do? Was she actually ashamed of the dear old mother to whom she owed so much?

She turned again and went over to the window. Pushing aside the lace draperies, she looked out on the maple boughs and over them down the vista of misty blue streets. She had not always been Miss Hamlin, B. A., sub-editor of the *Ladies' Banner*. It was not so very long, as years go, since she had been a little girl in print dresses and sunbonnets, living with her widowed mother out among the country hills, in the little brown house hidden by apple-trees. They had been poor, and life was a hard struggle for her mother, who managed the little farm and strove to shield her daughter from the hardships she herself had known. But they had been very happy there. Then, when she had grown into a big girl, clever and ambitious, she had gone away to school and after that to college. The little mother had worked and pinched and planned at home, denying herself all luxuries and even comforts for the sake of her daughter.

Madge Hamlin had not been ungrateful, nor was she idle. In vacation she taught school, and at college earned some money by her pen, in addition to the scholarships she had taken.

When Miss Hamlin got her position on the staff of the *Banner* she did not forget her mother. She wanted her to come and live with her in town. But Mrs. Hamlin said she would not be contented there and preferred to keep to her farm. So every summer Madge went home to spend her vacation in the old village among the friends of her girlhood.

"If mother had spent on herself all that she spent on me," said the girl, "she would not be so queer and old looking now—and I wouldn't be where I am. I ought to be proud of her—and I *am* proud of her. She is the best and dearest mother ever a girl had. I wonder if those people down there would do one tenth as much for me as my mother has done."

She went down to the parlor contritely. At the door she paused unseen, looking at the shabby, dusty little woman, sitting forlornly at the further end, and so oddly out of place in the fashionable apartment. She ran forward. "Mother dear," she cried.

"Oh, Marg'ret Ann!" The old woman rose eagerly. Her face brightened at the girl's warm greeting. "So you're glad to see me, Marg'ret Ann?"

"Oh, yes, mother. I am so sorry I was out. Why didn't you let me know you were coming?"

"I didn't know myself till this morning. I'd been kinder hankering to see you for ever so long. I hain't been awful well lately and I missed you awful. I just felt as if I *must* come up and see you."

"That was right. How tired you look—and dusty. Why didn't you ask Mrs. DeHaven to take you right to my room? You could have had a bath and a nap."

"She ran forward. 'Mother dear,' she cried"

The old woman hesitated. "Well, Marg'ret Ann—I didn't know—someway —I kinder felt lost here. I didn't expect such a stylish place. The folks all seemed so tony—and everything so dreadful high class—it just come over me that you mightn't want a queer, awkward old body like me coming in among

your fine friends. So I thought I'd just wait here and see what you said, and if you thought I'd better go somewhere else and not disgrace you."

"Oh, mother," said the daughter with a pang of self-reproach, "no, indeed, I am not ashamed of you. Don't I owe everything to you?"

"I didn't think you'd be. But I didn't want to do anything that'd injure you, Marg'ret Ann."

"You must come to my room now, mother," she said gently. "You'll have time to bathe your face before dinner and I'll brush your hair. You must be very tired."

With a sigh of relief, Mrs. Hamlin sank into a rocker in her daughter's room and looked about her with a keen, appreciative eye.

"This is an elegant room of yours, Marg'ret Ann—not much like that little old one of yours out home, 'way up under the eaves, is it?"

"No, mother. And yet, do you know, I love that little old room out home far better than this one. And sometimes—very often—I just long to fly back there and be your own little girl again, to have you sing me to sleep and hear the poplar-leaves rustling outside."

Mrs. Hamlin patted the hand lying on her shoulder.

"It's just the same as when you left it, Marg'ret Ann. I'd never have a thing changed. All your little pictures and traps are there, and your old chair. When I get lonesome, I go and sit there and fancy I kin see you a-setting there, reading or writing as you used to do."

"Come, mother, it's dinner-time—you know dinner at night is the custom here."

All feeling save love and tenderness had vanished from the girl's heart. She drew the bony, knotted hand through her arm and led Mrs. Hamlin down to the drawing-room. There was a decided glitter in her eyes and an unmistakable ring in her voice as she said, "Mrs. DeHaven, this is my mother."

Mrs. DeHaven rose to the situation like the true lady she was. Mrs. Austin smiled and said sweetly, "*So* glad to meet our dear Miss Hamlin's mother." Nellie Stirling giggled audibly and Fred Owen stared superciliously. Ned Mitchell shook hands with boyish heartiness, and Mr. Sherman, in the background, bowed in grave silence. Miss Hamlin felt relieved when dinner was announced.

Mrs. Hamlin was at first too overcome by the splendor of the table appointments and the variety of the courses to talk, but this soon wore off. She had a good deal of the assertiveness that belonged in a refined way to her daughter, and possessed the same faculty of making herself at home in all circumstances.

She talked wholly to her daughter about the folks at home and the various interests of her farm and dairy.

Mrs. Austin listened with a covert smile and occasionally shrugged her shoulders at Ned Mitchell. But Howard Sherman maintained an unbroken silence. When dinner was finally over, she took her mother to her room again.

"Now, mother dear," she said, slipping down on a cushion at her mother's feet, "let me lay my head in your lap and play I'm your little girl again."

The older woman passed her toil-worn hand caressingly up and down the bright waves of auburn hair. "I'm so sorry, mother," said Miss Hamlin after a while, "but I'll have to leave you alone for an hour or so. I must go up to the office. The issue goes to press to-morrow. You won't mind, will you?"

"Bless you, dearie, of course I won't mind. I wouldn't want you to neglect anything. I'll go down to the parlor and chat with some of the folks. That yellow-haired young chap seemed real nice and sociable to-day."

Silence fell between them for a few minutes. A sense of rest and tender protection filled Madge Hamlin's heart as she sat with her head in her mother's lap. There was nothing so dear as a mother. She reached up and pulled the hard hands down to her lips.

"There's nothing so good and true as your love, after all, mother. I wish I could see you oftener. I'm afraid I'm growing hard and selfish."

It was nine o'clock when Miss Hamlin came down from the *Banner* office. She had been detained longer than she had expected. A fine mist was falling; the streets were wet and slippery. It was not often she had to stay late, and when it was necessary, Howard Sherman was always on hand to see her home. He was not there to-night.

"If he is so easily frightened away as that, perhaps it is just as well he should be," she said to herself.

Miss Hamlin paused in the hall to remove her rubbers. Out through the door floated Nellie Stirling's voice.

"Did you ever in your lives see anything so funny as old Mother Bunch?"

"I fancy our beloved Marg'ret Ann won't hold her head quite so high after this," laughed Mrs. Austin. "Yet she actually seemed proud of the old lady."

Miss Hamlin fled to the library.

She pushed open the door and there sat her mother and Mr. Sherman. The latter rose.

"I was sorry I could not bring you home this evening," he said, "but I have been trying to entertain your mother. She was rather lonely in your absence."

"That's a real nice young man, Marg'ret Ann," said Mrs. Hamlin confidentially when they got upstairs. "I like him real well. Is he your beau, Marg'ret Ann?"

"Dear me, no, mother—at least—I don't know—"

"Mebbe you don't, but I have my guesses, child."

Mrs. Hamlin decided to go home next morning on the early train. Mr.

Sherman and Madge went to the train to see her off. When it had rumbled out, they walked down the cool street and out under the elms, where Mr. Sherman asked his companion a certain question. But it was not until long afterward that he told her how he came to.

"Do you remember the day your mother came to Hillside Hall? I heard what the others said. I wanted to see what you would do. When you brought her down so proudly, I knew then that you were loyal and true."

"And what if I had failed you?" asked his wife.

"Then—then—I am afraid I should never have asked that question under the elms."

Uncle Chatterton's Gingerbread

First published *Housewife*, March 1912.

This time it was the gingerbread. Uncle Chatterton had to find fault with something. It was a matter of principle with him. If ever the day passed whose low descending sun failed to set upon some adverse comment of Uncle Chatterton's concerning his bill of fare, Aunt Chatterton put a kettleful of water on the stove before she went to bed, in the firm belief that it and a doctor would be needed before morning.

"This gingerbread," said Uncle Chatterton, "is not fit for the pigs."

The rest of us had eaten our squares of it without finding this out. It was very good gingerbread—not quite up to Aunt Chatterton's mark perhaps, but still, very fair average gingerbread.

Georgiana looked indignant, but Aunt Chatterton's brow cleared. Uncle Chatterton had not grumbled at anything during breakfast or dinner. It was a relief to her when he began at last.

"It is a little coarse-grained," she said apologetically. "I don't think that last barrel of flour is quite as good as the one we had before."

Uncle Chatterton snorted: "If that isn't like a woman! Never give in that it's her own fault, of course. The flour is all right. The recipe is the trouble. If you'd use the recipe my mother gave you, you'd have gingerbread fit to eat. My mother used to make the best gingerbread I ever ate."

"Your mother's recipe calls for sour cream and you know we never have any," protested Aunt Chatterton.

"Well, why don't we have?" Uncle Chatterton was getting more excited every minute. "Anyway, such gingerbread as this is a menace to the digestion and health of every unfortunate creature who rashly attempts to eat it. I could make better gingerbread myself."

"Why don't you make it, then?"

Of course it was Georgiana who asked this. None of us would have dared. But Georgiana belonged to some weird new place out West, where people said what they thought. This was her first visit East, and she was not yet sufficiently sophisticated to be in awe of Uncle Chatterton.

"Wha-a-t?" gasped Uncle Chatterton.

"I said, Why don't you make it?" repeated Georgiana, sweetly and calmly. "Won't Aunt Chatterton let you?"

Uncle Chatterton's face was a study.

"Y-young w-woman!" he spluttered. Then he stopped and drank a glass of

milk to relieve his feelings, after which he said: “I will make it for tea to-morrow night. It’s the simplest thing in the world. I’ll send over to Mrs. Grigsby for some sour cream, and you’ll see.”

Uncle Chatterton was game. He would rather die than give in that he couldn’t make gingerbread after all his growling. Accordingly, the next afternoon Uncle Chatterton made the gingerbread for tea.

We all went into the kitchen to watch him. He was beaming with good nature and made us all furious by assuming genially that we had come to learn how good gingerbread was really made. Aunt Chatterton tied one of her big blue aprons around him, and hunted out his mother’s recipe for him. Mrs. Grigsby had sent up a whole jug of sour cream, and Uncle Chatterton went to

work with energy.

He measured and sifted and stirred—all quite deftly, as we had to admit. He did get slightly flustered when he broke one of the eggs by mistake into the sour cream instead of into his mixing bowl; but he cheerfully decided that it didn't matter because eggs were cheap and the rest of the cream wasn't needed anyway.

"I'm going to put lots of ginger in," he said. "Maria never flavors it strong enough for me."

When his mixture was ready he poured it into the pan and triumphantly set it in the oven.

"Now, you girls may set the table," he said. "That cake will be ready to eat in about twenty minutes."

When the gingerbread came out of the oven it was beautifully light and puffy.

"Say I can't make gingerbread, will you, young woman?" chuckled Uncle Chatterton at Georgiana.

Georgiana's crest was drooping, but she replied that the proof of the pudding was in the eating.

Uncle Chatterton turned the steaming gingerbread out on a plate and carried it proudly to the table. Triumph seemed to ooze out of him at every pore. When the gingerbread was passed he helped himself to the largest, piece and took a big, brave bite.

We all saw the look on his face and each of us hastened to sample his or her piece. We did not take a second bite, however. Georgiana, who has a delicate throat, very nearly choked to death.

Uncle Chatterton had gingered that gingerbread with mustard!

Josephine's Husband

First published *The Housewife*, January 1913.

Zillah Gorham went swiftly up the narrow stairs and opened her bedroom door. The room was dark with the gloom of a November twilight. It was a long, cold, neat room, with four windows, three of which were shadowed by the cherry trees of the orchard and the firs behind the house. The fourth looked out westward over the pond, and through a break in the willows around it to the fields and homesteads of Lower Wentworth.

Josephine was sitting listlessly by it, one hand hanging at her side, the other propping her chin on the sill. Above her head was a narrow shelf across the window, supporting some potted house plants. The tendrils of a trailing fuchsia almost touched the smooth, glossy arch of her fawn-colored hair. Her faded wrapper was loose at the throat as if she had flung it open for air, and her black brows were knotted in a frown above the large, deep-tinted hazel eyes that were such a startling contrast to her colorless face.

Zillah came forward slowly and sat down on the low, chintz-covered seat before Josephine.

She was much older than her sister, and had the same sleek, thin hair and pale face, but her eyes were a faded blue and her expression was at once weaker and more malicious.

She had been talking to Amanda Reed over the line fence and had heard from her some news which she must tell Josephine. But she knew very well that it would never do to blurt it out too eagerly; Josephine looked dangerous.

"It looks like snow," she began. Josephine made no answer, but Zillah had expected none.

"Who do you suppose was married last night?" she went on.

"I've no idea," said Josephine indifferently.

"James Wright and Ada Allan. Folks are more than surprised. He courted her pretty sly. There's another of your old beaux gone, Josephine. If you don't look out there'll soon be none of them left."

"What's that to me?" said Josephine scornfully, not glancing at the speaker.

"Oh, nothing much, I s'pose. Only this . . . you won't get anybody to take you if you keep on acting this way much longer. If you'd got a divorce long ago, as you ought to have done, you might have your pick even yet. But you always were so set and stubborn."

Doubtless Josephine was stubborn. Her mouth looked like it. It grew more

set still as she responded drily,

"It's a wonder you ain't tired talking to me about it. I've told you often enough that I don't mean to apply for any divorce. He can if he wants to."

"Well, I guess he will before long," said Zillah, seeing a chance to work in her news fittingly. "I'm going to tell you just what Mandy Reed told me out there to-night. Gilbert Flemming told Lonzo Farrer in the store at Upper Wentworth the other night, that he wished to mercy he was free of you once for all. There, Josephine Gorham! If a man said that about me I'd see that he had his wish soon enough!"

"I don't believe it," cried Josephine, moved for a moment out of her cold reserve. "Gilbert never said that."

"He did. And I've heard other things he's said. He'll apply for a divorce if you won't. And that'll tell against you ten times worse than if 'twas you that applied."

Josephine did not answer but Zillah was satisfied with the expression of her face. She hastened to strike while the iron was hot.

"Now, Josephine, listen to me. I've always had your best interests at heart and I've always stood by you. You're miserable and I want to see you happy. Gilbert Flemming treated you scandalous and everybody says so. And now they say he has a notion of Caddy Evans."

"Caddy Evans?" she repeated in a whisper.

"Yes. And he drove her home from prayer meeting last Wednesday evening. I saw that with my own eyes, but I didn't dare to tell you before, for you always get in such a rage when I mention his name. But I think things have gone just far enough. With Gilbert courting another girl already and telling all over the country that he wishes he was rid of you, you're a fool, Josephine Gorham, if you put up with it."

Josephine sprang to her feet. Zillah had never seen her so moved. "I won't put up with it," she said passionately. "You're right, Zillah. The court meets at Upper Wentworth next week and I'll put in my application. He wishes he was free, does he? He shall be free! I hate him!"

She lifted her large hand and struck it violently against the window casing. Zillah felt frightened but triumphant.

"Don't take on so, Josephine," she said soothingly. "He ain't worth getting worked up over. He never treated you right. You're young and good-looking yet and there's other men."

"I don't want any other man," said Josephine sullenly, relapsing into her old reserve. "I've had enough of married life. I'll get a divorce, but don't you go prodding me about marrying again."

"Well, well, not if you don't want to," said Zillah with another of her disagreeable laughs. "Perhaps you'll change your mind. Of course, you're

always welcome to a home here as long as William and I have one to offer you. Anyhow, you'll be free and feel happier. And Gil Flemming can marry his precious Caddy then. He had a notion of her, folks say, before he ever took up with you."

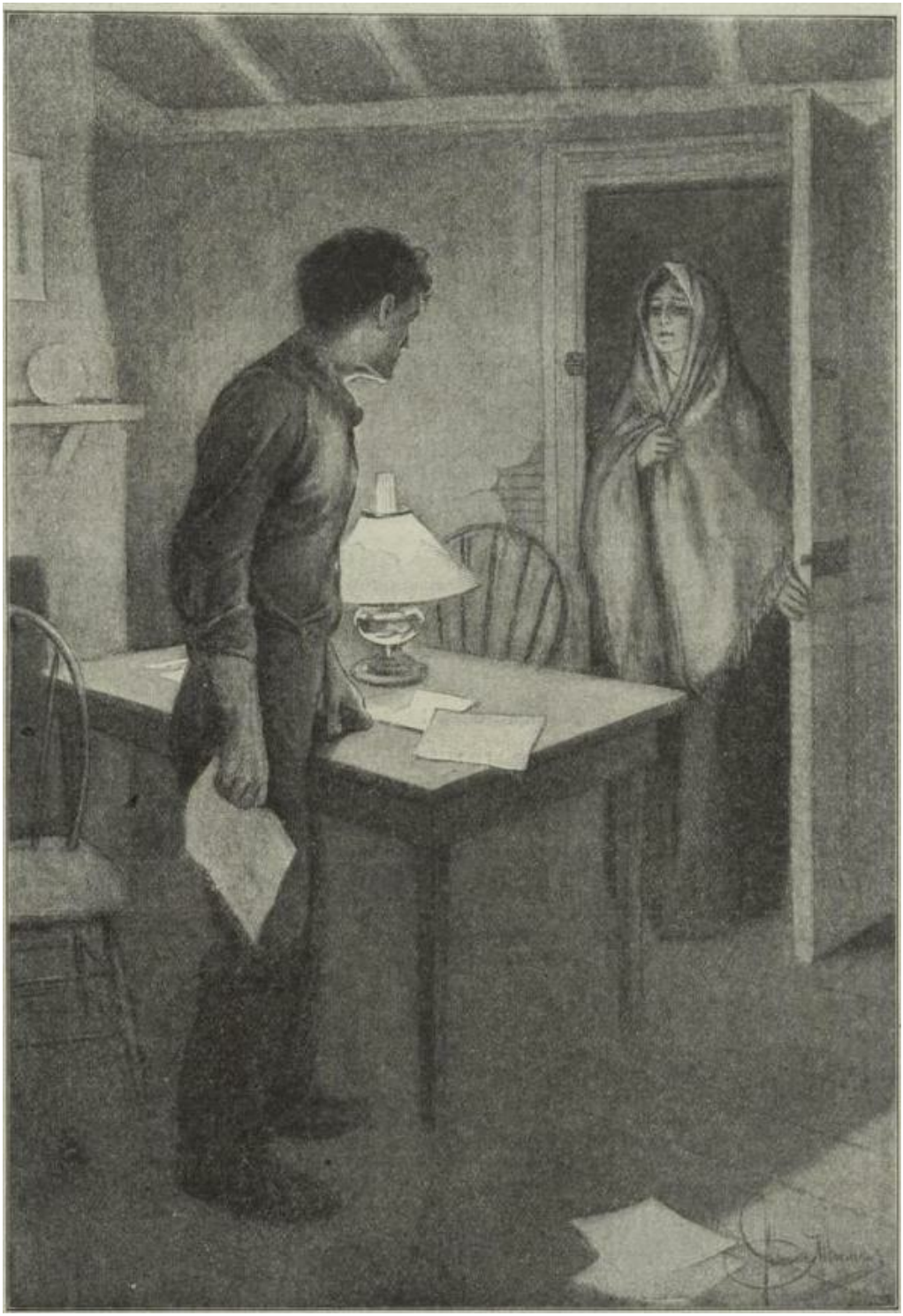
Zillah Gorham knew, no woman better, how to gall and exasperate. So well did she succeed in the present instance that she grew alarmed at Josephine's face and hastened to change the subject. "Well, I must go down and get William's supper. Don't stay here in the dark and cold, Josephine. You'll get melancholy. There ain't any good in brooding. Goodness knows if there was you've done enough to make everything right."

Josephine made no reply and Zillah, well satisfied with the result of the interview, went downstairs with her cat-like step. She knew Josephine would keep her word. And Jabez Reed next door was a well-to-do bachelor who always wanted her.

"She'll get over her crank about marrying again," she said to her brother at the supper table, "and she'll get on with Jabez better than she did with Gilbert. She was a fool not to take him in the first place but she was crazy about Gil Flemming. She's well cured of that now, I guess. Jabez is easy-going and Mandy is a good-natured old fool who won't try to boss her as 'Lisbeth Fleming did. I was afraid she would never apply for a divorce, she's so stubborn. She'll get one easy enough."

"If Gil don't fight it I s'pose she will," said William Gorham. "But she might give him another chance. I believe he wants her back yet if he could get her. Lisbeth's dead now and maybe they'd get on better together if they made up."

"Well, there'll be no making up," said Zillah. "Josephine hates him and she'd never go back to him if he went down on his bended knees to ask her. And that being the case the sooner she's free the better."



William Gorham said nothing more. He seldom ventured to differ openly from Zillah. In his heart he believed that Josephine, under all her pride and stubbornness and seeming hatred, loved Gilbert Flemming still.

Josephine, meanwhile, was pacing up and down the long room like a caged creature. A weaker woman might have wept her passion out in tears but Josephine’s wide-open hazel eyes were bright and dry, although her whole heart was filled with a tumult of wounded pride and the bitter hatred born of strong love. She would sue for a divorce and he might have his freedom and make what use of it he would. He might even marry Caddy Evans—she did not care. Anything that he might do was nothing to her forever.

When the court met at Upper Wentworth Josephine applied for her divorce, and much gossip was occasioned thereby. Josephine herself never spoke of the matter and allowed no one to speak of it to her. Even Zillah for once was cowed into silence. But one afternoon, when the latter was away, William ventured to mention it to Josephine.

“I saw Gilbert down at the store today, Josephine. He looks terrible haggard and thin and hasn’t a word to throw to a dog. Don’t you think you were rather hasty, suing for a divorce? You shouldn’t have let Zillah argue you into it if you didn’t want it.”

“I did want it,” said Josephine. Her voice was sullen and proud, but the hands that held her sewing trembled. “I did it of my own free will. He’s after Caddy Evans and I don’t intend to stand in his way.”

William rolled his tobacco thoughtfully in his hands. Zillah had always told him he was stupid and sure to make a mess of any affair he meddled with. But he did not see how this matter could be any worse than it was, so after a pause he went on, “I don’t believe there’s any truth in that gossip about him and Caddy. He drove her home from prayer-meeting one night when it was pouring rain and she was walking alone—and another time he gave her a lift on the road—and it all started from that. I believe Gilbert loves you yet, Josephine.”

Josephine’s mouth grew harder.

“It looks as if he did when he’d go and tell Lonzo Farrer that he wished he was free of me.”

“Well, I never heard the rights of that story. Maybe he never said such words and if he did you don’t know how he might have been goaded. I daresay people have told him things too.”

“I don’t care,” said Josephine dully. “I don’t want to change my mind and you’d best let matters be, William. You can’t help them any now.”

"Josephine," said Zillah one evening, a few days later, "Lawyer Stirling took the papers up today to serve on Gilbert. He's got them by this time. You'll soon be a free woman."

Josephine was washing the milking pails on the backdoor platform. The November evening was raw and chill and her hands and face were blue with cold, but at Zillah's words a tide of color surged up in her cheeks. She made no response, however, and Zillah, after waiting a moment, went into the house, slamming the door in her petulant disappointment.

When Josephine had finished her work she went up to her room. At the western window she sat down on the chintz seat and pressed her burning face against the pane. So Gilbert had the papers! What would he think? Would he care? Would he be glad?

The proud, angry woman folded her hands over her breast and looked back over her past. She recalled the days when Gilbert Flemming had first come wooing her. How proud and happy she had been! How she had loved him! Yes, and how he had loved her! He had loved her then, whatever he did now.

Then had followed their marriage and those first few happy months. Gilbert, like herself, was intense and deep-natured—"high spirited," as the phrase went in Wentworth—and the strong wills sometimes clashed. But love had smoothed the way. How good and kind he had been to her, even in her tempers! Then his older brother at the homestead had died, and the sister who had kept his house came to live with Gilbert. After that there was nothing but trouble. Lisbeth Flemming was a domineering woman, accustomed to having her own way. She and Josephine quarrelled incessantly. Both took their complaints to Gilbert. At first he had taken his wife's part. But Lisbeth had a craftiness that Josephine lacked. Instead of exasperating Gilbert with railing and reproach, as Josephine had done, she posed as a patient, ill-used martyr. Gradually Gilbert was led to blame his wife for their domestic dissensions.

Then Josephine made another mistake. She fled for sympathy to her own kin. Zillah Gorham was one of those women whose capacities for brewing trouble are limitless. She championed her sister's cause less from affection for her, or even from family pride, than from pure love of mischief-making and interference. She soon made the already bad situation intolerable and it had ended in Josephine leaving Gilbert's house and going home to William and Zillah.

That was two years ago. Since then Gilbert had lived his comfortless life alone, for Lisbeth had died soon after the separation.

Josephine thought it all over relentlessly. But somehow the memories of recriminations and quarrels seemed less vivid than those of kindness and gentleness, of tender words and kisses, of the long, sweet hours of early bridal days. Deep down in her heart she loved Gilbert still. And yet she meant to

discard him forever!

"If I only thought he cared!" she muttered chokingly.

Far out over the dim, lifeless fields a light was gleaming from the kitchen window of Gilbert's house. She pictured him sitting there, alone and uncared for. The thought was suddenly more than she could bear. She rose and went silently down stairs. She took a shawl from the nail behind the front door, wrapped it around her head, and slipped stealthily out.

The sun had long since set, but the western sky was still an arc of cold primrose softly threaded with crimson. The hills came out clearly against it, but the long valley was brimmed with twilight and the pond lay in it like a great semi-lustrous jewel. Josephine skirted it swiftly and made her way over the fields, passing through lanes where beeches, with their withered, sibilant leaves met overhead, and along dim woods, where frosted bracken clung to her dress and pungently sweet odors of dying fir floated out on the moist air. Sometimes a sudden gust of wind sent the dried leaves scurrying before her in weird dances as of wood elves; sometimes voices came from afar on the still air, or the hoof-beats of a horse mingled with young laughter rang down the shadowy country roads. But Josephine heard and heeded no sound save her own wildly beating heart and quick-drawn breath. Only when she reached the gate of her forsaken home did she pause and listen tremulously.

In the farmhouse kitchen Gilbert Flemming was sitting by the table with his arms outstretched upon it and his head bowed on them. Before him lay the papers that had been served that day. The fire was out and the untidy room was but dimly lighted by a smoky, ill-trimmed lamp. The man himself looked shabby and hopeless.

There was a light footstep outside. Somebody fumbled uncertainly with the kitchen latch; then as Gilbert rose slowly to his feet the door opened and Josephine came in. For a moment husband and wife looked at each other; then Josephine's eyes fell to the scattered papers.

"You've got them," she said dully.

"Yes." Gilbert's tone was bitter. "The lawyer brought them today. I've been expecting them. But no human decree is ever going to make you anything but my wife, Josephine. Do you think you've done right?"

She threw back the shawl from her pale face.

"I was driven to it," she said defiantly. "There was nothing else left for me to do."

Her voice broke like a child's. Gilbert strode forward and caught her in his arms.

"Josephine, if you're sorry you did it it ain't too late yet," he cried eagerly.

"Why did you say you wanted to be free of me?" she demanded passionately, straining back from his embrace.

“I never said it.”

“Lonzo Farrer said you did.”

“He lied then. I’ll tell you what I did say. He’d been telling me things he’d heard you had said, and one was that you wished you’d never set eyes on me. And I was so riled and badgered I said I wished it too. I was feeling bitter at you, Josephine, when you never gave me word or look, or answered my letter.”

“Your letter?”

“Yes, the one I wrote you the Spring after Lisbeth died. I never could get a chance to speak to you, so I wrote and asked you if you wouldn’t come back.”

“I never got any letter of yours, Gilbert.”

“You didn’t? I left it at the post-office for you. Oh,” he added fiercely, “I suppose Zillah took good care that you shouldn’t get it. From first to last that woman has made most of the trouble between us.”

“She’ll never make any more,” cried Josephine.

She snatched the papers from the table, tore them twice across, and flung the fragments into the ashes of the littered hearth. Then she turned to Gilbert and held out her arms.

A Patent Medicine Testimonial

The Overreaching of Uncle Abimelech

First published *The Star Monthly*, April 1903.

"You might as well try to move the rock of Gibraltar as attempt to change Uncle Abimelech's mind when it is once made up," said Murray gloomily.

Murray is like dear old dad; he gets discouraged rather easily. Now, I'm not like that; I'm more like mother's folks. As Uncle Abimelech has never failed to tell me when I have annoyed him, I'm "all Foster." Uncle Abimelech doesn't like the Fosters. But I'm glad I take after them. If I had folded my hands and sat down meekly when Uncle Abimelech made known his good will and pleasure regarding Murray and me after father's death Murray would never have got to college—nor I either, for that matter. Only I wouldn't have minded that very much. I just wanted to go to college because Murray did. I couldn't be separated from him. We were twins and had always been together.

As for Uncle Abimelech's mind, I knew that he never had been known to change it. But, as he himself was fond of saying, there has to be a first time for everything and I had determined that this was to be the first time for him. I hadn't any idea how I was going to bring it about but it just had to be done and I'm not "all Foster" for nothing.

I knew I would have to depend on my own thinkers. Murray is clever at books and dissecting dead things but he couldn't help me out in this, even if he hadn't settled before hand that there was no use in opposing Uncle Abimelech.

"I'm going up to the garret to think this out, Murray," I said solemnly. "Don't let anybody disturb me and if Uncle Abimelech comes over don't tell him where I am. If I don't come down in time to get tea get it yourself. I shall not leave the garret until I have thought of some way to change Uncle Abimelech's mind."

"Then you'll be a prisoner there for the term of your natural life, dear sis," said Murray sceptically. "You're a clever girl, Prue—and you've got enough decision for two—but you'll never get the better of Uncle Abimelech."

"We'll see," I said resolutely and up to the garret I went. I shut the door and bolted it good and fast to make sure. Then I piled some old cushions in the window seat—for one might as well be comfortable when one is thinking as not—and went over the whole ground from the beginning.

Outside the wind was thrashing the broad, leafy top of the maple whose tallest twigs reached to the funny gray eaves of our old house. One roly-poly little sparrow blew or flew to the sill and sat there for a minute, looking at me

with knowing eyes. Down below I could see Murray in a corner of the yard, pottering over a sick duck. He had set its broken leg and was nursing it back to health. Anyone, except Uncle Abimelech, could see that Murray was simply born to be a doctor and that it was flying in the face of Providence to think of making of him anything else.

From the garret windows I could see all over the farm, for the house is on the hill end of it. I could see all the dear old fields and the spring meadow and the beech woods in the southwest corner. And beyond the orchard were the two gray barns and down below at the right-hand corner was the garden with all my sweet peas fluttering over the fences and trellises like a horde of butterflies. It was a dear old place and both Murray and I loved every stick and stone on it but there was no reason why we should go on living there when Murray didn't like farming. And it wasn't our own, anyhow. It all belonged to Uncle Abimelech.

Father and Murray and I had always lived here together. Father's health broke down during his college course. That was one reason why Uncle Abimelech was set against Murray going to college, although Murray is as chubby and sturdy a fellow as you could wish to see. Anybody with Foster in him would be that.

To go back to father. The doctors told him that his only chance of recovering his strength was in an open-air life; so father rented one of Uncle Abimelech's farms and there he lived for the rest of his days. He did not get strong again until it was too late for college and he was a square peg in a round hole all his life, as he used to tell us. Mother died before we could remember so Murray and dad and I were everything to each other. We were very happy, too, although we were bossed by Uncle Abimelech more or less. But he meant it well and father didn't mind.

Then father died—oh, that was a dreadful time! I hurried over it in my thinking-out. Of course when Murray and I came to look our position squarely in the face we found that we were dependent on Uncle Abimelech for everything, even the roof over our heads. We were literally as poor as church mice and even poorer, for at least they get churches rent-free.

Murray's heart was set on going to college and studying medicine. He asked Uncle Abimelech to lend him enough money to get a start with and then he could work his own way along and pay back the loan in due time. Uncle Abimelech is rich and Murray and I are his nearest relatives. But he simply wouldn't listen to Murray's plan.

"I put my foot firmly down on such nonsense," he said. "And you know that when *I* put my foot down something squashes."

It was not that Uncle Abimelech was miserly or that he grudged us assistance. Not at all. He was ready to deal generously by us but it must be in

his own way. His way was this.

Murray and I were to stay on the farm and when Murray was twenty-one Uncle Abimelech said he would deed the farm to him—make him a present of it out and out.

"It's a good farm, Murray," he said. "Your father never made more than a bare living out of it because he wasn't strong enough to work it properly—that's what *he* got out of a college course, by the way. But you are strong enough and ambitious enough to do well."

"WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?"

But Murray couldn't be a farmer, that was all there was to it. I told Uncle Abimelech so, firmly, and I talked to him for days about it but Uncle Abimelech never wavered. He sat and listened to me with a quizzical smile on that handsome, clean-shaven, ruddy old face of his, with its cut granite features. And in the end he said,

"You ought to be the one to go to college if either of you did, Prue. You

would make a capital lawyer, if I believed in the higher education of women, but I don't. Murray can take or leave the farm as he chooses. If he prefers the latter alternative, well and good. But he gets no help from me. You're a foolish little girl, Prue, to back him up in this nonsense of his."

It makes me angry to be called a little girl when I put up my hair a year ago and Uncle Abimelech knows it. I gave up arguing with him. I knew it was no use anyway.

I thought it all over in the garret. But no way out of the dilemma could I see. I had eaten up all the apples I had brought with me and I felt flabby and disconsolate. The sight of Uncle Abimelech stalking up the lane, as erect and lordly as usual, served to deepen my gloom.

I picked up the paper my apples had been wrapped in and looked it over gloomily. Then I saw something and Uncle Abimelech was delivered into my hand.

The whole plan of campaign unrolled itself before me and I fairly laughed in glee, looking out of the garret window right down on the little bald spot on the top of Uncle Abimelech's head, as he stood laying down the law to Murray about something.

When Uncle Abimelech had gone I went down to Murray,

"Buddy," I said, "I've thought of a plan. I'm not going to tell you what it is but you are to consent to it without knowing. I think it will quench Uncle Abimelech but you must have perfect confidence in me. You must back me up no matter what I do and let me have my own way in it all."

"All right, sis," said Murray.

"That isn't solemn enough," I protested. "I'm serious. Promise solemnly."

"I promise solemnly, 'cross my heart' " said Murray, looking like an owl.

"Very well. Remember that your role is to lie low and say nothing like Brer Rabbit. Alloway's Anodyne Liniment is pretty good stuff, isn't it, Murray? It cured your sprain after you had tried everything else, didn't it?"

"Yes. But I don't see the connection."

"It isn't necessary that you should. Well, what with your sprain and my rheumatics I think I can manage it."

"Look here Prue. Are you sure that long brooding over our troubles up in the garret hasn't turned your brain?"

"My brain is all right. Now leave me, minion. There is that which I would do."

Murray grinned and went. I wrote a letter, took it down to the office and mailed it. For a week there was nothing more to do.

There is just one trait of Uncle Abimelech's disposition more marked than his fondness for having his own way and that one thing is family pride. The Melvilles are a very old family. The name dates back to the Norman conquest

when a certain Roger de Melville, who was an ancestor of ours, went over to England with William the Conqueror. I don't think the Melvilles ever did anything worth recording in history since. To be sure, as far back as we can trace, none of them has ever done anything bad either. They have been honest, respectable folks and I think that is something worth being proud of.

But Uncle Abimelech pinned his family pride to Roger de Melville. He had the Melville coat of arms and our family tree, made out by an eminent genealogist, framed and hung up in his library and he would not have done anything that would not have chimed in with that coat of arms and a conquering ancestor for the world.

At the end of a week I got an answer to my letter. It was what I wanted. I wrote again and sent a parcel. In three weeks' time the storm burst.

One day I saw Uncle Abimelech striding up the lane. He had a big newspaper clutched in his hand. I turned to Murray who was poring over a book of anatomy in the corner.

"Murray, Uncle Abimelech is coming. There is going to be a battle royal between us. Allow me to remind you of your promise."

"To lie low and say nothing? That's the cue, isn't it sis?"

"Unless Uncle Abimelech appeals to you! In that case you are to back me up."

Then Uncle Abimelech stalked in. He was purple with rage. Old Roger de Melville himself never could have looked fiercer. I *did* feel a quake or two but I faced Uncle Abimelech undauntedly. No use in having your name on the roll of Battle Abbey if you can't stand your ground.

"Prudence, what does this mean?" thundered Uncle Abimelech, as he flung the newspaper down on the table. Murray got up and peered over. Then he whistled. He started to say something but remembered just in time and stopped. But he did give me a black look. Murray has a sneaking pride of name too, although he won't own up to it and laughs at Uncle Abimelech.

I looked at the paper and began to laugh. We did look so funny, Murray and I, in that advertisement. It took up the whole page. At the top were our photos, half life size, and underneath our names and addresses printed out in full. Below was the letter I had written to the Alloway Anodyne Liniment folks. It was a florid testimonial to the virtues of their liniment. I said that it had cured Murray's sprain after all other remedies had failed and that, when I had been left a partial wreck from a very bad attack of rheumatic fever, the only thing that restored my joints and muscles to working order was Alloway's Anodyne Liniment and so on.

It was all true enough although I dare say old Aunt Sarah-from-the-Hollow's rubbing had as much to do with the cures as the liniment. But that is neither here nor there.

"What does this mean, Prudence?" said Uncle Abimelech again. He was quivering with wrath but I was as cool as a cucumber and Murray stood like a graven image.

"Why, that, Uncle Abimelech," I said calmly, "Well, it just means one of my ways of making money. That Liniment company pays for those testimonials and photos, you know. They gave me fifty dollars for the privilege of publishing them. Fifty dollars will pay for books and tuition for Murray and me at Kentville Academy next winter and Mrs. Tredgold is kind enough to say she will board me for what help I can give her around the house, and wait for Murray's until he can earn it by teaching."

I rattled all this off glibly before Uncle Abimelech could get in a word.

"It's disgraceful," he stormed. "Disgraceful! Think of Sir Roger de Melville—and a patent medicine advertisement! Murray Melville, what were you about, sir, to let your sister disgrace herself and her family name by such an outrageous transaction?"

I quaked a bit. If Murray should fail me! But Murray was true-blue.

"I gave Prue a free hand, sir. It's an honest business transaction enough—and the family name alone won't send us to college, you know, sir."

Uncle Abimelech glared at us.

"This must be put an end to," he said. "This advertisement must not appear again. I won't have it!"

"But I've signed a contract that it is to run for six months," I said sturdily. "And I've others in view. You remember the Herb Cure you recommended one spring and that it did me so much good! I'm negotiating with the makers of that and—"

"The girl's mad!" said Uncle Abimelech. "Stark, staring mad!"

"Oh no, I'm not, Uncle Abimelech. I'm merely a pretty good business woman. You won't help Murray to go to college so I must. This is the only way I have and I'm going to see it through."

After Uncle Abimelech had gone, still in a towering rage, Murray remonstrated. But I reminded him of his promise and he had to succumb.

Next day Uncle Abimelech returned—a subdued and chastened Uncle Abimelech.

"See here, Prue," he said sternly. "This thing must be stopped. I say it *must*. I am not going to have the name of Melville dragged all over the country in a patent medicine advertisement. You've played your game and won it—take what comfort you can out of the confession. If you will agree to cancel this notorious contract of yours I'll settle it with the company—and I'll put Murray through college—and you too if you want to go! Something will have to be done with you, that's certain. Is this satisfactory?"

"Perfectly," I said promptly, "If you will add thereto your promise that you

will forget and forgive, Uncle Abimelech. There are to be no hard feelings."

Uncle Abimelech shrugged his shoulders.

"In for a penny, in for a pound," he said. "Very well, Prue. We wipe off all scores and begin afresh. But there must be no more such doings. You've worked your little scheme through—trust a Foster for that! But in future you've got to remember that in law you're a Melville whatever you are in fact."

I nodded dutifully. "I'll remember, Uncle Abimelech," I promised.

After everything had been arranged and Uncle Abimelech had gone I looked at Murray.

"Well?" I said.

Murray twinkled.

"You've accomplished the impossible, sis. But, as Uncle Abimelech intimated—don't you try it again."

Teddy's Mother

First published *Vick's Family Magazine*, September 1902.

It was a public holiday, and almost everybody in Dalton had gone to see the football game at Seyton between the Dalton "Wanderers" and the Seyton College men.

But William Fielding had decided to spend the day in his office. His wife and his two daughters were in Europe; he did not care for football, and there was good deal of extra work to be done.

"I'll have a good look into those papers in the C. & R. railroad case today," he thought, as he entered his office.

The big building seemed unusually quiet and hushed. He reflected with satisfaction that he was not likely to be disturbed by callers.

Later in the day he remembered that he had not read the letter which he had found in his box on the way down town. It was addressed to him in a somewhat tremulous hand, and bore the post office stamp of a little village at the other side of the continent.

"Mother writes a good hand for a woman of her age," he thought, as he opened it.

The letter was short and written on cheap, blue-lined paper, with frequent lapses of spelling and grammar. It told all the simple home news and bits of gossip about neighbors whom he had half forgotten. On the last page the handwriting grew shakier. She was feeling "terrible lonesome" she wrote.

"It seems so long since I've seen you, William. Can't you come home for a spell this summer when Marion is in Europe? You haven't been home for ten years, William, I'm thinking. I do so long to see my dear boy."

Mr. Fielding frowned slightly as he folded the letter up. He drummed his fingers on the desk. His mother's request had come at a peculiarly inconvenient time. To be sure, he had often felt that he ought to go and see her. But he had always been too busy; he could not spare the time. A trip East to be worth while at all would take at least two months.

"I can't possibly go this summer, anyhow," he reflected impatiently. "Those nine cases are coming on next month. I suppose Morton could attend to them, but I should hardly care to trust them solely to him. Then there's the house to look after while Marion is away—and I've promised Tremayne to spend my vacation hunting silver tips in the mountains with him. Mother must wait until next summer. I'll write her just how it is—she'll understand. Mother was always a famous hand to understand a fellow."

But he did not feel altogether satisfied as he began his letter. He determined to write a good, long, newsy letter by way of a salve to his conscience, remembering with some shame the hasty scrawls he had fallen into the habit of sending her. A rap at the door interrupted him.

"Come in," he called, impatiently, wondering who it could be.

The figure that appeared in the doorway was quaint enough to provoke a smile. A little old woman—such a tiny scrap of a woman, with delicate, bleached features and bright, dark eyes. Under a very old-fashioned bonnet of quilted black satin her silvery hair was twisted down over her ears in a fashion which Mr. Fielding remembered seeing old ladies wear in his boyhood. Her dress was a dull-colored print, plain and neat, and she wore a gay Paisley shawl. In one hand she carried a huge bunch of sweet peas, and in the other a small covered basket.

She flashed a quick glance over the room.

"Oh, ain't Teddy here?" she faltered, disappointedly.

Teddy! Mr. Fielding remembered that young Wyndham, the clever young lawyer next door, was called Teddy by his friends. This was probably his mother. He knew that Wyndham belonged in the country.

He rose and offered the little lady a chair.

"If you mean Mr. Wyndham, his office is next door. But I'm afraid you won't find him there, either. I think he has gone to the football match at Seyton. This is a public holiday, you know."

"No, I didn't know, sir." There was a tremor in her voice and her lips quivered suddenly. "If I'd known it I wouldn't have come. Do you know when Teddy will be back?"

"Not before night I'm afraid, Mrs. Wyndham.

"The game won't be over until late in the afternoon, and I believe there is to be a banquet in the evening."

"And I must go home on the afternoon train. I won't see Teddy at all!

"Well, I s'pose it serves me right for not sending him word I was coming. Ted always likes me to send him word so he can meet me at the train and look after me. But I thought I'd just like to surprise him, and anyhow, I took the notion sudden-like this morning. And I've brought him a basket of jelly tarts—Ted is so fond of jelly tarts—and this posey. Ted likes flowers. Maybe you'd like to keep 'em, sir. 'Tisn't no use lugging them back—they'd only fade."

She gave a little choke of disappointment, in spite of her efforts to suppress it. Mr. Fielding felt as uncomfortable as if he had been responsible. He got up briskly and took the flowers.

"Thank you, Mrs. Wyndham. Your sweet peas are beautiful and remind me of those which used to grow in my mother's garden away down East. I'm not so fortunate as Ted—my mother is too far away to drop in and see me."

"I guess she wishes she could often enough. She must miss you dreadful," said his visitor simply. "It don't seem's if I could live if I didn't see Ted every once in a little while. He knows that, and he comes out 'most every week, for all he's so busy. If he can't come, he sends a great long letter just full of fun and jokes. Teddy is an awful good son, sir."

Mr. Fielding felt still more uncomfortable as he hunted out a glass for his sweet peas. Perhaps the contrast between his conduct and Ted's came home to him sharply. The little lady, who was evidently fond of talking, went on:

"As I came along on the train I was just thinking what good times we'd have today. Last time he was out Teddy promised me a drive in the park next time I came to town. I'm real disappointed—but it's all my own fault. I should have remembered 'twas a holiday."

The gentle, little voice ended in a sigh. The lawyer noticed that she looked very tired. Under the impulse of a sudden idea, he said:

"Mrs. Wyndham, I think you must let me act as Ted's proxy today. You will be my little mother and I'll give you as good a time as possible. You shall have your drive in the park."

Mrs. Wyndham looked at him doubtfully, yet eagerly.

"Oh, sir—but you're busy—"

"No, I'm not—or I oughtn't to be. I am beginning to think I'm a very unpatriotic citizen, pegging away here instead of enjoying my holiday. We will have a splendid time. My name is Fielding, and I assure you I'm considered a very respectable person. The first thing is lunch. I know you're hungry, and so am I. So come along. Remember, I'm to be your son for the day."

A pink flush of delight spread over her tiny face.

"I guess you know what mothers like," she said gleefully. "And I know how much your mother must think of you, and you of her, when you're so good to other boys' mothers. Oh, I'm real glad to go with you, sir. I don't know anybody here and I always feel kind of bewildered when I haven't Ted to stick to. May I leave these jelly tarts here?"

"Yes, I'll lock them up in my desk," said Mr. Fielding, boyishly, "Ted'll get them when he comes."

She gave herself up to enjoyment with the abandon of a child. Her clear little laugh trilled out continually. She chattered to him as she might have done to Ted, telling him all the ins and outs of the farm at home. She did not often take a holiday, she assured him. Her husband was dead and she had run the farm for years; Ted was her only son—such a good, kind, clever boy.

"There ain't many like him, if I do say it myself," she declared proudly.

They had lunch together in an uptown restaurant whose splendor nearly took her breath away. Then Mr. Fielding telephoned for his own luxurious carriage, and they went for their drive in the park. The busy, middle-aged

lawyer felt like a boy again. He found himself talking to her of his own mother, describing the little down east village where he was born, and relating some scrapes of his school days that made her laugh.

"That's so much like Ted. Such a boy for mischief as he was—not bad mischief, though. How proud your mother must be of you! And how often she must think of you! It is such a comfort to have a good son, who doesn't forget his mother. I'm awful sorry for the poor mothers whose boys get kind of careless-like and neglectful—not writing to them or going to see them as often as they might."

When the drive was over he took her to the train. "Such a good time as I've had," she said gratefully. "Ted himself couldn't have given me a better treat."

"I think our holiday has been a success," said Mr. Fielding, genially. "I know I've enjoyed being Ted's proxy ever so much."

"Ted always kisses me good-bye," she said archly. Mr. Fielding laughed and bent over the little old lady.

"There! That's one for Ted, and here's another for my mother. Good-bye and safe home to you."

From the window of the car she beckoned to him as the train started.

"Them jelly tarts," she whispered, "I forgot about 'em. You keep 'em for yourself. Ted'll have such good things at the banquet that he won't want 'em." When Mr. Fielding went back to his office he saw his half-written letter to his mother lying on his desk. He tore it in two and flung it in the waste basket. Then he sat down and wrote:

> "Dear Little Mother: Your letter came today. This is not an answer to it, but merely a note to say I'll answer it in person. I am going East as soon as I can make the necessary arrangements and you may look for me within a week or so after receiving this. We will have a real, good long visit together. With much love,
>
> "Your affectionate son,
>
> "William Fielding."

"So much to the credit of Ted's mother," he said with a smile. "And now for some of those tarts."

American Messenger.

How Grandma Ran Away

First published *New England Homestead*, March 27, 1909.

he mellow sunshine was sifting in through the vines about the little kitchen window, and making a mosaic of dusty gold on the spotless floor and whitewashed walls. A white monthly rose was abloom on the sill, and an old-fashioned blue bowl on the dresser was filled with yellow hollyhocks. William Massey was sitting on the sofa talking to his mother and brother. He was a handsome, prosperous-looking man of about forty-five. There was a marked contrast between him and Benjamin Massey; the latter, though in reality five years younger, looked as much older. He was a tall, stooped man with kindly brown eyes and a care-worn expression.

Grandma Massey was sitting by the window. She was a tiny scrap of a woman, with a thin, sweet face and snow-white hair. Her brown eyes went from one son to the other with wistful, wordless questioning. Her thin, knotted hands, folded on the table beside her, trembled fitfully. William had been speaking, kindly and affectionately, but with the quiet decision of the experienced man of business.

"You can't stay here by yourself alone any longer, Mother—that is impossible. Benjamin has a large family and his house is small; I don't think you would be contented there after being used to a quiet life so long. So we have decided that you will make your home with me after this. Benjamin and I have talked it over, and he agrees with me that it will be the best thing to do. You've worked hard all your life, and it is time you had a rest now. You can always come home every summer for a long visit. Edith and the girls will be delighted to have you, and we will do everything in our power to make you happy and comfortable."

He paused, as if expecting an answer, but no one spoke. Benjamin looked steadily at the floor. Grandma Massey put a trembling hand under the rose and drew the blossom up to her face caressingly. All her life she had given in unresistingly to the will of her husband and her sons. It never occurred to her to dispute their decisions. Since Benjamin and William had arranged it all, it must be so.

But after they had gone out together she laid her head in her hands and wept bitterly. The cat gravely walked over to her and jumped into her lap, rubbing its head against her arm. She stroked it with her trembling fingers.

"Oh, kitten, I've got to go away and leave you and everything—my hens

and flowers and all, and it breaks my old heart to think of it. I've been so happy here all my life. I dassent say anything, 'cause William is so good to me; I must do as he wishes. And Benjamin has hard enough to get along with the family he has now. But I wouldn't cost him much. I don't eat much nor wear out many clothes. But he thinks it is better for me to go. I suppose it is; the boys know best. They're both good sons to me, and William's wife is a nice woman. I must try to be grateful to them all. But I can't help feeling dreadful bad, kitten."

William Massey was not in the habit of wasting time when he had once decided on a course of action. He was a wealthy merchant in a neighboring city and his business rendered a speedy return imperative. The slower country folk were almost bewildered by his swiftness. In a few days all was ready—the little old farmhouse stripped and nailed up, the old-fashioned household goods sold or scattered, the old mother's little trunk packed with her few worldly possessions.

When the day came on which they were to go she rose early and slipped away from Benjamin's house across the field to her own garden. Benjamin found her there half an hour later, wandering wistfully around among its unworldly sweetnesses.

"I wanted to take a posy away with me, Benjamin, just to remember my garden by. Everything's so sweet here, ain't it? They don't have old-fashioned flowers like this in town. There's the southernwood your father planted right by the steps when we were married, and them white rosebushes is the ones your little sister set out the very spring she died, Benjamin. I always thought of her when they bloomed. And here's the day lilies you and William planted the last summer you were both home together, do you mind? You were just little boys."

Her voice died away in a furtive sob. She hastily turned her face. She must not let Benjamin see her cry. It might worry him if he knew she felt so bad about going away. Benjamin looked embarrassed. He was a silent, reserved man, and speech came hard to him.

"Mother," he said awkwardly, "if you shouldn't like living in the city you know you can always come back to us. We'd always be glad to have you."

She looked up with a sudden timid resolution in her face. But before she could speak William joined them and her opportunity was gone. An hour later they were on the train.

William Massey's house was a handsome one on a fashionable street, and his wife and his two daughters welcomed "grandmamma" with unaffected kindness and cordiality, but the simple country soul, unaccustomed to the splendor that surrounded her, felt pitifully insignificant and out of place. It was impossible to adapt herself to her new environment, although she struggled to

do so and to prevent her small individuality from being entirely sapped out of her amid the bewildering sensations of her new life.

William's wife, a brilliant society leader, was a thoroughly kind-hearted woman. She welcomed her husband's mother sincerely and spared no pains to make her happy and contented. The most beautiful and luxurious room in the house was given her, the most delicate courtesy and attentions accorded her, all her little wishes and preferences consulted in every particular. Nevertheless, Mrs William, naturally enough, could find and give little real companionship in her intercourse with her mother-in-law. There was absolutely nothing in common between them, and the older woman longed for her other daughter-in-law, Benjamin's wife, who could talk to her of the things in which they both had an interest, and whom she could have assisted in a hundred little ways consoling to her innocent vanity. She could not help feeling in awe of William's stylish wife, even while she reproached herself for it.

William's daughters, two pretty, precocious misses of fourteen and sixteen, respectively, seemed like strangers to her. She felt in a way afraid of them. Helen and Christine were merry, good-hearted schoolgirls, ever ready to wait on "grandmamma" and contribute to her pleasure. Nevertheless, Grandma Massey pined for her other grandchildren, Benjamin's sunburned, barefooted boys and girls, who had been wont to swarm at will through the old farmhouse, preferring it to their own home, and play hide-and-seek in the orchard, and be fed at all hours with plum buns and cookies and all sorts of grandmotherly goodies. They had filled her heart with their own warm young life, and it grew cold for the want of them.

She missed her garden and her flowers. William, remembering her old love for them, had a florist send her fresh ones every day, gorgeous hothouse exotics that were revelations of beauty and fragrance. They pleased her in a way, but, although she never said so, nothing could replace the homely blossoms she had known and loved all her life, the crimson hollyhocks and poppies, the cabbage roses and daisies and ribbon grass that she had planted and tended with her own hands.

She missed her old occupations and duties. There was nothing for her to do in this big house with its numerous servants. She was not even allowed, in mistaken kindness, to wait on herself; maids were at her beck and call; Helen and Christine anticipated every want. William and Edith insisted that she must "take things easy" now, forgetting that when a woman has been accustomed to constant occupation for seventy years the lesson of taking it easy is a hard one to learn—sometimes an impossible one. She had nothing to do. Books did not interest her; she wanted to be mending and patching, knitting children's mittens and stockings, things that were never heard of there.

She wanted her cows and hens and cats, all the living creatures of the farm

that had been part of her life so long. She wanted her own old room, with its bare floor and stained walls, and the low, uncurtained window where the splendor of the sunrise came in.

William Massey, to do him justice, never for a moment suspected that his mother was not happy. He was a very busy man, and having done, as he thought, all in his power to make life pleasant for her, he was satisfied. Now and then he noticed that she looked thinner and more worn than of yore. But that was only to be expected. Mother was getting old; in the nature of things they could not expect to have her with them very much longer. He guessed nothing of her homesickness and loneliness. It was another of her trials that she had no one to talk to. William seemed wrapped away from her in the multiplicity of his business affairs; he was not half so near to her as when there had been a hundred miles between them. Mrs William and her daughters and her numerous fashion-plate callers could talk of new books and music and pictures and plays and fads and "functions," and a hundred other things that were Greek to Grandma Massey, but they could not talk to her of what she understood.

"I couldn't have been lonesomer if I was stranded on a desert island," she said pathetically to herself.

Her only comforts were her home letters. Benjamin's eldest daughter, Tessie, a girl of fifteen, wrote every week, and the letters were full of home news and bits of gossip and messages from old friends; sometimes clippings from the village paper or pressed flowers from her old garden, or a blotted and ill-spelt note from one of the younger children were inclosed. How Grandma Massey treasured those letters and read and reread them until they fairly dropped to pieces in the folds!

The long winter went slowly by. When spring came and the grass in the city squares grew green and the buds burst on the chestnuts her homesick longing grew so overpowering that she ventured to ask William tremulously if he wouldn't take her home for a visit. William, still unobservant, did not consider it wise.

"Why, mother, it wouldn't do for you to go down to the country as early as this. You wouldn't enjoy it yet. It's all wet and muddy out there now, and Benjamin and Mary will be busy planting and housecleaning. Besides, I'm rather too busy to take you down just now, and you couldn't go alone. Wait until July or August."

Grandma Massey said no more. Her life seemed to be drying up within her. Her heart was starved for a glimpse of the places she had known and loved all her life. At the close of May came a tear-spotted letter from Tessie. Her mother was ill; there was a new baby at the farmhouse and Bobbie and Nellie were laid up with the chicken-pox. "I do wish you were here, Grandma, not to work,

of course, but just to tell me what to do. I feel kind of lost and helpless, and mother mustn't be worried about things, and we can't get any help. Can't you get Uncle William to bring you down? Mother is kind of pining to see you, and maybe she'd get better faster if you were here."

Grandma Massey was alone in the big uptown house when Tessie's letter came. The girls were out and Mrs William was visiting friends in another city. William was away and would not be back till late. Grandma laid down Tessie's hurried note and meditated. Her heart thrilled at the thought of being of some use yet. There were people in the world who needed her, after all. If she were home she could do so much—nurse Mary and the children and cheer up Benjamin and help poor, bewildered Tessie. She must go! It would be of no use to appeal to William; he would only be indignant at the idea of her going to wait on sick folks. A cunning light came into the gentle, faded eyes. With an almost stealthy step she went to her own room. From the closet she took her old carpet bag and swiftly packed it with a few necessities. She had a little money in her purse, enough to take her home: Grandma Massey meant to run away.

It would not do to go without leaving some word; they would be alarmed at her disappearance. She got a bit of paper and wrote shakily:

> "My deare son, I have had a letter from tessie and the children and mary is sick and they want me, so I'm going. Please don't be cross at me, you and Edith have been so good to me and Im grateful to you, you have been a good son William but I'm awful homesick. I guess when I get home it won't be worth my while to come back. I'm getting old to be moving round much. Ben will look after me.
>
> Mother."

This she put on the pincushion on her table. Then she crept noiselessly downstairs and out of doors. She might have ordered the carriage, but she was terribly in awe of the dashing coachman. Besides, she was afraid that she might be prevented. The dusk was falling outside, but her desperate courage did not fail her. She asked the policeman at the corner to call a cab for her; but when she got out in the quivering, blue, electric glare of the station, amid hurrying swarms of comers and goers, she felt bewildered, and caught blindly at the cabman's arm.

"Oh!" she gasped tremulously, "I'm so skeered! Where shall I get my ticket? And which is my train?"

Fortunately for Grandma Massey, this particular cabby had a tender heart. And he also had an old mother away back among the country hills who looked a little like his passenger. So although it was not in his line of business at all,

he got Grandma Massey her ticket and put her on the right train.

"Thank you," she said joyfully, "I'd never have managed it alone. You're a real kind young man."

When the train started she began to realize that she was really homeward bound. Her spirits rose; she felt a secret exultation over her own boldness in starting off so. She was not so old and helpless after all. Then her thoughts went out ahead of her and pictured getting home.

It was a long, wearisome night, but when morning came Grandma Massey, with her eager face pressed close to the car window, recognized a place she knew.

"There's Henry Newbold's place, I do declare!" she exclaimed aloud, much to the amusement of the other passengers, "and if he hasn't been and built a new end onto the house. I'm just sure and certain he didn't need it. It's the second wife's doings, I suppose. She was always a high-stepping creature. She'll make Henry's money fly. And there's the Corner stores away down in the hollow and all the trees out in bloom. Look at them cherry trees in Jesse Wright's garden! My, how green the fields are! I just feel as if I'd never get my fill of looking at them."

When the train stopped at the little well-known station there were plenty to help her off. The station master shook her hand heartily.

"Blessed if it ain't Grandma Massey! How do you do? How do you do? Come down to visit your folks, I s'pose? You never come all alone! Well, well, I always said you were the smartest woman in the state, age or no age. I guess Ben's folks will be powerful glad to see you. They've been having a tough time of it lately. There's Will Finley with his express, he'll take you right to the door."

"Oh, no, I want to walk," said Grandma eagerly. "It ain't far across the fields, you know. He can take my satchel along, but I'll walk. I haven't had a walk since I left here—nothing but driving. I'm tired of it."

Her heart was almost bursting with joy as she struck across the green fields. The sun was rising, and all the basins among the hills were brimming with golden and emerald light. The pond in old Abe Henneberry's field was aglow with a shimmer of fairy tints. The skies over her were blue; the birds were singing.

She could not see Benjamin's place, or her old home, but she knew that when she came to the brow of the hill they would flash out below. She could have knelt in rapture as she climbed the fence into the old brook meadow, where the spring bubbled up under its sentinel pines. Two calves came frisking across the ferny slope with liquid mischief in their soft eyes. The wild cherry trees in the corners were creamy with feathery bloom. At her feet she saw some delicate blue violets hiding in the lush grasses. Everything seemed to be

welcoming her back. Yes, she belonged here. Slowly, and with frequent pauses for rest, the little bent figure toiled up the slope. At its top she paused to gaze eagerly down. Below she saw her old home and Benjamin's newer house, nestled in the green hollow, half hidden behind bloom-white apple trees. A fragrant wind stirred in the valley and drifted up to her. A divine light came into the tired old face.

Benjamin Massey, going out to milk the cows with a wearier look than usual on his face, met his mother coming in through the little sagging gate under the sibilant poplars.

"Why, Mother! Mother!"

He said it twice, the first time in a tone of startled amaze, the second with heartfelt joy.

"Oh, Benjamin," she said, catching at his arm with tears of delight in her eyes, "Oh, Benjamin, I've come home!"

The Violet's Spell

First published *The Ladies' World*, July 1894.

Only a violet in the trodden street
Breathing its purple life out 'neath the tread
Of hundreds, restless, eager, hurrying feet,
Ere set of sun the frail thing will be dead;
"Only a violet," so its loser said.

As in a dream the dusty street passed then,
Unheeded on my ear its tumult fell;
I saw a vision from the past again
That wove across my heart a nameless spell—
Fond memories of a spot I once loved well.

A woodland lane where ferns grew green and tall,
And beeches wove their branches overhead,
All silence save some wild bird's passing call
Or the swift echoing of a rabbit's tread;
'Neath those green arches fear and strife were dead!

Blue smiled the sky where thro' the fir trees green
The summer sunshine fell in golden sheaves,
And shyly from the beneath their mossy screen
With half averted face as one who grieves,
Blue violets peeped thro' last year's withered leaves.

And one was there with me whose voice and smile
In keeping seemed with those fair joyous hours!
A face where Nature set her every wile
And laughing eyes blue as the sweet spring flowers
When wet with tear-drops of the May-time showers.

Dear friends were we and hand in hand we went
Down the green lane where sunshine thickly lay,
The soft, low voices of the woods were blent;
A drowsy cow-bell tinkled far away,
Heart spoke to heart that far, fair, sunny day!

For us the sunshine laughed, the wild birds sung,
The purple darlings of the spring were fair;
For us each vagrant note of music rung,
And every passing breeze was like a prayer,
Heart-whisperings of Nature everywhere.

[The end of *Faded, Yellowed, Tattered and Torn* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]