

HOW MARTHA GRAY FOOLED JONATHAN

(Continued from page 17)

betwixt house and garden, much scorned by Jon, who would root them out only that he was too busy. He was tearing mad when he said it, because he had waited all summer to nibble one of those quinces and when he did it,

"Drat the 'ard, sour thing," he said, spitting it out. "Wife wummon! Never any gude them'll be. The pigs won't eat them. Wot sow won't eat, man shouldn't—I tell you!"

MARTHA knew as little about quinces as Jon did. But she had a better sense of smell and more skill with fruit. Such a lovely crop to look at never grew to be idle. Jon was prejudiced. Some day he should find out. Time. Years, maybe. Nevertheless.

After experiments Martha discovered that she could make from quinces not only preserves—which she never showed Jon—but a certain amber-colored jelly more delicious than currant, grape or crab. The very first year she secretly filled all her available small jars with quince "jell," as she called it. Jon never so much as saw one

of them. He observed that the quinces were all picked. Where they had gone to he knew not. Martha had crannies in her root-house that held all manner of things.

Very first market-day after the job was done, Martha went along as usual; always, as usual, helping to load the democrat evening before so as to let them off by two in the morning in the October starlight for the twenty-mile drive to get the stand next the main street of the county town. Surreptitiously by the flicker of the lantern Martha managed to smuggle in among the quarters of lamb, bags of potatoes, cabbages and muskmelons—a patchwork quilt cunningly loaded and padded with these twenty jars of quince jelly. For a wonder, Jon never detected the ruse. They went under the seat on Martha's side, and she skilfully played the loose ends of the buffalo robe about it, all the way in, hour by hour, mile on mile towards the daybreak which crept over the caravans of the gravel road just as they caught sight of the spires of the county town. And the sun lifted itself only when Jon, shouting to the boom of the market bell, backed his team to the curb two stands down from the main street, because some of the French farmers from the nearby claims had beaten him to the front line.

One day at market to Jon and Martha was very much like all the rest. This was different. Martha had a charge to conceal. While Jon manoeuvred with the horses she contrived to conceal her bundle up by the dashboard, before she laid out her tempting little tail-board shop which, with its various colors, was a very charming picture; and she well knew how a bit of color and artistic arrangement helped to interest the critical housewife with her basket. If she could but have crowned the show with those rows of amber-colored quince jars she would have had a much better picture. But Jon must not find out.

By noon, having breakfast before two, they ate their basket lunch and drank cold tea sitting by the curbside among the marketers. The load was selling better than usual. By half-past three, please God, as Jon said, it might be all gone, and they could start early for home. Not so Martha, who still kept in hiding her jars of jelly, waiting for a chance. Always when the load was done Jon and Martha took a turn up the main street to some store. This day Martha had a headache. She would stay with the load. But she entreated Jon to get for her at a store far up street something which she knew would take him best part of an hour, and he said so; but she was quite determined. So off he went.

And with a pair of baskets loaded with her jelly jars off went Martha also, swiftly across the bridge of the creek in among a pack of well-to-do houses she could see from the market. The sight of this



While Jon manoeuvred with the horses, Martha contrived to conceal her bundle up by the dash-board.

black-bonneted, trudging woman with the neat, faded black dress and the two baskets was something new on that street, where all the housewives did their own carrying.

Oh, the hurry she had to get back before Jon, minus all her jars at fifteen cents each, charging five for the jar so that she might buy others for the rest of the quinces. But by the help of good luck and swift heels she made it. She had not a jar of jelly left. And when Jon came trudging back to the team here she was busy packing up.

Week by week Martha carried on this secret campaign with the quinces till she had them all converted to jelly and the jars off to market, away on into the driving east winds of November, the rains and the mud. Every Saturday she contrived some way to get Jon off her hands for half an hour so that she might deliver the jars which she had contracted by custom the week before. Narrowly many a time she avoided some housewife at the waggon asking her after the jelly; though if possible she slipped one over when Jon wasn't looking.

THIS was to be a secret. Martha knew how to keep it, knew how to wait year by year, hoarding up her stealthy cash against the great day, watching the quince-trees bloom white, the nubbins come on and the fruit thicken up while Jon left the quince grove alone, never seeming to know where the pesky sour things went to, when not one of the children

THE EVOLUTION OF MIRANDA

MIRANDA came to us after the manner of an infant left in a basket on the doorstep. She was like Moses found by Pharaoh's daughter in the bulrushes. She was at the railway station after a four days' journey from a bleak, sea-washed country in the far east; she had followed all the instructions given her by the shipper, faithfully to the letter—and here she was more than a thousand miles from home with a big city clattering overhead and underfoot, thousands of people within two blocks of her, a whirligig of travel in her brain and the general demeanor of a young owl caught at mid-day blinking in amazement.

We pitied Miranda. She was so far from home. So silent. So thick through. So ill-clad and picturesque. So altogether looking like a misfit in a cruelly busy world.

Well, time would tell. Miranda said nothing, but went to work. Her first difficulty was over the stairways and doors.

"Oh?" she said, "be I to go in be the back door, sure enough?"

"Yes, Miranda, maids are always supposed to go in at the back door. The front door is for the mistress." She laughed—baboonishly.

"And them stairs now?" she wanted to know. "I don't go up them front ones that's carpeted?"

told him—but the two girls knew, and also why mother was deceiving him so.

It was the only concealment between these two. It lasted four years, at the end of which time Martha Gray had accumulated a secret \$54.

Last Saturday evening of the market season, after getting home, Martha gave the children some work to stay up. Perhaps they knew why. Jon looked over the laggard group.

"Now, then, to bed all on you!" he said. "Church in the mornin'."

BUT they went not. Instead, Martha rose and went to a secret place in the bottom of a bureau drawer. She fetched back a tin box, which she set on the kitchen table and slowly unlocked while the family leaned over the table under the scowling front of Jonathan. With a smile she spilled the box loose—ten-cent pieces, quarters, fives, coppers.

"O—o—oh!" screamed the family. Jonathan shouted—"Woman Martha! Wot's all this, then?"

"Oh—it's just them despised quinces. It's the very pieces I've got for them—"

"Yes, but 'ow, then? You've not sold 'm."

So she told him about the jelly, when the look on his face was something like his namesake of old must have had on the Isle of Patmos.

"That's cash payment on the new organ," she said. "And we'll make the quince trees pay for it."

To describe the reverent conventicle that ushered in the new organ is not the scope of this article. It came many miles on a grand sort of waggon. It was carried as gingerly as though it had been a new baby into the barish front room with its rag carpet, new-plastered walls and box stove. It was set up between windows and at once became the heart of the room; the spot where most of all the lamp stood—because seldom anybody went to the parlor unless to hear the beautiful sweet tones of that organ.

The voice of that little box of reeds and bellows became the finest sound in the whole community. Neighbors flocked in to hear it. All the Sabbaths and some of the evenings were made beautiful and gracious and almost divine by the hymns and songs and polkas and grand marches done on that organ from two or three books. Hundreds of dollars in cost were all forgotten time and again as Martha and Jon listened. The deep drudgery of the morrow folded itself up and went to rest while somebody played the organ and one held the lamp, and all gathered about like a village choir.

What it cost would last for years. What it said would live forever. The magic of that little organ made the farm home seem like a gate of heaven.

(To be continued.)

"Only when you clean them, Miranda; and of course you can always use the front door when you go out for the milk. Now you understand."

So she did. But it was such a strange world, this city place. Miranda came from a land where they had no back stairs and where one door was as good as another; a land of no cellars, no coal, no gas, and no electric lights. She had been brought up on wood and coal-oil. And it was a very grave problem with her mistress what would become of such a primitive creature in so giddy a whirl as a modern city, with its manifold temptations.

Miranda's first diversion was going to a lecture in a nearby church. She came home in a state of excitement to say that she had met a woman in the very same seat whom she had known down below at home. In ten days she had met, casually, at least six of her fellow-natives. Which would be very nice for Miranda, quoth her mistress, not wanting her to be alone.

Much in need of clothes, Miranda consented to let her mistress conduct her downtown to a department store. Never can she forget the wide-eyed hysteria of the girl who in the terrible clatter and the crowd almost ran away.

"Oh, indeed, I'll never go down there any more!" she

(Concluded on page 31.)