

whilst I go git the stuff. We'll hev to work like a house an're to git ready by day after to-morry, for I'm goin' to see the hull show."

An hour later, Miss Susan sat in rapt silence while her sister displayed before her admiring eyes two patterns of cheap black-and-white lawn, two simple white straw bonnets, adorned with precise bows of ribbon, which looked as if nailed to position, rested chastely upon the machine.

"I'm a-goin' to curl my hair, Susan Brown, an' so be you," announced Miss Mindy before retiring, and Miss Susan, her simple soul in a flutter of delight over her new finery, made no objection, and for the first time in twenty years the foreheads of the two Misses Brown bristled with curl-papers, forcing them to sleep upon their backs, and giving them bad dreams in consequence.

The morning dawned bright and warm, and, after a lengthy and careful toilet, the two sisters sallied forth to see the procession. Many were the curious and calculating glances cast at their new and giddy raiment, and incredulous stares were bestowed upon the soft waves of brown hair which softened their worn faces, and made them, with the faint color excitement brought to their cheeks, astonishingly young and good to look at.

It was curious to note how all the sisters of the Circle, and even the preacher himself, had found it necessary to purchase groceries and dry-goods on the very street and at the precise time the glittering procession passed, though Sister Snow confided to Sister Gaylord that it would take three weeks of protracted meetings to straighten out the sinners after such a show, and the Reverend Joseph Lumly calculated that the publicans and sinners who ran the circus would carry away with them many times the sum he raised every year with so much difficulty for the heathen.

The smallest, raggedest and worst little boy in town did not eat less dinner, or climb more expectantly to a hard seat any earlier than Miss Mindy and Miss Susan, who, with their curiosity sated a trifle by the side shows, and their laps full of bags of peanuts and popcorn, blissfully chewed gum and looked with all their eager eyes in a perfect flutter of enjoyment.

Why try to tell of the delights, the glories of that day? Of the gauzy ladies who—truth to tell—somewhat scandalized Miss Susan by the briefness of their skirts, and Miss Mindy by the absence of sleeves and tucker, but who smilingly jumped long-tailed horses over hurdles, or made them waltz to a fascinating air, played by a wonderful band, glittering in red and gold.

Of adorable little fat ponies who trotted briskly in to do all sorts of astonishing things no staid Fairview horse ever dreamed of doing, and who shook their silver bells, fluttered their blue ribbons and flitted their wavy tails in a manner decidedly cithed and distracting. Of grotesque elephants who ponderously lumbered through many clever and amusing tricks, or of the smart little dogs who seemed to know how to do everything but talk.

How they laughed till they cried at the clown! How shocked they were when he fell from his horse and lay motionless on the ground, and how astonished and relieved they were when he jumped up and snapped his fingers and showed he was only fooling! In short, how the two poor souls crowded into one brief afternoon more real pleasure, than they had known in twenty years; so oblivious of all surroundings that they paid no attention to a sun-burned, middle-aged man who sat near, and who never took his eyes from Miss Mindy's flushed, delighted face.

It was not till the sisters, still in a blissful dream, turned in at their own gate that they realized that the man was close behind them, and Miss Mindy was about to latch the gate when he said, very softly, "Minnie, don't you know me?"

With a cry Miss Mindy turned and ran to him and caught his outstretched hands, to the horror of Sister Snow, who was passing by.

In all Miss Mindy's life no one but Jim Bowen had ever called her Minnie,

and no one but Jim Bowen had ever touched her faithful heart, though several worthy brothers in the church had tried.

Therefore, Miss Mindy, drawing him into the house and closing the door in Sister Snow's face, allowed the sun-burned gentleman to take her in his arms and kiss her repeatedly, right before the petrified Miss Susan. It is a matter of history, too, that Miss Mindy returned every kiss with interest.

"You see, Minnie, I saw you and Sue when you came into the tent," said the sunburned gentleman when they sat down to supper, "and I knowed you at onct, spite of the fifteen years since we quit. I'm a-travelin' with the show just now, in charge of the trick horses on the road, but I've bought me a ranch in Arizona, and I'll have it paid for next month. What do you say to goin' back with me then, Minnie, as Mrs. Bowen, an' raisin, real woolly sheep instead of bein' a lost one?" asked the gentleman, with a wink at Miss Susan, who had just confided to him the story of their backsliding.

"Of course, Sue goes, too," he added, hastily, seeing a look of blank dismay overspread that lady's face. "There's a widower with three kids lives on the place next to mine, purty little things with yaller curls, an' no one to wash their faces, an' Sue can marry him, an' fix 'em up."

So he arranged it, to Miss Susan's great confusion, that when the circus train pulled out that night, the sun-burned gentleman had Miss Mindy's promise to wed him that day month, and visions of the three neglected infants, with yellow curls, floated through Miss Susan's dreams all night.

At the next meeting of the Circle the President was absent, and it was well, for if the assembled sisters had been obliged to voice all their sentiments and tell all their news according to parliamentary rules, they simply would have burst.

"She called me in, as large as life, an' handed me five dollars an' said she was much obliged, but she wouldn't need the stove this winter, as she was goin' to be married an' move to Arizona, an' Susan with her. It does beat all how uppish some folks are when they gits on their feet. 'Twa'n't two weeks ago she was glad to git that stove, an' now she's thrown it away runnin' after a man who hasn't been near her for fifteen year."

"The preacher told me," supplemented another sister, "that when he called to remonstrate with Mindy for goin' to that circus she jes' laughed in his face, an' actually told him she'd thanked the Lord on her knees every night since that she hed went. Looks like if she wanted a man that bad she'd a-took Deacon Smith and straightened out them seven young'uns of his when he asked her."

"Well, I hope she'll be happy," ventured Sister Gaylord, timidly.

"You'd better," observed Sister Goodrich, acidly, "for you was the one that set us on to buyin' that heater for her, an' ef she hedn't hed it to sell she couldn't a-went to that circus. No one'd 'a' bought any o' her ole furniture, so I think it'd be more becomin' ef you led us in prayer beseechin' pardon fer causin' a sister to offend," stid o' talkin' 'bout her bein' happy."

But Sister Gaylord, completely crushed by this rebuke, retired to her kitchen in tears, and the meeting broke up.

Kneeling beside her bed that night, Miss Mindy lifted up her grateful heart in thanks:

"Oh, Lord," she whispered into the quilt, "that backslidin' done me more good than anything in my hull life, an' I thank Thee for understandin' an' not bearin' ill will towards me. I allers thought it was the preachers 'stid o' You that objected to folks enjoyin' themselves, an' now I know it. You mustn't blame Susan a bit, fer she only did what I made her, an' I don't hanker after no more whiskey an' tobacco, an' neither does she. Take care of all the folks that was good to us when we was poor an' alone, an' fergive us our trespasses as we fergive those that trespass agin us, an' thank You for Jim, dear Lord. Amen."

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