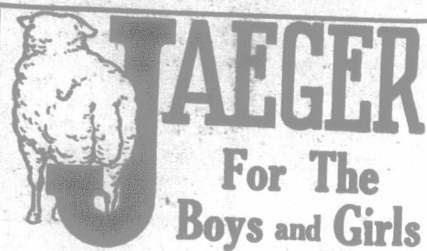




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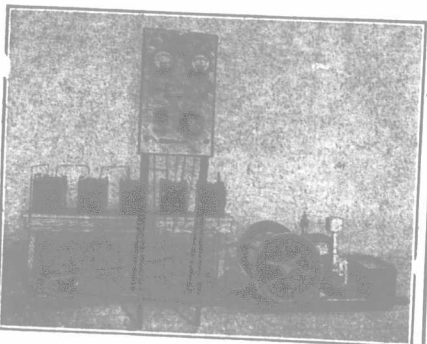
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ought to be a pleasant rippling song, as far as we can have it so,—not all filled up with doing things that might just as well be left undone. . . . And I think every woman (at twenty-one and just engaged since five o'clock of the evening before Marian was already speaking of herself as "a woman"). . . . I think every woman should have time to improve her mind and be a companion to her husband. Don't you?"

Mrs. Bertram slowly resumed her fancy-work. "Ye-es," she hesitated, "but I think folk will think it queer not to have curtains."

"Oh for that part," Marian replied briskly, "You can do just as you like in the country, don't you know? That's the beauty of it! Of course I mean to have my house pretty, and sweet, and deainty, but as for curtains and upholstery and carpets—not for me!" and the girl swayed to and fro in her rocker with a consciousness that henceforth life was to be one grand sweet song, attuned to common sense and what one liked best.

"No carpets either?" Mrs. Bertram's needle went up again.

"Oh no, of course,—not too large. One can get them out of doors for cleaning so much more easily."

"Of course," Mrs. Bertram assented, "But I don't know how they'll take in the country."

Marian leaned over and pinched her mother's cheek playfully. "Mother dear," she said, "you are utterly, irrevocably wedded, or welded, or whatever it is, to the city. You can't see that in the country you can do just as you like,—you don't have to do as other folks do. . . . Of course all the neighbors may have carpets, good old fashioned ones, with tacks two inches apart all around the walls, and a quarter of an inch of filtered dust underneath—the regulation way of it,—but I (with a big emphasis on the "I")—I shall have rugs."

Mrs. Bertram smiled indulgently, and then Marian rambled off into a visionary description of how happy her new home was going to be; and how beautiful the ravines of Inglevale were, and of how she and Tom would stroll through them on Sundays and sit listening to the water gurgling over the stones and looking at the reflection of the cardinal flowers in the water; and of how she would go out in the field with her sewing of week-days and sit under a tree by the fence while Tom ran his mower or binder, ready to talk to him and cheer him up at the end of the furrows (yes, she actually said "furrows"), or to give him a drink of lemonade or cordial.

Mrs. Bertram listened to the glowing dream with a quiet half-perplexed smile. "Well, I don't know much about the country," she rejoined, "but I'm afraid you'll make a queer farmer's wife, Marian, and I'm thinking Tom will be losing sometime."

"Oh for that matter, mother," Marian replied, "Tom and I will have some common-sense, I hope,"—and then she stopped suddenly, for Tom was driving up in all the glory of a Ford Motor Car and Panama hat.

The "ceremony" could not long be postponed, for summer was coming on apace and there was much need for a young wife on the pretty farm at Inglevale; so it took place when the apple blossoms were all a-flush and the girl wore a little cluster of them in her bridal veil and carried a big bouquet of them knotted with white satin ribbon that streamed to the floor. The wedding breakfast table was also decorated with them, and great festoons were draped above, and about the walls until the girls of the Alpha-Beta who swarmed about Marian like as many white butterflies, caught their breath and clamored.

"Think what they must be at Inglevale!" Marian said. "These all came from there, and Tom says you would never miss them."

And then the girls all exclaimed again, and Clare Gilbert bravely declared that she should love to live on a farm.

But even Marian had not dreamed of the beauty of Inglevale, with its broad expanses of waving oat and hay fields in the foreground, its glory of pink apple blossoms beyond, and farther still the billows of green wood-

land stretching on over and beyond the ravines. The new house, too,—a thrill of pride ran through the girl as she looked at it. How fine and imposing it was, and how many possibilities there were in those broad verandas, once the clematis and trumpet-vine had had time to do their work!

"Welcome home dear," Tom said as he conducted her through the broad-hall doorway, "doubly your home, Marian, for you planned it all."

"Now Tom, you know I gave you the chance to help with everything," she retorted.

"Yes, yes," laughed Tom, "but what did I know about fixing things up! I only hope it's been done as you said."

And then they went gleefully from room to room like happy children, exclaiming over things a hundred times and making plans for future days. Yes, it had all been arranged as Marian had wished, rugs on the smoothly finished floors, little lambrequins of white or oriental colors at the windows, blinds up to the top everywhere letting in a flood of sunshine not yet hot enough to be denied entrance. To be sure the rooms looked a little bare as yet, but, as Marian remarked, "How much nicer not to have them all furnished up at once! There would be the fun of adding things for many a year."

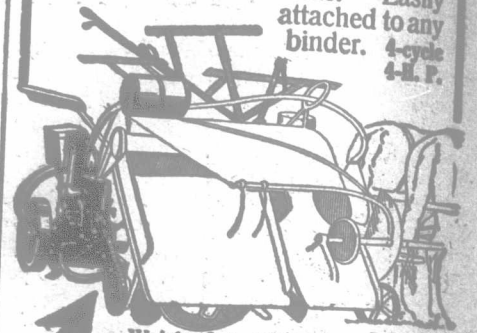
Tom and Marian, it will be observed, had made no calculations for flies in their honey-pot, a rather astounding omission since it is well known that flies do get into marital honey-pots, although, of course, the owners of each individual pot are not over-anxious to advertise the fact. The first one came to Inglevale with the arrival of Tom's mother, on the very day succeeding the "ceremony". Now be it understood that this record by no means purports to contain a homily against mothers-in-law. They, poor souls, usually get more than their meed of criticism; although it may be open to debate as to whether they do not deal to sons-in-law and daughters-in-law an equal share of the commodity, and so preserve the equilibrium of things. There is usually a period of adjustment after every break in the ordinary routine of events, and it is not to be supposed that in so great an upheaval as marriage the settling of mothers-in-law, and sons-in-law, and daughters-in-law can take place without a crevasse or a scraping-off in some direction. However that may be—and to change a rather strenuous metaphor,—the fact remains that Marian Sinclair's mother-in-law was the first fly to enter the honey-pot.

She came in the evening, prim and straight, in a gown of black silk, rather antiquated in cut, to be sure, but real silk, such as is not made now-a-days, with a real lace collar at the throat,—the very model of neatness and old-time conventionality and propriety. Marian would have liked it much better if she had run over with a straw hat and white apron on, as she had seen other country women do, but this, she learned, was not the way of Tom's folk.

Descended upon the paternal side from an ancestry which counted two baronets among its scions, they had a certain dignity to keep up, and to hold continually before the eyes of those who might otherwise forget the halo that beats down from a baronet-suffused ancestry. Inheriting from the mother's side—a good Pennsylvania Dutch stock—the traditions of a century's good housewifery, they could not be other than conventional even in the smaller things of life, and "set" to the sticking point in the time-honored ways of a "family." And the uniting of the two brands had resulted bodily, among the female representatives at least, in just such specimens as Tom's mother—excellent, virtuous, prim, decorous, never-mistaken, somewhat behind the times, narrow-minded, yet kindly creatures in silken skirts and lace collars,—this last, of course, on Sundays, gala days, and state occasions. On ordinary days at home they wore blue gingham dresses, convenient and tidy, but straight and narrow in both skirt and waist, with a snow-white starched collar—which was never absent though the thermometer stood at ninety-seven in the shade. The personnel of this sister-hood was composed of Mrs.

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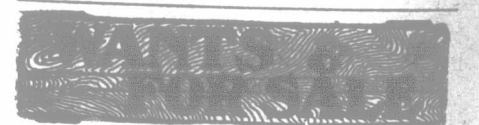
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