

ASTONISHING THE NATIVES

BY ANNA BURG.

"Never mind what you wear, Kate, we are only going into the country." But the speaker tied the ribbons of her "shaker" with coquettish grace, at the same time bestowing a lingering glance upon the reflection of her figure in the mirror.

"Pshaw!" returned her sister, a tall, dashing girl—"I'm going 'to astonish the natives!' How they will stare to behold a *bona fide* cashmere, that cost two hundred,—why don't you wear yours too?"

"Well, I will!—wait one moment,—Tom hasn't come with the carriage yet."

Ten minutes later, the two ladies tripped down the gravelled walk, leading from a handsome residence in one of our inland cities. Their gallant brother Tom Anderson betrayed much astonishment at his sisters' "full costume;" but they soon silenced his remarks upon improprieties, and he, too, entered with zest into the plan of "astonishing the natives."

"Where are my primrose kids? Oh, here they are!" and he drew forth the perfumed gloves which he was wont to don at the Opera.

"O, Tom, you cannot drive with those," exclaimed his sisters.

"Yes I can,—shall try it anyhow. I am bound to create a sensation, or have an adventure this afternoon. Wish the Governor would keep a coachman,—think it is confounded mean anyhow."

"Don't talk so, brother! Papa can afford it, everybody knows—it is only one of his eccentricities."

It was a warm July day, and the party entertained each other with remarks upon the miseries of country life, while they rode through several miles of sandy road, which was not relieved by any grateful shade. At length broad wheat fields lined either side, and now they were golden, ready for the reaper,—in many places the farmers had already begun to secure their grain. There was beauty everywhere,—in the blue sky above, and upon the fruitful earth beneath; but the coarse-grained nature which occupied that elegant carriage failed to perceive it.

"Doesn't Ida Hart live somewhere about here? I do want to see her very much. It seems strange that a girl of her talents can be content to immure herself in the country," remarked Elvira Anderson.

"I was at Mr. Hart's one evening last

winter, and am confident that he lives in this region; but it must be nearly four miles to his residence. Ida is a fine girl,—we must call upon her,"—and Tom smoothed his silken mustache.

"What an ugly house that is,—look Tom, look Elvira!—built of *logs*, too.—Goodness! how can any one exist in such a place. They must be heathen. There is a woman at the window,—she seems to be neatly dressed. I presume that she is one of that class who try to 'put on airs,' and ape city fashions. I propose that we call and ask for some bread and milk,—we can pretend that we have traveled some distance, and are excessively fatigued and famished. Wouldn't it be a capital joke to relate to our city acquaintances?" and Kate clapped her hands enthusiastically, while her companions joined with her, and laughed immoderately at the plan.

Tom immediately reined his horses up to the unpretending dwelling, and assisted his sisters to alight. As they walked up the path he drew down his face with comic gravity, while mentally preparing an introductory speech. The lady met her callers at the door, and they were somewhat "taken aback" with her dignified appearance. Elvira perceived their mistake at once, but it was too late to recede, and Tom still wore an air of assurance. With many bows and extra flourishes, he proceeded to present the case of a wearied, famished party, who would be happy to partake of her hospitality, in the shape of bread and milk. Kate's inward amusement, and the airs of superiority which she tried to assume, were not unobserved by the well bred woman, who immediately placed chairs for them and then hastened away to obey their request.

The party had not anticipated such a ready acquiescence, and now glancing about them, they perceived marks of intellectual tastes, for the gilt bindings of a choice selection of volumes shone through the glass doors of a carved bookcase.—The apartment was humble, but neatly furnished; and now they watched the operations of their obliging hostess, with ill-concealed uneasiness. She spread a snowy cloth upon the table, and soon emerged from the pantry with a loaf of light white bread; and then three large bowls, with silver spoons, made their appearance. Last of all, a bright tin pan, brimming with milk, and overlaid with a thin crusting of yellow cream. It was poured into the bowls, and then the visitors were invited to partake.

Elvira blushed violently—Kate tossed her head and tried to wink very roguishly at Tom, while she flounced up to the table, and, sitting down, spread out her rich silks upon the rag carpet. Her brother's self-possession did not forsake him, however, until he, too, was seated; when a new difficulty presented itself, in the shape of his primrose kid. His hands had become swollen with the heat and the exercise of reigning in his highly mettled steeds, and now it was impossible to draw them off.

"I can never get rid of these pestering things; what shall I do?" said he, in a low tone.

"Cut them," rejoined Kate, nonchalantly.

"I han't any knife."

"Here is one," and the color mounted to his brow as their polite hostess came out, very noiselessly, from the pantry with the desired article, and then withdrew from the room but not before they all perceived her inward amusement at the circumstance.

Tom struck the sharp blade into his delicate gloves with a savage pleasure, and sought to hide his chagrin and vexation with a gay laugh. But the bread and milk must not be neglected. The party knew that it would not answer to slight the hospitality which had been begged and so cheerfully granted. They swallowed their liberal allowance with a disagreeable sense of stuffing, for a well-filled dinner table had appeased their appetites only an hour previous; and then, with many thanks for their entertainment, took their leave.

Upon seating themselves in the carriage again, Tom curtly remarked, "There girls! I hope you are satisfied with 'astonishing the natives' now."

"And you are satisfied with 'creating a sensation,' in those gloves,—rather a disagreeable one for your hands though," retorted Kate.

Tom laughed good-naturedly, and they rode on in silence for some time, when he suddenly halted in front of a beautiful country residence, embowered in shrubbery, and half hid from view by a shady grove of majestic trees.

"Mr. Hart lives here. I did not know that we were so near his estate,—shall we call?"

"O, yes, certainly!" ejaculated the ladies.

Miss Ida met her old acquaintances with undisguised pleasure. The party enjoyed their call extremely, and ere they