

LITERARY.

The New Cook.

"There is one thing you mustn't forget, Tom."

"What's that Emma?"

"Don't forget to go to the registry office and send me a cook. The new girl is good for nothing, and the old one can't do everything. Young or old man or woman, I don't care, only send me up a competent cook by ten o'clock this morning."

"Don't look so desperate, sis, I'll remember it. I want things in pretty good style for Maxwell, he's used to it—fond of good dinners, and I guess I'll send you a good smart cook, Emma."

Mr. Thomas Maye disappeared with a reassuring nod. He had a proverbially bad memory, and pretty Emma Maye knew it very well, yet in this desperate emergency she trusted him. During the two years she had had charge of her widowed brother's family they had been blessed with the most skilful of cooks; but John had taken a fancy to get married, and her place was hastily supplied by one who soon proved herself incapable.

Just at this juncture, Mr. Maye received tidings that his dead wife's favorite brother, Arthur Maxwell, just returned from abroad, would pay him a visit. From the first Emma had been nervous over the responsibility of entertaining this elegant young man, whom she had never seen. She was lovely and accomplished, but she could not cook—in fact she had never tried.

It was 7.30 o'clock when Mr. Maye went to town. He took nothing but a cup of coffee at 7 o'clock, and lunched at his favorite restaurant at 11 o'clock. At 3.30 o'clock they dined, and Mr. Maxwell was expected by the 3.30 o'clock train.

"There," sighed Emma, when, two hours after her brother's departure, the house was in its usual exquisite order, and the viands and flowers sent up for dinner, "if Tom doesn't forget, and if he sends up a cook, everything will be nice enough."

She did not dare think of the possibility of Tom's having forgotten, or that of the cook not coming for any other reason; but when, precisely at ten o'clock, the door bell rang, a secret weight was lifted from her heart. She ran herself to answer the summons. A medium sized, well-dressed young man stood at the entrance, and she brightened up at sight of him.

"I am very glad you are so punctual. I was afraid I should be disappointed," she said, leading the way to the kitchen without an instant's delay. "Let me see—ten o'clock. I shall have to set you to work at once to prepare a good dinner. We are expecting company from London, my cook has left me, and I do not know anything about cooking. What is your name?" literally leaving the young man of his hat, and hanging it as high out of his reach as possible.

His reply was rather faint, but she thought she caught it.

"Mac? You don't look like an Irishman. But it doesn't make any difference. Are you a good cook?"

The smile of the young man was rather puzzling. "I'll do my best," he answered pleasantly.

"You see there's nothing in the house but cold chicken," continued Emma, unconsciously wringing her little hands, as she continued to address the new cook, who certainly listened with attention. "But my brother has sent up some pigeons—to be roasted I suppose."

"Yes'm."

"Can you make celery salad?"

"I think I can."

"And Mayonnaise sauce for the cold chicken?"

"Yes'm."

"Can you make French soup?"

"I can."

"Oh well, I think you will do," beginning to look relieved.

"Be sure the vegetables are not overdone, and the coffee good—my brother is very particular about his coffee. And we will have a Florentine pudding," with an inquiring look.

"Yes'm," readily.

The new cook was already girding himself with one of the white towels that lay on the dresser, and casting a scrutinizing glance at the range fire.

Quite reassured in spirit Emma was turning, when she stopped to add:

"I will lay the table myself to day Mac, and fill the fruit dishes and vases. But if you give satisfaction I will entrust you with the key of the china closet, and you will have the entire care of the table."

And with a gracious nod the young lady withdrew from the kitchen.

She piled the fruit dishes with rosy pears, golden oranges, and white grapes, filled the vases with roses, lilies and ferns; set clusters of dainty glasses filled with amber jelly among the silver and china, and then with a sigh of satisfaction at the result ran away to dress.

"I'll not go near the kitchen to even smell the dinner, I don't know anything about cooking it and will trust to luck. I have an idea that Mac is really capable—is going to prove a treasure. His dress was so neat and he was so quiet and respectful," concluded Emma, leisurely arranging her hair.

Her new dress, with its abundant lace and cardinal ribbons, was very becoming, and fitted the petite round figure so perfectly that Emma felt at peace with all the world.

"I have heard that Mr. Arthur Maxwell is very fastidious in the matter of ladies' dress," mused Emma, twisting her head over her shoulder to see the effect of her sash, "I wonder what his first impression of me will be? I should like to have poor Ally's brother like me."

At length the last bracelet was clasped; the last touch given, and retiring backwards from the mirror with a radiant face, Emma turned and ran up to the nursery to see the children dressed for company, and also to speak with the boys—and it must be confessed, flirt a little with Mr. Vincent, the tutor, who was always at her service for this exercise.

There was a delightfully savory odor in the house, when she came down and made a few additions to the table.

She looked at her watch—3.05. Then she went softly to the end of the hall, and listened to the lively clatter in the kitchen. She could hear Mac chatting pleasantly with the little housemaid Nanny, and all seemed to be well in that direction.

At 3.10 she repaired to the drawing-room, and took a seat overlooking the street.

Carriages came, and carriages went, but none of them stopped at the entrance.

The little girls, brave in new ribbons, came down.

Mr. Vincent and the boys came down.

Mr. Maye's latch-key settled in the door, and the dinner bell rang.

"Not come?" asked Mr. Maye at sight of Emma's disappointed face.

"No," she replied, "and such a nice dinner!"

"Very strange!" mused that gentle man, leading the way to the dining-room. "I hadn't the least doubt—Why my dear fellow!" seizing by the shoulders the new cook, who, acting as butler, had just placed the soup tureen on the table—"my dear, dear fellow how is this? Emma declared you hadn't come!"

"That young lady grew as white as

the table cloth, and grasped a chair for support.

"That Mr. Arthur Maxwell? I thought it was the cook!"

"I came earlier than I expected, and in time to make myself useful to Miss Emma," laughed Mr. Maxwell, divesting himself of his white towel and bowing with grace to that young lady.

"How could she have fallen into such an error?"

"I was so terribly anxious—I didn't look at you twice. Mr. Maxwell I hope you will forgive me!" stammered Emma, as red now as she had been pale.

"There is nothing to forgive, if my dinner turns out well," he added, laughing, evidently the sweetest tempered man in the world. I learned to cook when I was a student in Paris—a Frenchman taught me. I have been rather proud of my culinary skill, but I am a little out of practice now, and am not quite sure of the Florentine."

"Emma," cried Mr. Maye, "what does all this mean?"

"Why, John, you promised to send me a man cook."

Mr. Maye clasped his hands tragically.

"Emma, I forgot it."

"Well, he came just at ten o'clock and I thought he was the cook; I ushered him into the kitchen among the pots and pans. I questioned him as to what he knew about cooking. I urged him to make all haste and serve the dinner; and—and I called him an Irishman!" sobbed Emma hysterically.

"No offense, Miss Emma. My grandfather, on my mother's side—Major Trelawney—was an Irishman," observed Mr. Maxwell coolly. "And since I have done my best, won't you try the soup before it is cold?"

The others stared and Emma cried, but Mr. Maye laughed—laughed uproariously.

"The best joke of the season! Sit down everybody! Emma, you foolish girl, don't cry. And as for your Florentine—Arthur, tell Nanny to bring it in. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, you know."

But Mr. Arthur was so delightful, so winning, and so witty, so kind to his agitated young hostess, and he'd cooked such an excellent dinner—from the pigeons to the pudding, everything was perfect.

By and by Emma was herself again.

"This has taught me a lesson," she said. "I will never be so desperately situated again. I will learn to cook."

"Let me teach you," said Arthur. He did.

"A Daughter Worth Having."

"Harvey Mills has failed!" said Mrs. Smithson, one chilly spring evening, as she ran to see her next door neighbor and intimate friend, Mrs. James.

"My husband just came home, and he says what we supposed to be a rumor only is a sad fact; the assignment was made yesterday. I threw on a shawl and ran over to tell you. They are to keep the house under some sort of an arrangement, but they have discharged all their servants; now, Mrs. James, what in the world Mills will do, with Mrs. Mills' invalid habits, and Miss Helen with her dainty ways and refined bringing up, is more than I know," and pretty shallow Mrs. Smithson looked at her news-loving friend and neighbor, with the air of an epicure regarding some favorite dish.

"I heard about it last evening," said Mrs. James, adjusting the pink ribbon at the throat of her black silk dinner dress, and this morning I presumed upon your cousinship so far as to drive over and see how they were getting along. And really, Mrs. Smithson, you will be surprised when I tell

you that, although I expected to find the family in great confusion and distress, I never saw them in such a comfortable way and in such good spirits. The worst was over, of course, and they had all settled into the new order of things as naturally as could be. My cousin, Mrs. Mills, was sitting as calm as you please up there in her sunny morning room looking as fresh and fresh as she ate her toast and sipped her coffee.

"Our comfortable and cosy appearance is all due to Helena," said she. "That dear child has taken the helm. I never dreamed that she had so much executive ability. We were quite broken down at first, but she made her father go over the details of his business with her, and they found that by disposing of Helena's grand piano, the paintings and slabs, and costly bric-a-brac her father often indulged her in buying, we could pay dollar for dollar, and so keep the house. My husband's old friend Mr. Bartlett, who keeps the art store, you know, and who has taken a great interest in Helena, bought back the statuary, vases, &c., at a small discount, and Barker, who sold us the piano a year or so ago, and who is another old friend, and knew, of course, just how we were situated, took it back, deducting only twenty-five dollars."

"Helena has just gone into the kitchen. What she will do there I don't know; but she says she needs the exercise, that she has not attended the cooking school here in the city for nothing, and so long as the meals are served regularly and properly and the house kept in good order, her father and I are not to worry." After she told me that, I drew my call to a close and ran down to the kitchen to see her dainty daughter there. And what do you think? I found that girl at the sink, with her sleeves rolled up, an immense white apron on, washing a kettle!"

"Washing a kettle!" repeated Mrs. Smithson, holding up both her soft, white hands in unmeasured astonishment.

"Yes, Mrs. Smithson, washing a great black, greasy, iron kettle that meat had been boiled in, and had been left unwashed and gummy when the cook left. And do you know? She was laughing over it all, and saying to her youngest brother, who stood near by, that she really liked it, for she now felt she was making herself useful."

"The idea! Liking to wash kettles!" and the two fine ladies looked at each other in open eyed wonder.

"It seems to me as if Helena Mills was trying to make the best of her father's altered fortunes, and was simply doing her duty in the premises," spoke Miss Carlton, Ida James' new drawing teacher, who was that evening engaged in giving her pupil a lesson in drawing on the opposite side of the centre table. She spoke in an earnest yet modest way, and it being the vogue in New City just then to patronize Miss Carlton, the pretty and accomplished graduate from Vassar, the two ladies looked at her amiably, and went on:

"Yes, perhaps," replied Mrs. Smithson, "but how could a girl of real native refinement (both sides of the 'old stock') take so kindly to washing pots and kettles. The fact of it is people have been mistaken in Helena Mills. She never possessed that innate gentility she has had credit for. But every one finds their level, sooner or later—be, be!"

These two women, having thus summarily disposed of Helena Mills, socially, they repeated their belief that the lovely, dutiful young girl had now found her proper level in their set until it was common talk in New City. Miss Carlton in her round of professional calls among the so-called elite was entertained in nearly every