

# OUR FARM HOMES



## "Object Matrimony"

By ANNETTE CHADBOURNE SYMMES

(Continued from last week)

It seemed to Martin he had never seen such a change come over a home as came upon his after Dolores' advent. She filled it with sunshine and song, and it became the place of all the earth which he loved the best.

Once in a while he would think of that advertisement in "Wedding Bells," but he congratulated himself that nobody would answer it, and hurriedly pushed the notion into the background of his mind, as often as it presented itself.

Consequently it was a rude shock to him to find in his postoffice box one evening a handful of letters addressed to "M. G., Box 27, New Joppa." If everyone had been a dun for a hundred dollars, and if it had been plain that they were such, he could not have snatched them up and pocketed them more speedily, nor would he have opened them that night in his room with more trepidation.

There was a certain degree of similarity to the letters. They mentioned the fact that they had seen the advertisement in the "Wedding Bells" monthly, and ventured to write hoping they might prove congenial. Their ages as they confessed them, ranged from twenty years to the age limit which he had set; and according to the same authority, their charms, their common sense, and their desire for congenial companionship were beyond belief. Two sent pictures, one of a girl with a face like a poodle's, half hidden under an immense pompadour, another lettering to the fall, and the other the presentment of a lady of Hibernian features, who was, to say the least, old-looking for twenty-five.

With a face which burned for the second time that day, Martin collected the letters and thrust them into his table drawer. As he thought of it now, how foolish he had been to dream of finding his fate in such a way! What would Dolores think, if he knew that he had done such a thing! He was beginning to care exceedingly what Dolores thought of what he did.

He changed the hiding-place of those letters four times before he got into bed, and got up twice afterwards to change them again, fearing lest Dolores should happen upon them, and known by the addresses to what depths he had fallen. His dreams were haunted with visions of determined damsels, bent upon accompanying him to the altar, whether he would or no, and he woke gasping with fright at the vision of Dolores draping him in one of her wrappers and defending him with the statement that he was a girl, and that nobody of his name lived there.

The next morning he wrote a letter to "Wedding Bells," ordering the sheet stopped, but he was not out of danger yet, and there was plenty of trouble ahead.

### CHAPTER III.

"I don't believe I'll go to market on runners after to-day," remarked

Martin, at the early breakfast on market morning, the week after his first grist of letters had arrived. "The sky looks funny, and if I'm not mistaken, we're going to have rain."

"How do you know?" asked Dolores, with interest. She was insatiable concerning the simple lore with which the farmer's mind is stored and kept Martin busy enlightening her most of the time.

Martin explained the signs which led him to the conclusion he had formed, and Dolores, as was her wont,



What is the Home Garden Worth to the Table at Retail Prices?

fired them all away in her brain for future reference. She looked much better than when she came to the farm. Her color was brighter, and she had gained in flesh. There was a bright, contented expression upon her face, too, which contrasted with the look of anxiety which it had worn when she came to see him. She helped Martin off in the cold night of the March morning, and then turned to her daily tasks. Aunt Lovey was permitted to sleep as long as she pleased, and had not appeared at breakfast. Aunt Lovey was nothing if not wise, and she made her self "conspicuous by her absence" a great deal those days.

Meantime Martin was uneasily cogitating what he should do about the letters from maidens on matrimony bed, which continued to flow in ever-increasing volume. He had received over fifty now, of all grades of paper, penmanship, and sensibleness and silliness of subject matter. A few sounded as if written by people with an average complement of brains, but most of them were of the "gushy-mushy" type, which made him hot and cold by turns as he read.

He had written a second letter to "Wedding Bells," and received an answer that as the paper was already set up, the next number would per-

force contain his advertisement, but that promptly after its publication, they would see that no more bore his advertisement. Martin now foresaw that another month of letters must ensue before the advertisement would cease to do its work. And even then there would be scatterings come in from people who had picked up the back copies and seen it.

Never did criminal trying to conceal his crime labor harder than did Martin to hide from Dolores what he had been about. He was careful never to permit anybody to get the mail, except himself, and hid all his letters until he could burn them. But still he was haunted by the fear that someone might find it out some way and tell Dolores.

Before he returned from market it had begun to rain in torrents, and he was glad of the oil-skin coat and sooty vester hat which Dolores had brought to the pump and insisted upon his taking that morning. He was thinking of Dolores all the way home; how warm and cozy the sitting-room would look when he reached the farm, with the lamp lighted and the table set for supper with the hot, savory meal which she always had for him on market days.

As he approached the house he saw that there was a light in the parlor, and as he drove past the windows, he

"Why, yes," she remarked, impatiently, "kidding her brow." "I answered your letter in 'Wedding Bells,' you recollect, and said that before I wanted to see the man, and the place I was corresponding with. There's a good deal of cheating done in these matrimonial agencies and I don't intend to be caught napping. But I guess you told the truth, I asked the postmaster about you, and he said you was one of the best and most comestically fixed men in the town. Ain't you glad to see me?"

Martin gathered his dazed wits together and mumbled something intended for a welcome, as he waded his guest back to her seat. Since he had received so many letters, he had burned some unrequited, and evidently this woman's was among the number.

His guest was evidently not troubled with a cold, nor was she sensitive concerning the nature of her reception, for she chuckled on and on, while Martin's benumbed brain caught the fragments of the information she was dispensing.

"Yes, Mrs. Jones," she was saying, "I'm divorced from my husband, but I was going to keep the Mrs. Jones name, for I certainly don't want to think I'm an old maid. Two years ago next April we got divorced. Cried and abused me, but I wouldn't leave him, while he didn't hang me around quite so bad as was made out, and he wasn't a pleasant man to live with. I been living with my married sister over in Hancock township, but I been lookin' out for myself, too, and when I saw that advertisement in 'Wedding Bells,' I saw it was so near thinks I to myself, 'I'll go over and see him.' I'd made pretty sure we'd suit each other, and if we didn't, why I could stop at the hotel and go home next day. I see you've got a kind girl. She looks kind of up at comin' to me. She didn't seem to be disappointed, but I was disappointed. Even for herself, because he knew wonderful and be plan for her, while a little while ago he was in the house. And all the while hours of grief and what at times her, came the the hour of meeting would have to be much they would together."

"How did you convince her?" asked Martin.

"Why, showed her the advertisement that I'd clipped out an' had in my pocketbook, an' told her about it, an' that I was comin' to-day, an' you not saying anything. That's how."

Martin groaned in spirit. Dolores knew the worst now. He was undone indeed! But Mrs. Jones gabbled away on, until Dolores announced supper ready.

He escorted Mrs. Jones to the fatal board, which exhibited some holiday features in the shape of sheep preserves and frosted cakes, the viands were as dust and ashes to the taste of the miserable Martin. Dolores said little, but bore that curious expression still. Aunt Lovey, who was so gentle that she could not bear to have anybody uncomfortable, sustained such conversation as was made by anybody but the unassuming guest.

They were just rising from the table when the sound of bells in the parlor took Martin to the door to find a neighbor's team drawn up beside the steps, and the figure of a woman preparing to alight.

"Hello, Martin!" was the genial greeting of the driver. "Here's a company I've brought out to see you." "As a day, Martin assisted the female to the doorstep, received the suitcase which was also handed out, and saw the man drive away. He turned to the guest who had so unexpectedly arrived. She seemed older and wiser, and when she stepped into the brightly lighted room, she displayed a self-possession as great as that of Mrs. Jones.

(Continued next week)

# The Up

## The Sp

"Rejoice, ye  
greet in them—

A young lad  
drowned not his  
brother seen  
ashed ahead  
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did the dead  
ly whispered—  
Do not think  
of bringing him  
as he was before  
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again and again  
great comfort to  
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Nature, and not  
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Even for herself  
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plan for her, wh  
a little while ago  
And all the wh  
hours of grief a  
what at times  
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the hour of meet  
would have to b  
much they would  
together."

"And God shall  
from their eyes,  
no more death,  
crying, neither  
more pain."—Re

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