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Certainly to the aged bridegroom the 'coddling was most gratifying. "Mandy would never remember that I can't eat toast unless it's softened in hot milk; she said she despised bean-soup, an' I've always thought it was fit for a king. An' then"—here Mr. Hooper waxed emphatic—"an' then, Great Scott! I must say there's nothin' like stretchin' one's legs under one's own table! 'Sides now if I want to pour my tea into my saucer or eat with my knife, like I learned to when I was little, there's nobody to find fault. Mis' Wig—my wife, I mean—she only chuckles an' says, 'Suit yourself, my dear.' An' I tell you I be suited! I ain't been so happy sence I went fishin' sixty years ago an' ketched my first string o' suckers.

Everybody said Mr. Hooper looked ten years younger since his marriage; the ragged ends of his hair and beard were neatly trimmed—his wife did that, with a towel tied around his neck; she persuaded him to give his ancient broadcloth suit to a needy trap and to buy one of fashionable make and material. Moreover, one of the results of her good cooking was to make his exceedingly lean figure gradually round out into firm and portly curves.

But for one thing old Mr. Hooper's cup of joy would have been full. That one thing was the estrangement from his son's family. Ever since the night of the wedding the younger Silas had treated his father with but

scant courtesy. And when the two Mrs. Hoopers met at church or on the street, frost was in the air—that is as far as the younger woman was concerned. For, as she stoutly maintained, "I shall always believe that that fat, old red-cheeked nurse inveigled pa into marrying her; a regular bewitchment it was. I've been expectin' she'd send for some o' Silas's mother's things, but she



'Good-evenin', Silas. . . I thought I'd come, too, an'—an'—

ain't done it yet. Folks, say she's got property of her own a thousand dollars, life-insurance from Wiggins an' a house 'n lot of her own she rents, over in Winchester, for two hundred dollars a year, besides money in the bank she's saved by nursin'. But I don't believe it. I sha'n't have anything to do with her; and no more will Silas."

Now it wasn't twenty-four hours after this speech that the

maker thereof came to grief by means of a broken step in the outside cellar-way.

"I must say that if pa had been here, them steps would have been mended long ago," was young Mrs. Hooper's tearful outburst when her remorseful husband, assisted by a kind neighbor, carried her into the house.

Since his departure, however, she had been brought to a realization of his usefulness in small matters. Silas, junior, absorbed in the raising of fine stock and big crops had no time to spend over knobless doors and cracked window-panes. Such minor matters he had left to the attention of his father.

A bruised shoulder and a sprained ankle proved to be the result of her unlucky tumble, and for several days she was forced to lie on the couch in the sitting-room, hourly consumed by contempt, pity and indignation as she watched her husband's attempts at housework.

"Silas Hooper! are you crazy?" she exclaimed tartly on the second morning. "Do you know what you've done, man alive? You've gon an' stirred up the pancake-batter with plaster of Paris instead of buckwheat flour."

"Great guns, Handy! Don't scold any more! I've lost ten pounds of solid flesh these last two days. 'Taint my sphere, this doin' housework! Of all the puddin', fussy, do-it-over-an'-over-again occupations, it's the very worst! But I suppose I was

sort of absent-minded this mornin', because of little Si."

"The baby—hurt?" and in her agitation, Mrs. Hooper strove to rise to a sitting posture.

"There! there! I don't spring up like that. Little Si is in the crib there all right; only he seems to have a cold or something."

Mandy's face was pale and anxious as, in compliance with her request, the baby was placed in her arms.

"He looked real sick, I think! Breathes queer, don't you notice it? Sort o' choked up an'"

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