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Entertained by Angels.

By Annie Hamilton Donnell.



THE touring car dashed over the crest of the hill, down a bit of steep grade that to any but two imperturbable youths would have been alarming, and sped smoothly out on a long, apparently endless plain. The youth at the wheel relinquished his grip a little and allowed his eyes to scan certain cloud-banks to his left.

"Looks nasty out there," he remarked, as he might have said: "Fine sunset, isn't it?"

"Sure," rejoined the other, calmly. "Bet you a dollar we're in for it."

Sundry houses scattered sparsely along their way shot by in rather a startling way, indicating more steam on. A white church spire in the distance came rapidly to meet them.

"We must be getting on. What time have you, Kit?"

"Four-twenty. Where are we down on the hills to light, artyhow?"

"Lord knows, I don't. One thing's certain, I'm not going to have the Old Girl get a wetting."

"Never!" agreed the other with enthusiasm. They might have been talking of a pet child of delicate constitution.

"Think it's going to rain soon?—cricky, it's raining now! I'll send her ahead—look for an open shed or barn, Kit. Both sides o' the road, sharp!"

"Sure. I've got two eyes, haven't I? When I say 'Ready,' pull her up."

The two of them—George Holland and Christopher Dill—were college fellows out on a vacation jaunt. They had left the beaten paths they both knew and were "discovering Nature," as Kit said. Kit claimed to be a lineal descendant of the Christopher of historic renown. He was fond of discovering things, which trait may or may not have been his only title to the claim.

"Here we have it!" he exclaimed suddenly, but the machine sped on unchecked.

"Aren't you going to run her in? I tell you I've found a place!" he roared above the din of progress.

"Where?"

"Oh, back there a mile or so," he said nonchalantly.

"Wouldn't trouble to go back. It's nice and—er—moist out here."



"This," proving to be a large card tacked to the little battered door, read in this wise:

You dear George and Kit, walk right in and make yourselves comfortable! The key's V-O-E-F-S the S-V-L-Y — Kit will know. Shall be back tomorrow — too bad but unavoidable. The house is yours' mean-while.

"Why in thunder didn't you say 'Ready?'" The owner of the delicate-constituted child was palpably cross. "How was I to know?"

They shot on over the level roadway, searching for other places of promise, but finding none. The rain slanted steadily into their faces.

"This won't do," George Holland shouted. "What sort of a place was that one back there?"

"Good sort—open barn. Folks away, I should say."

"Best to go back?"

"Sure. The Old Girl's getting it wet at this rate. Doesn't look much like letting up."

"Back there" they found barn doors hospitably wide open, and with small ceremony entered in. After rubbing the Old Girl down with solicitous tenderness, they stood in the great doorway and gazed gloomily into the rain.

The prospect was not cheerful. Night was coming on, the storm was getting under headway and bade fair to become a tempest; they were in an undiscovered country—wet, famished, uncomfortable aliens.

"We can sleep on the hay up—er—up attic," suggested George Holland with praiseworthy philosophy. "What's the matter with that, Kit?"

"Oh, no matter at all, only there doesn't happen to be any 'hay. I've been 'up attic.'"

"No hay! What kind of a barn is this with no hay in it?"

"Probably it was designed as an asylum for itinerant Old Girls. In which case hay doesn't seem—"

"I'm going to tackle the house; you can do as you please. Maybe some nice Christian bedridden party left at home who'd let us go in and camp down somewhere till the clouds roll by. Ta-ta—"

"Where thou goest, I go. Guess I've got as good a claim on the nice, bed-ridden party as you have!"

It was a little, rather battered old house, with a tiny front porch as the sole ornamental feature. No signs of life were anywhere visible to the naked eye. Kit got ahead and reconnoitered the tiny porch.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed; then, "Well, the dickens!" then in climax, "By thunder!"

"What's up?" queried George Holland, coming up with his usual leisure. "You don't tell me the bed-ridden party keeps a dog—or a gun?"