

VILLANELLE.

Just to please my Bonnie Belle
With her welcome eyes of blue
Lo, I sing a villanelle.

List the merry music swell!
Haste, ye rhymes, in measure true
Just to please my Bonnie Belle.

Have a care to foot it well,
Tipping like a fairy crew:
Lo, I sing a villanelle.

Come from where the Pixies dwell,
Dance with sandals dipped in dew
Just to please my Bonnie Belle.

In her ear, the tiny shell,
Let my peerless passion sue:
Lo, I sing a villanelle.

Will she listen? Who can tell?
Does she love me? Would I knew!
Just to please my Bonnie Belle
Lo, I sing a villanelle.

SAMUEL MINTON PECK.

SIX MONTHS OF BLISS.

A housekeeper is apt to regard those of her friends who, for any cause, are obliged to board, much as married women look at old maids. Whether it is because "misery loves company," or that they really believe in married bliss or housekeeping happiness, is hard to tell; yet women are notoriously match-makers, and as notoriously anxious to convert all their boarding friends into believing that housekeeping is full of delights and pleasures and devoid of any cares or worries. To be sure, servants are hard to manage sometimes, and a few minor troubles arise, but they are nothing in comparison with the discomforts and unpleasant experiences of life in a boarding-house. So I had come to believe, from what my friends had told me and from what I remembered of my mother's faultless housekeeping. I had known nothing of it all by experience, and I felt that if the time ever came when I should have a home of my own I should be perfectly able to manage it to perfection, and I often built air-castles, in which a lovely future home was a central and prominent figure. I had boarded for about ten years, and, like Noah's dove, had found no resting-place. Consequently one day I was lifted to the seventh grade of happiness when a dear little woman, a staunch friend and splendid housekeeper, ran in and said,—

"Oh, I'm going to Europe next week, for six months. Won't you come and live in our house while we are gone? You can then have a home of your own and will not be obliged to put up with so much discomfort and annoyance. Do say 'yes'; I should then leave home without a care on my mind."

I managed, however, to preserve my wifely dignity enough to ask delay till evening, in order to find out "his" opinion, though of course I had already decided, for my friend's house was large, handsome, near the park, furnished most elegantly, and with enough bric-a-brac and pictures to satisfy Oscar Wilde himself. So when my better-half (whom I will call Demosthenes, for short, and also because he is something of an orator, especially when anything vexes him,—on which occasions he rises to sublime heights and is truly eloquent, in fifteen languages, too!) came home, I told him of the good fortune which had come to us, for it seemed like something too good to be true, that we were actually to have a whole, big house to ourselves, and all the world-famous comforts of a home instead of one good-sized room in somebody else's house; that I could have just what I desired for breakfast, dinner, and supper, and at the hours I liked. My fancy ran riot at the marvels of good things that I was going to cook just as mother did before her dear, tireless hands were folded away in their first and last repose.

My friend went away and we moved our modest household goods into the big, brownstone house. I was happy. I surveyed everything with a new interest. It belonged to me now for six months, and I was mistress of a princely home. Demosthenes had accepted with the gentle remark that he "was afraid it would cost us much more than our boarding had, what with servants, etc.," and I had answered sweetly that "he should see that it would not cost us half as much, and that, with the help of my washerwoman, I intended to do all the work." He looked at me a moment in astonishment, and simply said,—

"You!"

His air of mocking incredulity put me at once on my dignity, and I read him a long homily against servants,—their insolence, their untrustworthiness,—and told him that it was really child's play to do the work for two persons and a half,—meaning my little boy. I furthermore said that intelligence in housekeeping was more than seven eighths of the work, and I knew that I could do it, etc., etc. I think I convinced him then. Anyhow I didn't engage a servant, and all the help I wished was that of the woman who was to come once a week and scrub for me.

The house was in "apple-pie order," with the exception of the cellar, where my friends' servants had been wont to bury their dead, or, in other words, throw all the dirt, ashes, and broken dishes, until there was about three tons (forty-four barrelsful), when we had it finally taken away.

How I reveled in the immensity of the house that first week! I put Demosthenes in one large

room, with dressing-room, bath, and a half a dozen closets attached; and I took another to myself, with quite as many modern improvements. I gave my little boy, "Toots" by name, a handsome, large room for nursery and play-room. I had breakfast in the pretty little breakfast-room, and dinner in the dining-room. I sat in the front parlor evenings, and used only the back parlor mornings, and enjoyed the novel sensation of space for certainly a week. Then I began to think of burglars. What should I do all alone? I decided that I preferred Demosthenes, with all his eloquence, to being left alone; besides which, I concluded that it was not necessary to have those extra rooms to keep in order, for, to speak the truth, the dust did seem to sift and filter into that house as if by magic. The windows and doors were all right, and the walls were sound; yet dust was omnipresent. I swept and I dusted, and a last decided that I would close tightly several of the upstairs rooms, which I did not need. That was all right, until one day, when I had occasion to enter one, a dozen moths fluttered about, causing a speedy opening, dusting, peppering, and insect-powdering, according to the most approved methods, and only then I became aware of the fact that rooms must be attended to whether used or not.

I have said nothing of my culinary triumphs and failures. The triumphs would be easy to enumerate; the failures would require more space than you would be willing to allow. Still, as I bought my bread, used no pastry, and could make really good coffee, I managed with the aid of fruit, to get along. It is true that I began by ordering the amount of meat necessary for ten persons, but a very convenient beggar relieved me of the surplus. I kept it a profound secret, but I really believe I almost entirely supported three indigent families during those six months. They never left food untasted on their plates (they took it in baskets), they never looked askance at anything, but always "God blessed me," until I felt really grateful to them.

I would rise early and tell Demosthenes not to hurry himself, and I could generally get rid of all the remains and failures of the previous day before he was down-stairs, and by the time breakfast was ready, the parlors were in order and all the little odds and ends picked up, and when breakfast was over and Demosthenes sat back in his easy-chair for me to read the morning papers to him, he actually began to show signs of impatience when told that I could no longer spare time for that very intellectual amusement, that now I must wash up the breakfast things, and prepare the dinner, and make the beds, and dust, go to market, or that the ice box must be cleaned out, and—the rest was wasted on the desert air. Demosthenes was left grumbling to himself that, since we came into the house, we did not have a bit of comfort; that I must always be doing this or that, and he didn't see any reason why I could not leave those things and do them later. I tried to convince him that it would do to read the papers after dinner; but he would not see it so; and then I asked him what reason there was to hinder him from reading them himself; he could read; and that I didn't see why he needed to discuss all the news when he never agreed with me anyway; and I thought it real hateful and selfish of him anyhow. Here he gave me a look made up of sadness and reproach, put on his hat without a word, and went out.

I supposed I had gained a victory, for it was wrong of him to expect me to sit down cosily and read the little bits of news (and I always picked out the bits that interested us both, and he discussed them as he smoked his after-breakfast cigar); but somehow, I didn't feel like crying "Hurrah" over it, and the day was long and dreary, and the work dragged, for I kept sitting down and rehearsing mentally all that little story, and I would feel nearer like crying over it all than I liked to admit, for I am not a crying woman. But, you see, we never had quarreled. I determined, however, that I would try and arrange things so that I could have half an hour to read after breakfast; but after that morning he would put his hat on at once after he had eaten, and, kissing Toots and I, go directly out. I did cry after he went out, once or twice, but I did not give him the satisfaction of knowing it.

The work seemed to me to grow harder all the time; not because there was more to do, but because I carried a heavy heart about with me. We could not go out together any more. I had so much to do in the day-time that I was obliged to do my sewing in the evening. I seldom had time to look at the papers, and the splendid library of excellent books up-stairs never received more than longing glances. I had promised myself much pleasure from those books, and had pictured long, peaceful afternoons, wherein I should lie back in an easy-chair and revel in my favorite authors.

My little Toots grew fretful and unhappy. What to him was a big house if he had no one to keep him company? What to him were the treasures of Golconda, if his mother could not share them? He wanted to study his book, to write his copy; and he could not play soldier without a general, nor have a bit of fun. He hung about me until, at last, what with the work, the worry, and the sore heart I carried, I grew as petulant as he; and he often went crying up-stairs while I was laying the table, or washing dishes, or sweeping, or doing some other necessary work.

One day, when everything seemed strained to such a pitch that something must break, a young

lady friend came to visit me. She was fond of my little boy, and made much of him. She was bright, pretty, affectionate, and a fine musician, in fact, was studying for the grand opera; and the Chickering piano up in the back parlor, which had been voiceless since I came, now rang with glorious melody that rested me, charmed little Toots, and gave Demosthenes the deepest pleasure. Lizzie was in raptures about our delightful home. How charming, how delightful, how different from the pent-up Utica of a boarding-house! How happy I ought to be! Oh, would not I let her come and live with us? She would make no trouble at all. She did not care what she had to eat, if it was only home-like; and as she had to board (being away from home), she was so lonely, and wanted to be with friends; and would not I let her come, for a while, anyhow? I demurred at first, fearing that I could not fulfil the duties of a hostess, particularly when I thought of the expense, for I knew that I was already spending more money than it had cost us to board, and having all my labor for nothing. But she begged so hard, and insisted so delicately on paying her board, that I finally consented. Demosthenes agreed with me, and Toots was a happy boy again. I argued that it could not cost me any more than it had done, as three can have sufficient on what is provided for two. I gave her the room Demosthenes had used, and she became one of the family. All went well for a while; she was delighted with everything, and took Toots to the park and made him happy by unlimited sights of the roaring lions and chattering monkeys. Then in the afternoon, while I was getting dinner, and doing up the dishes afterward, and preparing for breakfast, etc., she would play and sing to Demosthenes, who seemed very well contented. I wasn't a bit jealous,—I knew I had brought it all upon myself—and yet I could not prevent two or three tears dropping off the end of my nose. I could not play on the piano; my hands were rough and red, and the joints stiff; and I fancied that Demosthenes imagined that they smelled of dish-water; for he did not kiss them any more, even when I brought him his lighted pipe.

One morning, we were all sitting around the breakfast-table. I don't know how it happened that I felt that I had the time to spare, when I knew that I ought to be at work: the front-parlor windows needed washing, the high front stoop was full of dust, the area and sidewalk all needed water, and my washerwoman had not come; but I could not go out-doors and do that. I drew the line right there: So while we were all sitting there, a Dutch woman who peddled vegetables came along, and I offered her her breakfast and a quarter of a dollar if she would "clean up" for me. She was willing, and sat down to her breakfast. When she was done, Demosthenes went and got the garden-hose from its nail and fixed it all right; so that by the time she got out into the area he was ready to turn on the water. The hose had a half-inch nozzle, and there was a very high pressure on. About an inch below the nozzle there was a hole in the hose as big as your thumb-nail. I heard him ask her if she was all ready; she replied "Yes," and he went up-stairs to dress for business; and I left the dining-room, which, like all dining-rooms in New York, was at the front of the house. I went into the kitchen, leaving Lizzie and Toots still at the table. Suddenly I heard a smothered scream from Toots and a wild yell from Lizzie, and I hurried back into the dining-room to find the table and floor flooded, and Toots wiping the water out of his eyes; while Lizzie rushed up-stairs to change her drenched dress. The Dutch woman was playing the hose on the parlor windows. She held it still with both hands, frightened, and only anxious to keep the furious stream from striking her, sublimely unconscious of the spiteful little stream pouring from the fatal hole and setting every movable thing in the dining-room afloat.

I dared not go to the open windows, and had to make quite a tour before I could get to the area door. When I had got there she had decided to go up on the front steps, the landing of which was about ten feet high. She began playing all down the front and on the tops of the parlor windows, when the gentleman next door on the left came out with his two little girls, dressed for a trip to Coney Island. The hole in the hose answered all purposes of a bath for all three, and they retired to the sacred sanctity of seclusion. In the mean time I had reached the area and called her to come down, but the rushing sound of the double cataract deafened her. A nice old gentleman started up our steps to tell her she was wanted. He went home, too, before going down town; and as she turned, she poured from the hole about a barrel of water into our right-hand neighbor's vestibule.

Finally she heard me call her and stooped over the stone balustrade to see what I wanted, still pointing the fatal muzzle straight in front of her. I opened my mouth to speak, and then I sat down on the dripping stone area to muse on the mutability of things, and try to think of some word a little more expressive than "darn" that would still be suitable for a lady to use. Then she turned her undivided attention and the full force of the nozzle on the front door. I got inside as best I could, leaving a trail of water behind me, and told Toots to go and call his papa quick to go and stop that lunatic. He called, and of course his papa had to run to the front door. He opened it, to take to his bosom as much water as could reach him before he got the door closed again, and he rushed down cellar to cut off the water, before any more damage

was done. She, having finished up there, and sent all the pedestrians to the other side of the street, came slowly down the steps, reaching the ground and turning just in time to strike our milkman a little above the pistol-pocket; and he, not having the fear of the Lord before his eyes, swore until I could fairly smell sulphur. All this while she was as innocent of all the damage she had done as Toots. Just as she got into the area, Demosthenes had reached the cellar. In his haste he forgot the pile of ashes, and fell full length upon them. When he arose, no one could find a fitting name for his appearance. He stopped off the water so suddenly that the foolish woman just stood there looking into the nozzle to see where it had gone to, when, as he wound up the hose, it spouted up suddenly and hit her in the eye, and she felt back against the railing, frightened nearly to death. It took me half a day to repair damages, and after that I depended upon friendly rainstorms to clean down those windows and things.

We had a garden at the back of the house, or rather a place for one, and we decided that the middle would look well with grass for Toots to play upon, and that we would have flowers all around the walls. So we got some grass-seed and planted it, and some flower seeds and planted them. Some of them were morning-glories, some pansies and mignonette, and others of various kinds. No grass ever made its appearance and no flower ever grew; but the whole yard was soon filled with a flourishing crop of rag-weed, the very raggedest kind too. Seeing that grass was not forthcoming, Demosthenes thought that rag-weed was better than nothing; so every night he watered that, with delightful patience. A few of the morning-glories did grow, and a sweet-potato also took root, and sent up long vines full of heart-shaped, shining leaves that covered the gray wall with rich color; but it was not long before the leaves began to grow scarce, and when we searched for the reason we found that every vine was nourishing whole families of caterpillars.

It was not long before little Toots began to call the back yard his managerie and it did not lack much of meriting the name, for he had preserve-jars full of grass-hoppers, katydids, potato-bugs, and beetles of several kinds, and more different colors and species of caterpillars than I ever was aware existed. Every little while I would find him laughing in glee over the vicious fighting of a couple of caterpillars; and it was really horrible to see how they would fight, taking each other by the neck, and bite, and writhe, and froth at the mouth. They were wicked things, but he felt just as grand as P. T. Barnum, with his "collection," as he called it. Often at night I would find his pockets full of defunct specimens.

When we despaired of the garden, we thought a couple of boxes of window-plants would be pretty. I obtained a box for each window, and we set to work to fill them with dirt. That had to be carried up two flights of stairs to the sitting-room, and it seemed as if we should never get them full. At last we succeeded; but lift them when full, neither of us could. So we felt that they were safe on the wide stone ledges, and began to look about for plants. Demosthenes met a Chinaman who was selling roots, which he gravely asserted would come out very good-looking. He bought two, also a paper containing several kinds of seeds, and planted them. There were hollyhocks; dwarf sunflowers, larkspur, and sweet-peas among them; and he certainly put a handiell in that box, besides a tea-cupful of flax-seed, the two roots, a Japanese lily bulb, and a few morning-glories. I asked why the flax-seed, and he answered that it had pretty flowers, when it blossomed.

I was determined to show more taste in the selection of the flowers in my box; so I went out and bought a calla bulb, four tuberoses, four gladioli, and several mignonette plants. Then, when he was out, I took his Jananese lily bulb and put it in the middle of my box, and put a red-skinned onion in its place. I also thought a fair exchange could be made by giving him an Irish potato in place of each root he had bought of the Chinaman. But our plants did not seem to grow, and when the rain came it was astonishing to see how the dirt in those boxes shrank in volume; in very shame, it seemed, for its poverty; so Demosthenes made midnight excursions to the street with a fire-shovel and a basket, and soon the plants began to look thrifty, and mine grew apace. But if mine grew apace, his certainly grew ten paces, for everything came up so fast, the flaxseed particularly, that it lifted the soil right out too. By the most persistent slaughter of the plants undesired, he reduced his garden to something like decent proportions. Then his potatoes began to push up pretty sprouts, and his onion to thrust forth its pointed lance. How proud he was of them, and how he did brag over my garden! I just bided my time. I did regret a little that I had not planted some geraniums, or something that would flower quickly; for all I had to show was the border of mignonette, the spikes of the gladioli, and the pointed leaves of the tuberoses and Japanese lilies. But they grew so slowly! Still, the time did come when my garden bloomed out into a rare sweetness of perfume and a richness of color that made me proud and him jealous. Then one fatal day there came a sudden storm. One puff of wind took both boxes as though they were but leaves of paper, and threw them into the middle of the street, where plants, flowers, and boxes lay unheeded, for fear and sorrow had taken possession of our palatial residence.

It was this way: Toots, I prided myself, was