

not knowing them, I could hardly be expected to do anything about it. I think he comes from force of habit. I admit that I used to have some curiosity about it, but I've nearly outgrown it now. I expect him to be part of our Thanksgiving dinner, just as I expect mince pies and turkey."

Mrs. Hunter leaned back in the rocking-chair, and laughed till she cried. The comical side of Mr. Blair's long-drawn-out courtship appealed very keenly to her sense of the ridiculous. The first time he came to share the Thanksgiving feast with the Hunters, her husband had invited him because, as he told his wife, he evidently "meant business," and he felt like helping matters along. Being so peculiar, and bashful, it was all right to "give him a chance." But a year went by, and nothing was said or done by him to declare his intentions; next Thanksgiving Hugh had felt it his duty to include him in the list of guests who partook of Thanksgiving Day hospitality at his place, and thus give him "another chance." Thus it had come about that for several years Mr. Blair had eaten his Thanksgiving dinners alternately with the Hunters, but the "chances" thrown in his way had never been taken advantage of. Though she would not admit it to her brothers, or their wives, Margaret had more than once got out of patience with the poor man. It was absurd, to have him, year after year, at the family gathering, precisely as if he were a member of the family, yet without any right to be there.

"No man has any right to treat a woman in this way," she told herself. "If I were in his place, I'd speak and let the worst be known, as they used to sing at conference meeting. I should think he could see what a ridiculous position it puts me in. But I suppose he can't help being peculiar. The Blairs always were, they say. I don't know but he has a vague hope that some of these days I'll declare my feelings toward him, and that he's waiting for this to take place, before he declares his intentions—if he has any."

Thanksgiving Day ushered in no end of bustle in the Hunter homestead. Hugh's folks would arrive about ten o'clock, and there was a good deal of work to be done before they came. "I like to have plenty of time for visiting," declared Mrs. Hunter, "and the only way to have it is to get as much of the work as possible out of the way early in the morning. I'll see to the turkey, and the vegetables, and all the rest that's to be done in the kitchen, and you may see to setting the table, Margaret. You've got a knack of making things show to better advantage than I have, and I do like to have things look nice Thanksgiving Day. It makes the dinner taste better. Oh, John Henry, do go out to the barn, or upstairs, or somewhere—I can't stir without stepping on you, or over you. Go right out of the kitchen, this minute, or I'll tell your father to not let you have a mouthful of the fruit cake, when it's passed." This threat had the desired result, and John Henry retired to the dining-room, where he took up his position near the door, through which, whenever it was opened, delightful whiffs of fragrance came in from the kitchen beyond, tantalizing the poor lad almost beyond endurance.

Margaret soon had the dinner table looking very attractive. She gathered some chrysanthemums from the plants in the window, and placed them in the center of the festal board, and pulled back the curtains to let the sunshine in, and gave little touches to this thing and that, until John Henry, in watching her, came near forgetting what was going on in the kitchen.

"If I was that man Blair, I'd marry her," he thought, admittingly. "Ma talked as if she hadn't the first idea how I come to think of Aunt Margaret's bein' an old maid. Don't she s'pose boys sense things? Mebbe she don't say old maid to Aunt Margaret's face, but she thinks it, an' I'd like to know which is worst, to say a thing, or think it? But boys hain't no right to open their mouths, 'cording to some folks. Just wait till I get big. Then see if I don't talk when I feel like it, an' I'll bet they won't send me to the wood shed for it, neither."

From which it will be seen that the transactions of yesterday still rankled in the mind of John Henry.

Presently Margaret went upstairs to get ready for the reception of the expected visitors. She put on a pretty gown of gray merino that brought out beautifully the healthy color of her cheeks, and pinned a cluster of white and pink geraniums in the lace at her throat. When she looked in the glass, before going downstairs, she smiled at what she saw there.

"I wonder if Mr. Blair will like my looks?" she thought. "Poor man!" And then she laughed as she thought of what his thoughts must be, during the day—that is, if, as used to be supposed, he "had intentions." Then she sighed softly, and looked almost sober as she hurried downstairs, having heard sounds that indicated the arrival of "Hugh's folks."

Hugh's folks had come, and so had Mr. Blair. His face brightened wonderfully

as he saw Margaret standing in the doorway to welcome them. He held out his hand, and opened his mouth as if to say something, but a wave of bashfulness seemed to sweep over him and freeze him into silence. He had to "look the thoughts he could not utter." Margaret could not help feeling sorry for the poor man. How he must suffer from his "peculiarities."

Dinner was over, and a little interval of "visiting" followed it. Margaret and Mr. Blair sat down by the center-table, and she showed him family photographs, exactly as she had done, at this time of day for the last six years. The honor of the situation struck Margaret very forcibly, occasionally, and brought a color to her face and a twinkle to her eyes that made the poor fellow sigh, as

if for things "so near, and yet so far,"—for "peculiar" people, like himself.

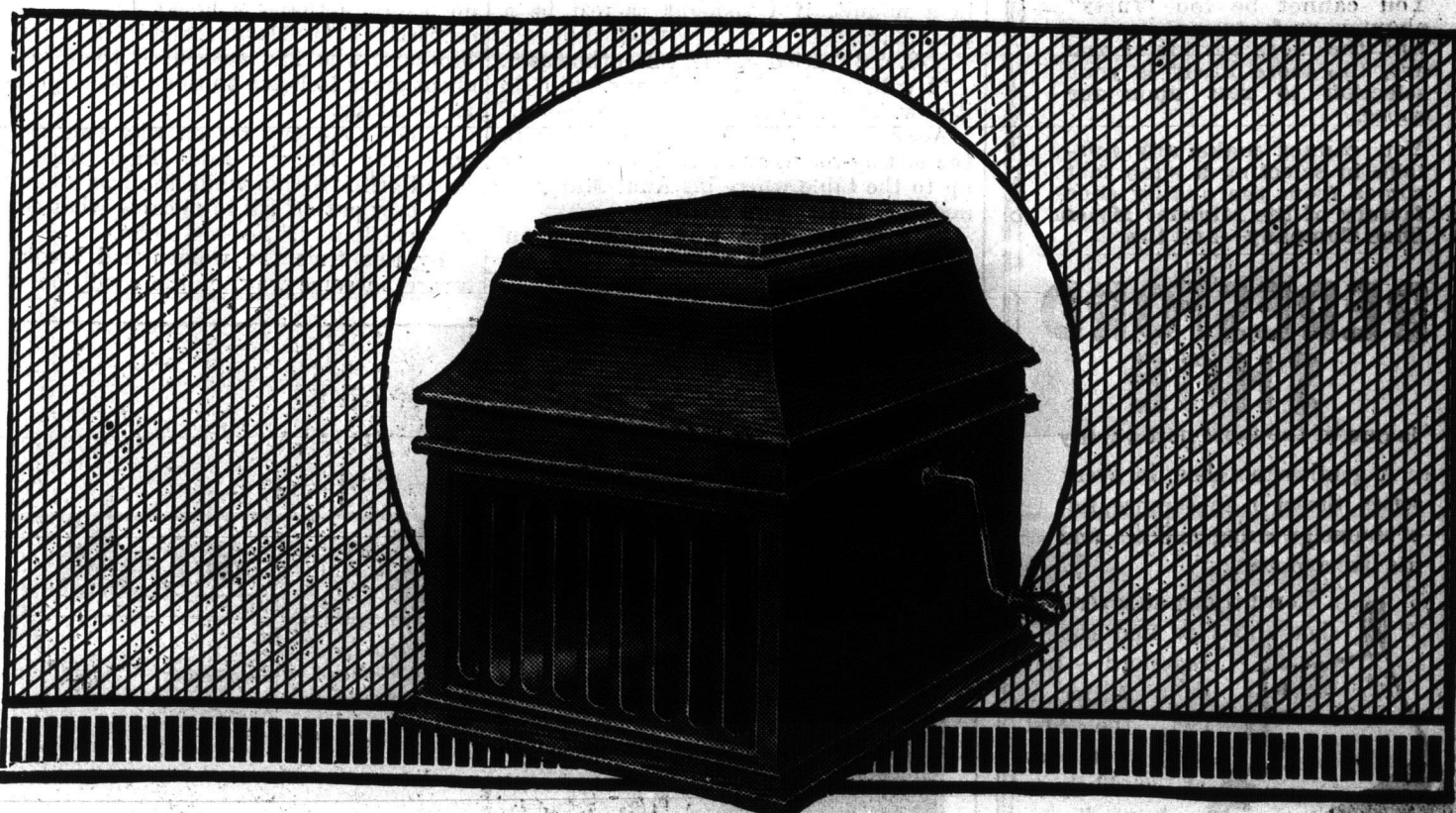
Hugh's wife and John's were talking over family matters in the kitchen, and the children were having a noisily good time upstairs.

"I wonder if we'll have supper," said John Henry, by and by. "Just as sure as you're alive, I'm gettin' hungry again. I say, ain't Thanksgiving an' Christmas jolly, though?"

"They don't begin with weddings," said Cousin Jessie. "Did you ever go to one, John Henry?"

"No, I never did," answered her cousin. "But I'd like to, if they have good things to eat. Do they?"

"Do they? Well, I sh'd say they did," replied Jessie, very emphatically. "Oh! cakes, an' cakes, an' cakes! bride-cake, an' fruit-cake, an' cocoanut-cake, an' choco-



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