

* * * The Story Page. * * *

Mother's Burglar.

A True Account.

By Mrs. H. P. LANE.

"Come right in, Mis' Bunker, glad to see ye; you've brought David back. Well, if he don't look shiny an' pert; he's a nice cat! Glad to git home, aint ye?"

David responded by waving his handsome tail, and amelling in a minute and critical manner of the table legs. Then he betook himself to the window-seat and made a toilet.

Meek Mrs. Bunker hitched along, in her uncertain, apologetical way, and "slipped" into a capacious rocking chair after her hostess, Mrs. Dakin, had punched and beaten the calico cushion. As a further polite attention, she was given a meetin' fan made of turkey-tail feathers, as the night was warm.

"Yes; I got home yesterday noon," in answer to "Wider Bunker's" question, "an' glad enough I be. Visitin' is wus than washin' or pig killing. Jane has married real well; keeps two maids, has sale carpets from attic to suller; don't do a chore; wears silk artemoons, but I am glad as can be to git where I can wait on myself an' wear kaliker."

The Widder Bunker nodded her approval.

"The hull during time I've been away," continued Mrs. Dakin, "I've had to wear my black silk artemoons, an' my alapacey mornin's, an' not onct have I bin in Jane Emmeline's kitchen!"

At this, Biddy Beecy Bunker sat up erect.

A smile began to show itself at the corners of Mrs. Dakin's mouth. Then it spread itself on her jolly face. When it left a look of sweet content remained.

She was a little proud of her "darter's" marriage and generous style of living, but would never listen to Jane Emmeline's earnest entreaties that she would come and live with her. "Country folks and city folks oughten never to live together," she contended, "no more'n than old folks an' young folks. Both their ways are right, but ye can't mak' 'em hitch."

After a prolonged visit to Jane Emmeline's, she had returned to "watin' on herself an' her kaliker gowd" with joy.

Beecy Bunker, a near neighbor, after polite excuses was persuaded to remain to tea. She had intended to do so as Sarah Jane, her daughter, was away. It would have been contrary, however, to the usages of good society in Plumfield if she had accepted at once.

Mrs. Dakin had spent a delightful day "slickin' up" and stirring up various country dainties. She had treated herself to a "biled dish" for dinner, all things cooked together in one pot and dished up on one platter. This well filled platter was now the central dish, flanked and surrounded by buttermilk biscuit, honey, "five-six cake," a custard pie, and a good drawing of tea. The table was set close to the open door, and the two old ladies drew up in rocking-chairs to feast.

As the happy hostess went from but'ry to the table, putting on her well-cooked food, with laudable pride, she told Beecy Bunker how flustered she got "having Jane Emmeline's hired gal pass her things that we're clus to her plate!"

"Howsomever," she added, "we orter to be thankful, Mis' Bunker, that so many folks can be found that air willin' to live in the city, I s'pose."

The Widder Bunker was the kind who could ask any number of questions—and answer none; could absorb any amount of information and impart little. Timid by nature, and dull from a life of wearing monotony she nevertheless was a delightful listener. Mrs. Dakin loved to talk.

The two women enjoyed their evening meal. Mrs. Dakin with gundered-in complacency, ate her cold "biled dish," gazing through the open door, down on the peaceful village houses, with their yards full of green grass and flowering shrubs, at her own box-bordered path, the hen house under a tall "elum." All the little common belongings of her quiet life took on new glory after months of weary city visiting.

When the meal was finished and work done up Mrs. Dakin said: "What would you say Beecy Bunker if I should tell ye I had a real scare when I wus to Jane Emmeline's—a real burglar scare?"

Beecy "didn't know just what she would say, but would be proper glad to hear on't."

Thus encouraged, Mrs. Dakin pinned her cap strings on top of her head, pushed up her sleeves and settled herself to work.

"Evry bit'n grain on't is true," she said, by way of introduction; "You know Mis' Bunker, I never wus one to hang out more clothes than I'd washed—never tuk glory that don't belong to me."

Beecy Bunker nodded assent.

"It was of a Monday," she began. "The way I remember, the hired girl was hanging out the clothes. I sot to my winder an' saw her hang the flannels double! Wind couldn't blow through 'em no how, don't wonder they mill up. Jane read the paper to me. There was lots in't about burglars. A number of houses had been broke inter, one Jane knew. The robbers had a signal—the paper called it—a screechin' sort of a whistle as a warning."

"When Mr. Graham came home—he's Jane's husband you know Mis' Bunker—he said it was lookin' a little mite serious, two friends of his'n had lost silver and diamonds. He was out late that night. I heard him come in. Their room was next mine. Jane went to bed. The gas she left turned down low; well when Mr. Graham turned up the gas, the light shined out inter the yard, there came the sharpest whistle I ever heard. It woke up Jane and she ran into my room."

"I slipped into my clothes, so did she. We sat still as mice hunched up in the dark an' every time the gas went up that screech came!"

"After a while Mr. Graham said he wouldn't stan' it no longer we must put the gas up an' down whilst he went out in the yard an' looked about. Jane tuk on, but Mr. Graham is masterful an' go he would, an' go he did. He called Jane foolish."

"He crept out inter the yard keepin' in the shadder of the house. Jane, she put the gas on and off. Every time she did came that whistle!"

"There's one tall elum in the yard air' I consated some one was perched in't. Jane thought so too. Mr. Graham staid out a good while an when he came in he made us go to bed but he sot all night. I never lost myself onct. I was scart. I wondered more 'n ever folks could be found willin' to live where there was so much worriment of mind. Across the yard was an' old house owned by a widder woman. She lived there with a peeked-faced darter, an' a big sort of overgrown son. The woman was feeble, saller an' thin; yaller as a brass kittle. Jane didn't know her. One of the hired girls said, they were poor, an' the son was off every other night an' slept day times; the girl kept school. There was only one winder that looked out on Jane Emmeline's yard. I used to see the peeked-faced gal there an' sometimes the mother."

"The next night, Tuesday, we sot in the dark an' put the gas up an' down by spells as we had night afore. Not a whistle. Wednesday night we did an' the screechin' whistle came. The hired girl said the woman's son was home that night!"

"We decided it came from that house. Mr. Graham concluded he'd hire a detective man, an' he said he'd put a boy in the elum."

"That was Thursday. It wus a warm day. To tell the truth I wus homesick enough, what with layin' awake worritin' an' wearin' my best clothes."

"All Jane Emmeline's fine furniture an' sale carpets, what wus it to my kitchen, with my new stove, handy bureau an' rocker, I s'x to myself."

"I grew so down in the mouth, I couldn't stan' it. I peeked out in the yard. A man wus there lookin' up at the elum. It wus the police who wus comin' that night. He had a boy with him. When he went away I slipped out into the yard for a breath of air, thinkin' of the orchard to home, clover an' dandelions, yaller and rusty butterflies an' David a chasin' of 'em."

"Beyond the elum was that house an' the saller woman settin' at the winder. She had on a muslin with the figgers washed out. She looked spindlin'. I wus dressed smart enough for meetin'. I wanted to appear real friendly so I nodded and said, 'How be you?'"

"Poorly; it's dretful tryin' weather," she said.

"P'raps you need some bitters; I take pennyrial an' sage tea mixed to home," I s'x.

"She shook her head."

"Are your folks well?" she asked.

"Yes; it's a general time of health with us."

"Up ruther late nights you be."

"Ruther," I answered, thinkin' it best not to tell 'bout the burglar."

"I shouldn't have noticed it if it hadn't bin' jist as it wus," she said.

"My son is nus at the hospital round the corner every other night. He don't have many pleasures. His work is wearin'. He has for a pet a mockin' bird his sister gave him. When he is to home he hangs nights in the winder, he don't want him in his sleepin' room. We shan't hang him here no more. The gas over to your house keeps him whistlin'; it shines on his cage. What were you a doin' the other night? two or three nights back?" she asked. "We watched ye."

"I wus put to it to know what to say. Of course I didn't want my folks poked fun at, an' I didn't want her to think me stuck up 'cause Jane's husband was fore-

handed an' a lawyer, and I had on a silk gown. Jus' then I spied Mr. Graham, an' the perliceman in Jane's chamber. He was a-showin' of him how the gas light worked."

"Good day," I said. "Mr. Graham is home, I must scud inter the house."

"You orter heard 'em laugh when I told 'em 'bout the mockin'-bird. The perlice said we must put your moth-on the detective force, Mr. Graham, an' he said 'this is mother's burglar, surely.' When I came away, he gave me \$25 sayin' 'Detectives always make good pay, mother.'"

Soon after Mrs. Bunker went home, delighted with the story, and Mrs. Dakin and David "shut up shop." For a long time, with her cat in her arms, David singing his one little tune, Mrs. Dakin stood in the door. Outside a cool, green shadow lay over the yard, and soft puffs of lilac-scented air swept across her face. Other delicious sniffs came to her; little hints of the rare sweetness and beauty of nature. All gave exquisite delight to this sincere, childlike woman.

"It's purty, David, aint it?" she asked. "We orter be thankful that some folks is willin' to live in the city, an' it t'aint us; I be."

David being country born and bred had no opinion on the subject; so wisely said nothing, but sung his usual vesper hymn.—[Standard.

Medefield, Mass.

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A Sixth Sense In Animals.

"Popular Science Monthly" contends for the probable existence of a sixth sense in animals. By this means it would explain the wonderful ability of animals to find their way back to an original location. Migratory birds which travel from North to South and back again in the winter and summer time, can scarcely travel, as man would do, by the knowledge of landmarks alone. Large numbers of small birds that come from the South to the North every year, can scarcely fly high enough to be able to take in land marks to any extent; yet it is certain that the same birds come these many hundreds of miles, backward and forward, to the exact locality that they tenanted, so to speak, the year before.

Horses, dogs and cats, as is well known, may be taken over long roads, and across fields and fences that they have never seen before, and yet be found at their old homes in a short time afterward. "Popular Science" gives an instance of a little pig, but three weeks old, that was carried in a sack for three miles. It was missed, and then tracked through the snow to its old home. It did not even follow the trail along which it had been taken, but took a nearly straight course, as was seen by the tracks in the snow through the woods. Many similar instances are given, showing that it is not by noting any especial points along the line of travel, but that there is some other medium by which animals are enabled to gain their desires.—[Meehah's Monthly.

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Sleepy Man.

When the sleepy man comes with the dust on his eyes
(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
He shuts up the earth, and he opens the skies.
(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

He smiles through his fingers, and shuts up the sun;
(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
The stars that he loves he lets out one by one.
(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

He comes from the castles of Drowsy-boy Town
(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
At the touch of his hand the tired eyelids fall down.
(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

He comes with a murmur of dream in his wings
(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
And whispers of mermaids and wonderful things.
(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

Then the top is a burden, the bugle a bane
(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
When one would be faring down Dream-a-way Lane,
(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

When one would be wending in Lullaby Wherry
(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
To Sleepy Man's Castle by Comforting Ferry.
(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

—Chas. G. D. Roberts, in The Book of the Native.

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