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## Melissa's Account Book.

But finding out what it really cost to feed a hired man was the most absorbing work of all. Any compunction which Melissa might have felt about "counting the bites" were wiped out in the greater consideration of learning if it paid to feed help. At first she jotted down what had been served at every meal, and how much, approximately, the man ate. But she soon discovered the better way was to set aside a given amount of food each week, keep track of the number of meals it lasted, and then average it up. In three weeks, so well she weighed and measured and reckoned, fifteen minutes after supper each evening sufficed for her bookkeeping.

Melissa's carrot-counting was Dan's standard joke that winter. For years he had kept accounts. Stocks and crops were weighed in the balance and mercilessly rejected if they did not pay. But that the food served on the table and the time spent getting it ready should be charged to profit and loss struck him as funny.

"You've got to eat just so much," he argued. "What's the use of setting down how many carrots you put into the stew or how many grains of salt goes into the soup?"

Melissa knew that you had to eat just so much but she found out that it made a great deal of difference what that "much" was.

The usefulness of household book-keeping became apparent to Dan in the spring.

"Cass thinks he's got to have more money," he grumbled as he watched Melissa bending over her books one evening. "Says everything is going up and he can't get along on what I'm paying."

"How much does he want?"

"Only three cents an hour more. It's not much when you think of it in hours but it's around seventy-five dollars a year."

"Tell him you'll give it to him if he'll board himself. You can save money at that." Melissa threw her bomb without looking up.

"What do you mean?" Dan howled. "Didn't I just tell you it amounts to around seventy-five dollars a year?"

"Plumb crazy," said Father Tompkins looking pityingly at Melissa.

"You've been paying him more than that extra three cents an hour all winter, with his two meals a day," Melissa tapped her books meaningly.

"The meals we set out could not be paid for by his extra pay, figured on what we get for the stuff we sell and what we have to pay for the groceries we buy, plus my time."

"Do you mean to say you've been keeping tab on what that fellow ate?"

"Nor you never heard of such high-priced help before," Melissa came back. "Those figures do not take in all the cookies and fried cakes you've told him to carry out for lunch. I have them all down on a separate slip, if you'd like to look them over."

Dan snatched the paper. There it was in Melissa's neat writing, begun the day Cass arrived and continued on down to the present—a long trail of cookies, hermits, pieces of pie and cake, apples, handfuls of raisins, crackers and cheese, all urged on Cassius by his generous employer. The total staggered even Dan.

"But what's a meal?" he said lamely.

"Very little, ten years ago," Melissa agreed. "But with 1920 prices for eggs and butter, not to mention sugar

"He's strong for your cooking," Dan grinned. "Maybe he'll stick to his old wages if he has to miss that."

"I won't have time to cook for him any more," Melissa picked up her pencil. "I'm going in for poultry raising as a sure-thing money-maker. My books show me that even with the slip-shod way of doing, hens pay. That book on poultry raising I borrowed from the County Representative, tells me how to get even better results. I'm going after them."

Dan threw up his hands. "She's even counted the worms the hens picked up and charged 'em up!" he said. "Who says worms haven't business heads?"

"All right, I'll tell Cass."

and coffee, 'a meal' is another story. Give Cass his raise and tell him we will not board him."

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Gnats on House-Plants.

E. L.: I find that a small fly or gnat is bothering my house plants. It is very small and about the same color as the common house fly. It crawls into the dirt and seemingly lays eggs, as I find the dirt full of little worms. One geranium plant is dying, and I think this insect is the cause. What can I do to prevent or get rid of it?

I think there can be little room for doubt that the small flies or gnats, which bother house-plants and which are described as being very small and about the same color as the common house-fly, are fungus gnats. These creatures often breed in decaying manure and decaying vegetable matter and occasionally injure house-plants. We have found nicotine the most valuable agent for killing these creatures and have usually had little difficulty with them after watering a few times with a little black leaf forty in the water. It is often sufficient to dig into the soil around the roots a quantity of tobacco, fine-cut tobacco or something of the kind which will liberate nicotine when it becomes soaked with the water of the soil. These worms are more apt to be present when the soil in the pot is soggy and when it is kept too wet, although they may thrive in soil of proper moisture. I would give the plant a little better drainage if the soil seems too wet and either use some tobacco or some nicotine. It doesn't matter which brand of nicotine is used.

Foot Comfort.

"From a well-fitted infancy to a cornless, comfortable old age," was the keynote of a shoe exhibit. Specialists in women's footwear believe that common sense may be attained without sacrificing beauty, and it is to stress this point that the exhibit had been planned.

Among the varieties displayed were shoes for infancy and childhood, for college girls, for elderly people, and for people with weak feet; shoes built on hygienic lines, and a comparison of well-cared for and neglected shoes.

Shoes with French heels and pointed toes, though for a long time dictated by Dame Fashion, are not in reality beautiful, assert the home economics experts, who say they are conducive neither to health, comfort, nor happiness.

High heeled shoes with pointed toes cause a hobbling, itching gait and deform the foot, while those with low or medium straight heels and toes which are not too pointed are a safeguard against sprained ankles and broken arches.

Low heeled shoes cause one to walk with the foot in a straight line, heels do not wear down rapidly and shoes of this type are easily cared for. The graceful swing with which one walks when comfortably footed is reason enough for the adoption of the hygienic shoe, it is contended.

Airplanes Guard the Vineyards.

In France great damage is done to the vineyards by hail, and resort has been had to many ingenious electrical and other devices for warding off this mischief.

The newest idea is that of a French scientist who proposes to use airplanes for the purpose, sending them up when atmospheric conditions suggest a likelihood of a hailstorm.

His argument is that inasmuch as a fall of hail is usually preceded by a calm, a disturbance of the air by the whirling propellers of flying machines would be likely to prevent the formation of the icy projectiles whose bombardment is so much dreaded.

## Tilly's Night Out

By D. C. ALEXANDER

Lady Bianca Fancourt looked at the lovely gown, its gleaming, silken folds peeping from the nest of tissue paper on which it rested half unpacked.

"No, I can't possibly wear that rag. Pack it up, my child, and go. Tell Mme. Francoise she can sell it. Label it 'Made for Lady Bianca Fancourt' and she'll get an extra ten guineas."

She spoke but the truth. She was the most idolized and spoiled girl in society. Kind-hearted, full of whims, daring to the point of recklessness, she was imitated, run after, worshipped—a popular favorite.

Her engagement, announced that morning to the young Duke of Warborough, was one of those ideal alliances that are regarded as the triumph of match-making relatives.

It was a love-match. They adored each other.

But this story has little to do with future duchesses or present dukes. It is social scene, as given slips down very rapidly to the rung where the vast majority find a more or less precarious perch.

Now we must consider the girl who brought the frock.

Tilly Brown was a dressmaker's mannequin on whom the gown had been modelled, her figure being almost identical with that of Lady Bianca. Her face, too, was as delicately featured, her teeth as much an affair of fair milk and roses. Both were daughters of Eve who might have sprung from the same family tree, only one had its roots in Brixton and not in Belgravia.

At that moment Tilly Brown's face was pink with reproachful color.

"Oh, my lady, you don't know how beautiful it is. Give just a moment!"

To hear this exquisite garment described as a rag was too much for the enthusiastic girl, who loved beautiful things.

Without waiting for permission, she slipped off her own dress, revealing a slender form clad in the fine lingerie that Mme. Francoise provided for her mannequins.

In a moment the gown was slipped on.

With slow, undulating steps the girl began to pace the mirrored dressing room before the other's indolent gaze.

"It's no use, my child," said Lady Bianca, not unkindly. "It suits you well enough, and if you were going to wear it I should say it is the very thing. But as a matter of fact," she added, frankly giving her true reason for the first time, "I don't want to the dance, and a disappointment in a dress is always a good excuse. The Duke and I are going to spend an evening on our own. We're rather spoony just now, you see."

Tilly nodded sympathetically, but tears were in her eyes. That lovely gown was not to be on show! They had all taken such pains with it. How disappointed the workgirls would be, and the gifted head-dressmaker, with her artist's brain and her wonderful fingers. Like all the world, they were in love with Lady Bi.

The latter looked at her thoughtfully. She hated to give pain. How could she solace this girl? She could not offer her a gift of money; something in the proud set of the little head told her that. But she was resourceful in ideas, and before Tilly had finished unfastening the frock, she stopped her with a sharp exclamation.

"The dress shall be worn," she cried. "Not by me, but by you. Why should both gown and ticket be wasted? It is a subscription dance. Provided with a ticket you have as much right there as I."

Tilly stared at her with wide-open eyes.

"There are the shoes and the silk stockings to go with it. You can return the lot to me to-morrow. My car shall take you and carry you home afterwards."

Tilly's momentary struggle with temptation fled.

Some hours later she was one of a great crowd that made dancing no easy matter even in the wide expanse of the Albert Hall.

Silks and satins, laces and velvets, divided by the black and white of men's wear, made a vivid and ever-changing picture that took the girl's breath away. She drank in that atmosphere of joy and laughter almost greedily.

She swayed round in her partner's light embrace. She was drunk with sheer gaiety. To-morrow—there was no to-morrow. There was but to-night, and that was hers.

Her present partner, who had already claimed more than one dance, looked at her wonderingly. A girl from Mayfair—a glance showed him that. How amazingly she had preserved her freshness, her keen, eager joy!

He who had travelled North, South, East, and West of the world caught something of its infection.

"You are the kind of girl to grace a throne," he whispered. They had paused a moment, but still held hands lightly clasped.

"Thank you, my prince," she said gaily.

She started.

"How did you know?" he murmured.

"My words had no meaning," she responded, lightly.

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"Suppose they struck home to the truth?"

She looked at him, her manner growing embarrassed.

"I heard there was to be a prince here to-night," she said.

"Hush!" He glanced round at the circling figures. "Strictly incognito, you understand? But people have already begun to pester me. Let us get away from the crush a little."

He offered her his arm with a courtly bow that well became his tall, athletic figure. She had seen a prince of afar many a time. But to dance with one, to be flattered by one. She drew a deep breath. That night would indeed be unforgettable.

Then she smiled in recovery.

"Forget the prince," he whispered; "remember only the man." She nodded slowly. "I shall try to forget it after to-night," he went on. "Let some one else claim one of the vacant thrones knocking about just now. I'd rather be one of the common people any day. Wouldn't you?" There was a touch of strange eagerness in his voice.

She glanced away from him. Should she tell him the truth? She appeared to ponder his question.

"I—I don't know," she answered. She gazed round the ball-room. The flowers were beginning to fade, the dancers showed fatigue, the noisy mirth sounded a little forced. "Yes; perhaps I would rather be, as you say, one of the common people."

He nodded approvingly.

They danced again—their last dance.

"I shall have to go after this," he said, regretfully. "This place is getting too hot for me. The Bravarian Ambassador, and some of his staff have just arrived. I'll slip away before he spots me. He is a pompous old chap, and we should be in the midst of a court of ceremonies at once."

The waltz came to an end.

"If I were plain John Brown," he whispered, audaciously, as he held her hand in lingering farewell, "and you were, say, just Mary Smith, I should put a certain question. What answer do you think Mary Smith would make?"

She laughed a little shakily, wondering what was wrong with her heart that it should be racing along in this mad, runaway fashion.

"How do I know what answer she would make?" she replied. She glanced up at his face. Her own eyes were shining.

He seemed on the point of further speech. Then, noticing a knot of people pointing in his direction, he vanished quietly and swiftly.

A few moments later an important-looking old gentleman addressed Tilly in a marked foreign accent.

"Where is your late dancing partner?" he asked, somewhat imperatively.

"Do you mean the Prince?"

"I mean the impostor who pretended to be the Prince," he answered shortly. "The Prince—the real Prince—is in the Balkans."

"It is probably only a practical joke—or done for a wage," murmured someone.

"More likely to be one of those gentlemen rogues we read so much about in fiction, bent on plunder," suggested another.

They turned away. The girl stared after them dully.

The next morning the world appeared more than usually drab to Tilly. Madame was out of humor. The weather was cold. Customers were difficult. London had got out of bed the wrong side.

Tilly was glad to be sent on an errand to Fleet Street with a description of the Francoise frocks to be worn at a forthcoming wedding. She experienced some trouble in finding the particular newspaper office she wanted, and then blundered into the editorial department of another publication.

A young man whose back was toward her was writing at a desk almost frenziedly.

He looked up with a frown.

"Can you tell me, please—"

She paused. They stared at each other. The recognition was mutual, yet tinged with doubt on both sides.

"This evening though she was in her everyday clothes, was not quite the radiant creature of the night before. And this young man, with ruffled hair and distracted gaze, was different from the calm, immaculate prince-prettender."

"Oh!"

"You!"

"They said you were an impostor after you had gone," she murmured. "Why did you?"

"I thought you a girl of Mayfair," he countered. "Why did you, too, pretend?"

She explained somewhat coldly.

He listened, the cloud lifting from his features. Then he pointed to some slips on the desk before him. One was headed in bold capitals: "I Pose as a Prince."

"This will appear in an early number of 'Laughter.' As a man I would scorn to tell or act an unnecessary lie. But—" he drew a deep breath, "as a journalist I would make Ananias blush and pose as his Satanic Majesty himself!"

Her smile forgave him; and when she found that he, too, lived at Brixton, a future meeting seemed not unlikely.

Tilly sits in a cozy sitting room—still in Brixton—happier than any princess. On the opposite side of the hearth John Brown—his real name, by the way—in slipped ease.

Above them the lovely young Duchess of Warborough smiles down at them from a framed portrait. She stands for the kindly fate in their lives which brought Cinderella and her prince together.

(The End.)

## A Toad's Table Manners.

One summer night when we were sitting round the porch light, says a writer in Country Life, one of us noticed a toad that was making frantic efforts to climb the three steps that lead to the walk. He finally reached the verandah floor and began flipping at the bugs that had fallen into the circle of light that the lamp cast.

Some of us began catching beetles and dropping them near his nose, and he soon appeared to accept us as his natural providers. He was back the next night and, in fact, every night while the toad season lasted; and he has continued to visit us in the same manner every summer. It is evidently the memory of a well-set table that brings him back each year.

There are certain bugs, such as potato beetles and squash bugs, that the toad will not touch. He likes lightning bugs only when he is very hungry, but he is not often too full to spear a luckless June bug that comes within reach of his tongue. Now and then a big clinching beetle clinches it strong mandibles on the toad's lip or foreleg and clings there, much to his inconvenience, but apparently not to his great suffering. One night some one offered him one of the big green larvae that feed on grape leaves. The worm was the size of a man's finger, but the toad undertook to swallow it. He would have succeeded had he taken the grub head-first; but, since he started with the tail, the worm could dig its hooked feet into the floor and crawl out the toad's mouth. At the end of five minutes the grub finally crawled free, though it died from the coating of toad digester that it had encountered.

It is fun for the youngsters to feed katydids to the toad; he has such a time swallowing all the legs and antennae. He stuffs them into his mouth with his paws, very much as a little boy crams in more cake than his mouth will comfortably hold. Moreover, the toad is troubled by the insect's kicking after it is down; and sometimes a jarry will sing quite a swan song after it is engulfed. At such times the toad pats his stomach with his forefeet or lies flat on the floor and stretches himself as far as he can reach.

If You Forget.

If you forget to do the kindly deed,  
Some sad soul may go sadder on  
his way;

And drearier still may be its dark-  
some day,  
Missing a friend in need.

If you forget that helpful word to say,  
Some sore heart may be filled with  
fiercer ache;

And, needing sympathy, that heart  
may break—  
So speak the word to-day.

If you forget to say, to think, to do  
The thing to help a fellow-soul  
along,  
Your soul must bear the burden of  
the wrong  
Your whole life's journey through.

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Snails and Screws.

Nearly all inventions have been  
suggested by natural objects.

Foremost, of the French School of  
Mines, points out an interesting ex-  
ample in the case of the screw, the  
fundamental idea of which, he be-  
lieves, was suggested to primitive  
man by the spiral shape of the edible  
snail.

It was not the shape of the shell  
that suggested the screw, but the  
spiral motion which it is necessary  
to give to the body of the snail in  
order to withdraw it from the shell.

This at once showed that an object  
of a screw shape embedded in a solid  
powerfully resisted attempts to with-  
draw it by a straight pull.

The hint was enough, and the screw  
became one of the earliest of man's  
inventions.

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