

Mrs. Batterby's Crazy Quilt.

Mrs. Batterby was a model wife and mother. Please to remark, dear reader, I say...

Well, Mrs. Batterby was a dear little roly-poly of a woman, with dark blue eyes, and a soft, gurgling laugh that was perfectly infectious...

I must confess that Mrs. Batterby was not a great reader. But then, her husband was, and as she was very sympathetic and receptive, and he was fond of conversation, she became, so to speak, infused with current information...

But Mrs. Batterby knew a good many things which books do not teach. She knew corned beef and cabbage make the best dinner for a hungry man in seven cases out of nine...

Such a woman it was who fell a victim to that 'crazy quilt' mania, which is now insidiously undermining the moral and intellectual character of the females in all ranks of life throughout this whole country.

learning and teaching music in a Western State.

But despite her disadvantages Mme. Pumpernickle's consciousness of her own superiority to criticism never deserted her, and never failed to impress, with more or less intensity, those with whom she came in contact.

So when Mme. Pumpernickle opened her valise, and from every part of it came tumbling out silk rags, snippings and clippings of every shade and shape, she said, in her gay way:

'I travel like an aesthetic ragsman. It's my 'crazy quilt.' You must have one. Everybody is making them. They are elegant.' And Mrs. Batterby immediately decided to have one.

That night, when Mr. Batterby, who, as one of Chicago's prominent men, had been requested to attend a 'ratification meeting' down town, arrived home at 10:30 P. M., he looked over the banisters into the dining-room, and involuntarily exclaimed:

'Up yet! Why, what in the world are you doing?' Well might he exclaim. The floor of the room into which he looked was strewn with rags; the dining-table was heaped with them; and, bending over the table, arrayed in loose wrappers, their cheeks flushed, and their hair dishevelled in their eagerness, were his wife and her guest, pulling about and tossing around the heap of silk scraps.

'Oh, I'm making a 'crazy quilt'!' abstractedly returned his wife, scarcely raising her eyes from her work. 'Mme. Pumpernickle is helping me plan squares.'

Mrs. Batterby looked on a moment, his habitual abiding sense of a man's inability to comprehend the mysterious workings of the feminine intellect enabling him to maintain a becoming composure of manner.

'Well, good-night!' he said, with the air of one who was giving up a problem. But as he turned to go, his eye was caught by the familiar pattern of one silken fragment. He drew it from the heap.

'Forty minutes, and forty back. Call it an hour and a half. The opera will be nearly over. How stupid of me!'

'Never mind. We can stop and buy that pink satin for your quilt, and then go home and plan two more squares before we go to bed.'

'I know you only say that to relieve me. You must be dreadfully disappointed! Oh, they're well-named 'crazy-quilts'!'

'Yes; but you see I must leave you Friday, so there is only one more day for us to work on the quilt. Dear child, pleaded Mme. Pumpernickle, earnestly, and laying her hand on Mrs. Batterby's arm, 'don't, don't stop until your quilt is finished!'

'Not even to eat and sleep?' 'Oh, I suppose you'll be obliged to stop for those things,' returned Mme. Pumpernickle, half in jest, half in earnest; 'but you must not let anything else hinder you. Delay would be fatal. Your arduous work soon cool.'

But Mr. Batterby, in the goodness of his heart, brought home theatre tickets for that night, and the ladies, with secret reluctance, tore themselves away from their rags and accompanied him, but the play being a society drama gave great display of costumes, and afforded the two demented creatures many occasions to whisper aside, such as:

'Look at that elegant brocade she has on. Wouldn't I just like a piece of that in my quilt!'

'See that rich purple velvet in that page's cloak? Wouldn't that show in your quilt?'

'I'd just like to snip a piece of that lady's bonnet-strings. We haven't any green that lights up at night.'

Fortunately Mr. Batterby could not hear these remarks or he might have feared for his wife's mental condition, and as he sat between the ladies in the car returning home they were obliged to make an attempt at least to speak on other topics besides crazy quilts.

upon this destroyer of domestic happiness. But it was, after all, only a physical abstinence, for her husband marked her long memorizing gaze upon the illuminated texts above the pulpit, where in the gray-haired minister was impressing upon his hearers the spiritual darkness of the ancient Jews. Subsequently he saw the ornamental 'conventional' forms, and the blending of tints reproduced in the crazy-quilt. He even thought, with a cold thrill of fear, that she might have so far forgotten the teaching of her childhood as to take her needle on Sunday. But no! she was the mother of Sunday school scholars! He banished the thought. He noted her roving, abstracted gaze over the congregation, and he divined the envy and covetousness in her soul as her eye caught the beauty of some new tint in bonnet-trimming.

One cold morning Mrs. Batterby's mother came in from the suburbs and surprised her daughter with a visit. Now, Mrs. Batterby was a model of filial affection. One of the things she had learned without recourse to books was that a woman should always live to be a grandmother, because her daughters never appreciate her till they, in their turn, become mothers. But no sooner were the old lady's wrappings off than the crazy-quilt was brought to notice, and the daughter could not be induced to make any but a momentary diversion on any other subject; but there she sat, only stopping reluctantly for lunch, 'feather stitching' on her 'square' as if her next day's bread depended on getting it done before night.

'Well, goodby,' said the old lady at parting. 'If they conclude to send you to the asylum at Batavia, tell them to let me know immediately.'

And she went back to the suburbs with a little chill of disappointment at her heart. But while Mr. Batterby was racking his brain to know how he could surreptitiously minister to his wife's diseased mind, a kind Providence was sending a blessing in disguise. It was something like the sensational society drama where the sickness of the child recalls the erring wife back to virtue.

Little Phillip fell ill. It was only the chicken pox, but, as the family physician said, 'it was not once in a hundred times that there was such a severe case.'

The morning of the fourth day of his illness, as the mother sat holding in her gentle arms the little sufferer, whose swollen face was covered with the confluent eruption, and whose beautiful blue eyes were closed by the disease, little Edie came and looked at her blind baby brother very thoughtfully.

'Phillie don't die? he's liappid.' 'Oh, no, darling! mamma hopes not.' 'Mamma wouldn't feel so very bad. Mamma could work all ze time on her tazy twilt zen,' rejoined Edie gravely.

The unconscious reproach went straight to the mother's awakened conscience. As soon as her arms were temporarily freed from their beloved burden she gathered up all the materials of her crazy-quilt and put them in a bureau drawer in the sewing-room. In the drawer lay the five yards of dark-green plush for the border; for the squares were all ready to be put together. Five yards at two dollars a yard, ten dollars!

lady visitor came in, and somehow the style of patchwork became the topic of the conversation.

'Ah, but you just ought to see my wife's quilt! Go get it, dear, and let Mrs. Smith see it.'

'It's not quite finished. Baby's sickness made me lay it away,' demurred Mrs. Batterby, who felt a strange reluctance to take out her old enlaver.

'Never mind. Show the squares.' 'Oh, do. I should so like to see them.' 'Prettiest things you ever saw!' enthusiastically said the proud husband.

Mrs. Batterby rose and left the room. As she went slowly through the hall and up the stairs her mind vividly recalled that \$10 worth of plush. It seemed a pity not to let Mrs. Smith see that, and get a clear idea of the whole effect of the quilt. But it might set Gustave thinking. Of course the gold piece had been her own. Yet he would be astonished at her extravagance. At least he would think it extravagant.

So thinking she opened the drawer. It was empty. Mrs. Batterby stood confounded. The other drawers were packed with old half-worn garments to be remade. No quilt in them. Gone—plush and squares. Also the gingham for aprons, and her unmade calico dress.

With a lightning flash she recalled sending Bridget to the bureau one Sunday afternoon for flannel for Philip. The next Monday she left.

Mrs. Batterby went back to the sitting room. She was pale but dry-eyed. She told her woe.

'Never mind, my darling!' said her husband, putting his arm about her. 'I'll buy you a handsome Marseilles spread.'

Her hours, and days, and weeks of slavish work rose up before Mrs. Batterby's mind, the tears gushed from her eyes.

'A Marseilles spread? What does a man know about a woman's feelings?' she sobbed.—Chicago Tribune.

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