

## A MILKMAN'S BLUNDER, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

"Walk out to my house and have breakfast with me some morning." Such was the invitation given me one day by Mr. Robertson, a genial, middle-aged solicitor to whom I was articulated, in the thriving town of Abbeyton.

Now I had only been articulated for a few weeks, and what I seen of Mr. Robertson in business made me wish to know him and his in their private life; hence I was much delighted to have this opportunity of gratifying my wish. A few days afterwards, waking up and finding a glorious summer sun streaming into my room, I speedily decided that this was just the kind of morning on which I should accept the invitation to breakfast at Abbey Grove, and in a few minutes I was on my way thither.

Abbey Grove was situated about two miles from the town, and consisted of a small cluster of villas, built in a prettily situated spot, which, generations ago, had formed part of the grounds of an old abbey. The only remains of this ancient building, however, were a few yards of crumbling wall, with here and there vestiges of what at one time had been traceried windows; these, with numerous mounds of stones and masonry, were all that was now left to tell of what had been there centuries ago. Most of these mounds were now covered with grass and shrubs and trees, and thus formed a delightfully secluded retreat, which the inhabitants of the Abbey Grove villas enjoyed in common.

The invigorating charms of an early walk on a summer's morning need no description. The pure air, the genial sun, the twittering birds, the sparkling dew, and soft, low breeze, all tend to exhilarate one's spirits, and to make the day pleasanter and happier throughout. All these experiences were mine on the day I write of. As I approached Abbey Grove, and saw the houses peeping from out the surrounding trees, I commenced wondering as to what kind of a residence would be occupied by Mr. Robertson, how it would be furnished, what kind of people his wife and family would be like, and the kindred things that you speculate upon when going to visit a house for the first time. Last, but by no means least, as my walk continued I wondered what kind of a breakfast there would be to appease the appetite stimulated by the morning breeze.

I walked down the short avenue leading to the houses, and then began to wonder which of the half-dozen villas I was bound for. This small community dispensed with numbers to their houses, nor did they even distinguish them by the ambitious and ridiculous names which you see stuck up on most suburban residences. No, nothing savoring so of the town for this group of country residents; they all called their several houses by the common name of Abbey Grove, and the stranger had to take his chance of having to go to each of the houses in turn, before he found the particular one he sought. Fortune favored me, however, by sending across my path a travelling directory in the shape of the local milkman; and in response to my inquiry as to which house was Mr. Robertson's I received the straightforward reply: "This 'ere one as I've jist come from, sir." Walking up the path, I found the door invitingly open, and the house-maid putting the finishing touches on the bell-handle.

"Master is not down yet, sir," she replied to my inquiry as to whether he was at home, which, considering the time of day, really appeared an absurd question to ask the girl; but we get accustomed to use stereotyped phrases under some circumstances.

"O, then I will come in and wait," I replied.

"What name shall I say, sir?" asked the girl.

"Just tell him Mr. Brookes has called, and he will understand."

So saying the girl showed me into a snug little breakfast-room, where the sunbeams and the fresh morning air seemed to be vying with each other as to which should hold possession of the room, with such friendly rivalry were they streaming through two open French windows, which opened upon a tastefully-arranged lawn and flower-beds outside. While noticing these things, the house-maid had gone up stairs to announce me, when something like the following dialogue ensued:

"Please, ma'am, Mr. Brookes is down stairs."

"Mr. Brookes! Who is he?" was the response, in a muffled female voice.

"I don't know, ma'am," the maid replied. "I've never seen him here before. But he's a young gentleman, and says he will wait till master comes down."

"Whoever can he be, and what can he want, bothering here at this time of day?" continued the muffled voice, and thereupon the door was shut.

Now this was not exactly pleasant to me; but when I reflected that most probably Mrs. Robertson would be unacquainted with her husband's invitation to me, I thought it best not to be offended; so I commenced examining the pictures on the walls. They were not very interesting, and I soon concluded my inspection and looked round for something else to occupy the moments, which began to hang rather heavily. The newspaper of the previous day was upon a small table by the window, so I took that up just to pass away the time, and I was soon listlessly perusing the advertisements. I had not been sitting thus above a minute or two, when I heard a slight rustling, as of a lady's dress; simultaneously came three or four light footsteps through the window into the room, and before I could look up from my paper, or rise from my seat, a musical voice accosted me with "Good morning, uncle; here is your buttonhole."

I started up in no little surprise at this greeting, which was evidently not intended for me; and there stood before me a fairy-like maiden of some sixteen summers, her brown hair falling loosely from a daintily shaped head; her cheeks aglow with the healthy morning air she had been enjoying, and deepened to a rosy blush, when she discovered her greeting had been unwittingly addressed to a stranger. She was standing before me, holding out the little knot of flowers destined for her uncle's button-hole—how I envied her uncle!—a very picture of health and life, and happiness and beauty. Her expression of unrestrained enjoyment had changed in a moment to one of embarrassment and dismay, mingled with a gleam of amusement in her bright eyes as the humor of the awkward situation we were in broke upon her. An instantaneous mutual agreement seemed to flash between us. We both broke into a merry little laugh; and I have often wondered what would have happened if we had not adopted this course; if, for instance, the young lady had passed on with a dignified coldness, and simple apologies and bows had passed between us! Our sudden introduction was, however, not destined to have this sudden ending. In a few moments we were chatting away like old friends. I fancied my fairy seemed to be actually pleased when I announced that I was going to stay to breakfast; and I had almost summoned up courage to ask her to present me in reality with the flowers she had undesignedly offered to me, when the entrance of the servant with the completing dishes for the breakfast-table served as an excuse for her to leave the room.

She had scarcely gone through the door when I heard again the greeting, "Good-morning, uncle," followed this time by an unmistakable sound which made me long more than ever to be that girl's uncle! The door opened once more. I stepped forward to meet my employer, but suddenly paused, as a tall gentleman entered the room whom I had never seen before in my life.

He stood looking inquiringly at me after a sharp "Good-morning." I was too embarrassed to make any response. My first thought was, "He is some visitor;" but in a few moments the awful truth dawned across my mind that this was in reality the owner of the house I was in, and that by some means or other I had got into the wrong one. The situation was tremendous. I am naturally a cool character; but I was so taken by surprise and chagrin that I could only mutter some confused apology about having been invited to breakfast by Mr. Robertson; that I had been directed to this house by some miserable misunderstanding; that I humbly apologized for my intrusion, and hoped he would pardon it. So speaking, I made a frantic dash at my hat, maddened at my stupidity, at the loss of my breakfast, and still more at the thought of never seeing or speaking again to that charming little lady who in less than five minutes I found I was absurdly in love with.

I said a hurried "Good-morning," and was trying to make a ghastly attempt at a smile as I left the room—when,