

HOME CIRCLE.

BY NEIGHBOUR'S WELL.

I would they'd come again, John,
Those days when we were young
By neighbour's well; ah! then, John,
We sat whole evenings long.
The silent moon we watched o'erhead
From out the white clouds peep,
And talked of how the heavens were high,
And how the well was deep.

Just think how still that was, John—
The world all hushed to rest—
'Tis thus no more, alas! John,
Or just in dreams at best.
And when some distant shepherd's song
Thrilled o'er the moorland lone,
Oh, John, 'twas music that indeed,
What sweeter ever known?

Sometimes at eventide, John,
I feel my heart still swell,
As when once side by side John,
We sat by neighbour's well.
Then eagerly I turned me round,
As though you still were by;
Ah, John, the only thing I find
Is—that I stand and cry!

—(From the Low German) Temple Bar.

A ROMANCE OF HOUSE CLEANING.

"Is she coming to visit you?" said Eric Hale with a slight grimace. "That simpering fine lady, with the useless white hands and the shallow little society laugh? Oh, Aunt Delia, pack my portmanteau and let me be off on a lecturing tour, until Flora Lee's visit comes to an end!"

Mrs. Dove looked a little disappointed. To confess the truth, she had specially arranged this visit with reference to her nephew Eric.

"He's a fine young fellow," she had said to herself, with true diplomacy, "with an excellent parish, and fine prospects—and it's high time he was settled in life with a wife. And I think Flora Lee would suit him exactly."

And here was the young man himself upsetting this charming little castle-in-the-air without the least scruple of conscience, like the modern iconoclast that he was.

"Well, Eric," said Mrs. Dove, despairingly, "I'll write to her not to come. Of course I don't want to put you out, just when you're so busy, too, with that course of lectures on the Book of Revelation—but I really thought Flora would make the house lively."

"She's a deal too artificial to suit me," said Eric Hale. "Ask her to come in June, when I shall be off to Omaha and Nevada on that conference business. But as for a visitor, I should prefer little Polly Peppercorn's big wax doll with the silky black hair and staring eyes, to that open and shut by machinery."

So Mrs. Dove choked back her disappointment (for she had been nursing this pet scheme in secret for a long while), sat down and wrote a letter to her friend Miss Lee, postponing the proposed visit to Cedarbough Farm until roses should be in bloom, and strawberries beginning to ripen.

"Adonijah," said she to the hired man, "take this letter to the postoffice."

"Yes, 'um," said Adonijah, and he put it in his pocket and straightway forgot all about it.

It was a dismal, rainy morning in April, the yellow jonquils beaten to the ground, the very wild violets shutting up their eyes as if in unmitigated disgust at the unpromising state of the weather. Overhead, racks of gray cloud scudded across the heavens, and the little sheet of silver lakelet under the hill was dotted and dimpled all over with the falling rain, as if pierced with a thousand tiny javelins.

"It's no use trying," said Mrs. Dove plaintively, "the fates have conspired against me!"

The carpets were up, the pails of whitewash stood steaming in the middle of the parlour floor, and Mrs. Dove herself, with her gray curls tied up in a yellow damask pocket handkerchief, which

her great uncle had brought from China half a century ago, sat crying on the lower edge of a step-ladder. For Betsey, the help, had fallen down the cellar stairs and broken her leg, and Mrs. Mulrony, the charwoman, had sent a message that her eldest son had broken out "wid de maizles, sure—speckled all over like a shower of red pepper, and sorra a bit of clanin' could she undertake for until the wake's over."

"And these three days of all others," sighed Mrs. Dove, "when Eric had exchanged pulpits with Mr. Washburne! And he so dislikes house cleaning, and—"

"Dear me, Mrs. Dove, what is the matter?"

Mrs. Dove started to her feet with a little scream—for there, exactly as if she had been rained down out of the gray zenith, stood Flora Lee herself, in a trim brown travelling dress, with a neat little handbag, a gossamer water-proof cloak and a silk umbrella.

"Why, Flora," cried she, "how came you here?"

"By the train, of course," said Miss Lee, "and I walked from the station."

"I wrote you not to come," said Mrs. Dove, in consternation.

"But I never received any such letter," said Miss Lee. "Shall I go again?"

"No, you darling, you shall do nothing of the sort!" said Mrs. Dove, enthusiastically. "It was only because—because we were house-cleaning."

"I'm not afraid of house-cleaning," said Flora. "I see how it is," with a comprehensive glance around the scene of confusion, "and I'm going to help you through with it."

"You?" said Mrs. Dove.

"Yes, I!" said Flora. "Why not? Just lend me one of Betsey's old dresses. Where is Betsey, by the way?"

"Her father has just carried her home in the waggon," said Mrs. Dove. "She broke her leg."

"And your charwoman!"

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" said Mrs. Dove, "She has got a visitation of the measles, or smallpox, or some other horrid disease in her family. And my nephew, Eric, is to be gone for three days; and I made sure I could finish the house-cleaning while he was absent."

"And we will," said Flora, cheerily.

"How can we?"

"Oh, you shall see!" nodded Miss Lee.

And, depressed though she was, Mrs. Dove began to feel the mercury rise in her mental thermometer at once.

And Flora Lee arrayed herself in one of Betsey's cast-off calicoes, tied her rippled brown tresses up in a cambric sweeping-cap, and went vigorously to work with a scrubbing-brush; while Mrs. Dove bent her attention to the window glass, and Adonijah, with more zeal than discretion, splashed whitewash over himself and the floor with laudable impartiality.

"Wal," said Adonijah, afterward, "I never did see no cricket work spryer than that city young lady. By gracious, she beats Betsey all holler at it! And she's got such an up an' down pretty way of doin' things, too. I declare, I couldn't hardly take my eyes off her all the time I was in whitewashin'!"

Mrs. Dove, however, was unused to the severe exertions incident upon house-cleaning time, and went to bed with the sick headache in the middle of the afternoon.

"Never mind, Mrs. Dove," said Flora; "I'll get tea and make some of those cream waffles and a short-cake for Mr. Dove, and you shall see how nicely I can fry oysters."

"Indeed, indeed, I don't know what I should do without you Flora!" said Mrs. Dove, fervently.

But, as it happened, Mr. Daniel Dove was unexpectedly detained on business at Whiskill, a neighbouring town, and instead of him, who should walk debonairly into the little sitting room, flinging down his carpet-bag, but Eric Hale himself, just as the rainy dusk closed in, and the odour of the delicious oysters and the Mocha coffee filled the house.

"Hello!" said Eric. "So you're cleaning house—eh, Betsey?"

"Yes, sir," a demure voice responded from the kitchen.

"And where's my aunt?"

"She has retired with a sick headache."

"The natural consequence of cleaning house, I suppose," said Eric Hale with a shrug of his shoulders. "Dear old Aunt Delia! why couldn't she be contented to leave things as they were? Tell her, Betsey, that Washburne has concluded not to exchange until next week, and, that, now I'm in the midst of the *mêlée*, I'll lend a hand with this business to-morrow."

"Yes, sir."

"And Betsey—"

"Sir?"

"Where did you learn to make such delicious coffee? Bring in a cup at once, I'm ready to drop with weariness; and it is like a dream of Arabia."

And Flora Lee, with the flapping edge of her sunbonnet concealing the amused dimples around her mouth, brought in the oysters and coffee, flanked by a pile of feather-light waffles.

"I declare, Betsey," cried the Reverend Eric, facetiously, "if you were a trifle younger and prettier, I'd marry you myself to make sure of coffee and waffles like this every night."

"Would you, sir?" said the *soi-disant* Betsey.

"And we'll make a compact, Betsey," merrily went on the clergyman, as he helped himself to butter, "to finish the house-cleaning ourselves to-morrow, and save Aunt Delia the worry and work of it."

"Yes, sir," said Betsey. "But, please, sir, it's all done, except the tacking down of the carpets."

"Who did it?"

"I, sir, please, and Mrs. Dove, and Adonijah. And please, sir, I'm going to finish it myself to-morrow; and please, sir," flinging back her sunbonnet and disclosing a coronal of brown braids, a pair of very rosy cheeks, and eyes full of sparkling hazel mischief—"I'm not Betsey at all, but Flora Lee, entirely at your service!"

The Reverend Eric stared with round-eyed surprise, not unmingled with dismay.

"Miss Lee!" he repeated.

"Exactly," nodded the young lady.

"Did you make the coffee?"

"I did."

"And fry these brown-jacketed oysters, and stir up these waffles?"

"No one else, Mr. Hale."

"And scrub these rooms?" glancing around.

"Yes, sir; 'nd dusted the cornices, and washed the window glass, and took down all the picture frames, and put the lace curtains in soak, beside other items to numerous to mention," mischievously added Flora, rather enjoying the discomfiture of the young clergyman.

"Miss Lee," said Eric, "I beg your pardon."

"What for, Mr. Hale?"

"For always having regarded you as the most useless of creatures. I recant. I own that you are equal to any emergency."

And when, later in the evening, Mrs. Dove crept out, with her head tied up in eau de cologne, she found her nephew and Flora Lee playing chess together by the fire in the most amicable manner imaginable.

"It's all right," said Mrs. Dove to herself.

It was all right. And Mrs. Eric Hale won her frank, unconventional husband, not through the medium of dress, or jewels, or waltzes, or flower-shows, but through the grim realities of cleaning house.

"I wanted a genuine helpmeet," said the Reverend Eric, "and I got one."—*Family Monthly*.