

their services at once, and how they worked! They did a considerable amount of laughing whenever they were alone, and required the most minute directions for everything they undertook, but they put down carpets and put up pictures and carried in furniture and unpacked glass and china, in fact, they worked with might and main, leaving to the driver of the van only the task of going to and fro with the goods, which he managed to load with Martha's assistance.

At noon we unpacked a substantial lunch, and as Bill and John, our new help, showed no signs of going home, we spread out a meal on the kitchen-table and sent them to it. I never in my life heard men laugh so much over sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs and coffee.

In all this time, you may be sure Teddy and I were berating those horrid Townsends at every turn. We called them all sorts of names expressive of meanness and selfishness, hoped their own house would burn down and let them know how pleasant it was to be turned out of a home they loved. We were sure they were sour, grumpy old bachelors, and we hoped they would never marry unless it was to some old witch who would worry all the year round.

All this we said in confidence to each other, never heeding those quiet, modest, young men who were so meekly obeying all our orders.

The house was really in very nice order, and mother's room as home-like as we could make it, when at last the carriage drove up with our dear invalid, Jim and Martha. Mother was very pale and propped up by pillows, and I was worrying over the necessity of her walking upstairs, when out walked our two hired men, and without any orders whatever raised her tenderly and gently, pillows and all, in their arms, and carried her upstairs as carefully as her own sons, had she ever had any, could have done.

Jim stared, as well she might, and Martha muttered "Holy Moses!" as she made a dive for the kitchen.

Teddy paid the men; Jim and I did the last few things necessary before resting; and then we all gathered in mother's room.

Such a chattering as followed, the dear mother laughing and talking as merrily as any of us.

"But, oh, what guys you two are!" cried Jim. "Tom, you've torn yourself, as usual, wherever there was the smallest opening for a rent, and your cap is hanging half way down your back, while your hair defies description. Teddy always does keep nice, somehow; but now—even Teddy will bear an application of soap and water."

"Same to yourself," said Teddy. "I guess you sent all the mirrors away before you washed your face. You've got what Martha calls a 'smooch' right across your nose."

"Don't be personal, young ladies," said mother, in extreme gentleness, "but perform your ablutions, and see if Martha can make out a tea."

In a fortnight we had settled down in our new house, but we did not occupy ourselves, as of old, in beautifying our home. We were advertising far and wide for a house such as we wished, and we hoped to purchase one. The price of the one we had left was beyond our reach, but we thought we could hear of one at a more reasonable rate.

During this time of waiting, feeling as if we really had no home, we had gone out but little. Mother was not well, and the heat was very oppressive, while Martha's large wrist threw considerable of the housework on our hands.

But one evening there came an irresistible invitation from mother's dear old friend, Mrs. Raymond, of Chester Grove, to a garden party and a dance.

"You will stay all night, of course, and I will send the carriage for you at two o'clock. Be sure you all come. I cannot spare one of you!"

But we did not all go. Mother was not equal to the eight-mile drive, and Jim stayed with her. We all wanted to stay, and finally drew lots, and it fell to Jim.

"I'm not really out, anyhow," said that young person, philosophically; "and, as you and Teddy seem awfully slow about leaving the family nest, perhaps it is just as well that I am not brought forward just now."

"The effect will be overwhelming when you are," said Teddy, laughing; but secretly we all thought Jim the beauty of the family, for, with the golden hair, she had soft brown eyes and dark eyelashes.

It was with the utmost serenity that Teddy and I accepted Mrs. Raymond's invitation to stroll about the grounds a little with her, and see some new neighbors only lately come to live at Chester Grove.

We were arrayed in the finest of linen lawns, white, with a small blue figure, with blue belts, and white muslin shade-hats with blue bows. Blue neckties, knots of blue in our curls, and blue-trimmed white gloves constituted our costumes; and I can answer for Teddy's being exceedingly becoming.

Strolling leisurely along, we met two gentlemen in white linen suits and straw hats; we heard Mrs. Raymond say:

"Allow me to introduce the Messrs. Townsends, lately returned from Europe. Mr. John Townsend, Miss Theodosia Brent; Mr. William Townsend, Miss Thomsine Brent."

I thought I was going to faint. I heard Teddy gasp. I saw Mrs. Raymond sail majestically away; and then I looked again.

Yes, it was "Bill"; and Teddy was blushing, with drooping eyes, before "John."

"Would you please forgive us?" said John presently. "We had just come over to Dolliver, and had heard for the first time that there was any personal feeling involved in the sale of our father's property, which we had regarded as a mere business transaction. We were coming up the street beside your house, when we saw your distress, and, having nothing to do, we took off our coats and vests and hats, and rubbed a little mud on our faces and hands and—"

"It was just for a lark, you know," pleaded Bill, as his brother paused; "and you did look just ready to cry, you know."

"It was very good of you," said Teddy, looking very much as Bill had just described her.

"Yes, we are very much obliged," I said, thinking of all they had heard us say about them, and wondering how much they remembered.

But, somehow, just then we all looked up, and in another second, the air was filled with laughter. It was irresistible. The whole affair was too funny.

After that, we were the best of friends. The Townsends came often to Jenk's Corner, and when Jim comes out regularly, next winter, she will have no alsterly compunctions about Teddy or me, because there will be a double wedding in about two weeks. Teddy and I are going to marry "those horrid Townsends"—Anna Shields.

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