



## AN AUTOMATIC MAID OF ALL WORK.

BY WYNNE WINTERS.

Yes, I mean what I say, an automatic maid-of-all-work, invented by my husband, John Matheson.

You see it was this way, the old story of servants, ever since we began housekeeping. We've had every kind, and if we did get a good one, something would come along to take her off.

You know John has invented lots of things. There's that door-spring now, not much when you look at it, but it brings in quite a little income. He used to say that he was spending his spare time on an automatic maid-of-all-work. Of course I laughed, said I wished he would, and thought no more of it.

Well, the day the last girl left, John announced that the automatic maid-of-all-work was completed, and that he would stay at home next day and show me how to work it. Of course I didn't believe in it.

It was a queer-looking thing, with its long arms, for all the world like one of those old-fashioned windmills you see in pictures of foreign countries. It had a face like one of those twenty-four hour clocks, only there were no hands; each number was a sort of electric button. It was run by electricity, you know. The battery was inside. I didn't understand it very well; I never could see into anything in the way of machinery; I never pretend to listen when John tells me about his inventions. The figures, as I said, were buttons, and you just had to connect them with some wires inside. There were a lot of wires, each for some kind of work which would be done at the hour indicated by the button you connected it with. This was handy, so that we would not have to get up in the morning till breakfast-time, and would be handy in lots of ways.

"Now look, Fanny," said John, "do try and understand how it works. You see this wire now; I'll connect it with button number six, and at that hour the maid will light the fire, sweep the kitchen and then the dining-room. Now this button, number seven, will be the one to set the alarm. It will sound for about ten minutes (I'd sound it now only it makes a fearful noise); then the maid will go upstairs to turn down the beds—a convenient arrangement in many ways. Then it will go downstairs, lay the cloth for breakfast, make the tea and toast, bring in the things, and ring the breakfast bell. You'll have to leave all the breakfast things on one shelf, of course, as she means to eat the oatmeal and tea also. We won't set any more buttons to-night. It's just as well to be around at first to see that all goes right. There may be some adjustment necessary."

We went to bed then, and it was daylight when I awoke. I was conscious of a peculiar whirling noise, but I hadn't got thoroughly awakened when I heard the most awful screams and thumps, and the two boys came running into our room in their night-dresses, and after them the automatic maid-of-all-work.

By this time I was out of bed, but John sleeps very soundly. He started as the maid jerked the bed-clothes down and laid them over the foot-board, but he wasn't quick enough. It took him under the arm. It had an awful grip, too—and laid him across the foot-board, after giving him a thump or two, as I do the pillows. (John had told me it would and had the thing to perfection. He didn't suppose it would be tried on him, though.) He didn't seem quite prepared for such a performance, for he founced around so that he and the bed-clothes, pillows and all, landed in a heap on the floor.

By this time the boys had got over their fright, having been treated in the same manner, and we all laughed. John can't bear to be laughed at. However, we proceeded to dress after the maid had gone downstairs. I could see John was a little nervous, but he didn't want to show it, so he waited till I was ready. The boys got down first, and we could hear them laughing.

"I daresay," you'll have to arrange the table a little, Fanny," said John, as he went down, "but that won't be much to do when all the things are on."

Well, we went into the dining-room, and sure enough, the table was set, and pretty well, too, only that the butter dish, with the butter, was upside down on the table, and the coal scuttle was set at John's place, instead of the oatmeal dish. That was because John had left it standing on the back of the stove after putting it in the dining-room for the morning fire. The porridge was standing cooked on the stove. We had got an arrangement with a white earthen bowl set into a kettle, and the bowl had just to be removed and carried in. However, the coal scuttle had stood in the way, and John had to carry it out and bring in the porridge. The toast was scorched a little, but the eggs were boiled just to perfection, and we enjoyed all immensely.

Meanwhile, the maid was upstairs making the beds, and such beds you never saw. You'd think they'd been cast in a mold. The maid came downstairs just as we were through, and then John pulled another wire. After doing so he acted rather strangely. He didn't seem to be able to let go the wire for a minute. It gave him a shock, you know. After that he hurried to the dining-room and sat down.

Then the maid proceeded to clear the table. Here was a slight complication, however, for the maid washed everything, and though we had eaten up nearly all, still there was some butter in the dish, a bowl of sugar, and the salt-cellar. However, as there was lots of good hot water, the dishes after they were wiped were as clean as they could be; but John suggested that for the present, until he could make some improvements, the eatables had better be removed first, for "of course," he said, "there will be some imperfections."

"Now, Fanny, I suppose you want to wash, don't you? You have the clothes ready, I see."

"Yes, but it seems to me the dining room is not swept very clean. Anyway the crumbs ought to be swept up."

"Exactly," returned John, "only, you see, I fixed it so that it would just run around the table once before breakfast, then afterwards you can have all the furniture moved out and the whole room swept every day."

Well, the maid proceeded to remove the furniture. It went to the middle of the room, then began to circle around, removing everything it came in contact with, and setting things out the hall. John dropped the leaves of the table, and all went well till it came to the stove and attempted to remove that also; but something was amiss, and it veered off to one side. John started forward to turn it off the track, but it promptly picked him up and removed him. I forgot to say that a revolving brush in the bottom was sweeping all this time, and now the thing was making the last circuit as I thought, for it touched the wall on three sides, and I was wondering how it would get into the corners, while John watched the stove, and wondered if it could pass between that and the wall without coming in contact with the stove, but there the passage was not wide enough, and the stove, a little open grate, was picked up and removed. The pipes fell down and made a lot of dirt, but that was pretty well swept up, as the maid had to make two or three more circles to allow for the corners. John replaced the furniture, as he

had not provided for that part of the work. The stove we decided to carry out for the season, but in the meantime he had started the maid at the washing. You see there was no time lost between things; and I tell you those clothes were washed, and so was John's coat, which, being a good one, he had taken off and laid on the bench. Then we had the kitchen scrubbed, the same apparatus which did the sweeping doing that also. John adjusted it so that the furniture was merely pushed aside. The worst of the thing was that you could not stop the maid when it got going till it had run down, and what was more, if you interfered with the wires when it was going, you were apt to get a shock from the battery. This was inconvenient sometimes; for instance, after the kitchen was all scrubbed, the thing still ran around the walls scrubbing as hard as ever. John said the only thing was to pull another wire and set it to work at something else; it would run till after the tea dishes were washed, anyway, and probably we could find something harmless to keep it employed. Just then John was called out to speak to a man about some coal, and I undertook to head the thing across the middle of the room. Unfortunately, it rushed straight into the dining-room, water-pail and all. I didn't care much. I wanted a new carpet for that room, anyway, and I knew that sooty spot would never come out. The water in the pail was very dirty by this time. John had not thought of its having to be changed.

Presently John returned, and we got into the kitchen again. There was another funny thing about it. Whenever anyone got going ahead of it in the same direction it was sure to follow, and the only way to get out of its road was to double back on your own track and dodge it. It was the current air it followed. John said he had a reason for making it that way. While sweeping the kitchen it got after one of the boys once, and it dodged around tables and chairs just as he did, till John told him to turn and go back. It got after Bruno when we got it out of the dining-room into the kitchen. He had just come in from the barn to get something to eat. He turned tail and howled, but he could not get out of the way till he jumped out of the window. The cat fared worse. It was in the way of the maid, and was picked up along with the wiping cloth and rubbed over the floor for about three yards before she managed to get free. There was quite a hole in the window, and we have not seen the cat since.

John said there was a fine arrangement for answering the door. Of course, in some instances, we would have to go ourselves, especially if any old lady or timid person, who had not made the acquaintance of the maid, were expected, but if the postman or parcel delivery it would be all right. Anyone could send in a card, too, you see. But the best of all was the arrangement for putting tramps off the premises. John was just explaining how this was done when Fred exclaimed:

"There's an old fellow now; I wonder if he's coming here!"

Yes, sure enough; he turned in at the gate and presently there was a ring at the door-bell. Beggars are so impudent, and this was an old offender, so I didn't say anything when John pressed the wire. We all followed to the door to see the effect, John remarking that it wouldn't hurt him. The door was opened quite quietly, but closed with a bang after the maid. At first upon re-opening the door, we thought it had missed fire, for the tramp, looking somewhat scared, stood at one side of the doorway, but the maid was scuttling down the path with some limp figure in its arms. I was sorry to recognize an uncle of John's from whom John had expectations. I knew his bald head. The maid had him by the middle and his feet and head were rushing to the door, so that his hat dropped off. He was too much surprised to attempt resistance, and the maid deposited him in a heap in the gutter, and then returned. We were so bothered by the turn affairs had taken, that we forgot to get out of the way. Fred received a slap which sent him sprawling. John was lifted bodily, after the manner of his uncle, and laid upon the table, while I, my skirts being caught, was forced to run backwards in a very undignified manner, by grasping a door-knob. I wrenched myself free at the expense of a wig on my skirt. I stood hanging on to that door-knob, as if I expected momentarily to be snatched up and thrown out of the window, when my eyes happened to fall upon Tommy. He was lying upon his back on the floor, his legs slowly waving in the air. He made no sound. The expression of his face gave me such a start that I relaxed my hold on the door-knob, thinking that he was injured internally. But he raised his hand, and feebly waved me aside. He was simply too tired to laugh any more, and was obliged to lie down and wave his legs to express his feelings. Fred had begun to whimper after picking himself up, but, catching sight of Tommy, laughed instead, until something in their father's eyes caused both of the boys to take themselves out of doors. However, they perched upon the fence, just outside of a window and looked in.

"You see, Fanny, we must expect some complications at first," said John, "but after a while we'll get used to running it better." This he said, as the maid started out of the front door again, after having buzzed around the hall for a minute; for, as I told you, it was necessary to start it at some new wire in order to stop what it was doing, and in the meantime, while we were recovering our breath, it was making trips through the hall to the front gate, and hence to the gutter and back again. John was explaining that we could arrange the length of the trip as we pleased, and it need ordinarily be only to the front door. Just then, however, we heard a loud cry, and we rushed to the door to see what was the matter. It seems that the maid had encountered at the gate the form of a stout, elderly female, with basket and an umbrella, and of course had proceeded to remove the obstacle. However, the obstacle refused to be removed, and they were having a lively time of it. A crowd was beginning to collect, and a policeman appeared around the corner. He interfered in behalf of the stout female, and attempted to arrest the maid. The maid, however, made short work of him. It did not succeed, it's true, in depositing him in the ditch, but it spoiled his hat, and caused him to beat a hasty retreat; then, having removed all obstacles, traversed the remainder of the limit and returned to the house, followed by another angry policeman, who, after considerable persuasion, was induced to depart.

After the door closed upon the policeman, John looked at me and I at him. The maid had accomplished several revolutions around the dining-room and was about to return. "Mercy, Fanny, you're always talking how much there is to do; can't you think of something I'm not supposed to know?"

"No," I answered grimly, but an idea struck John, and he immediately hurried to pull another wire. He did not accomplish it with impunity, however, and I'm sorry to say he made use of some expressions, as he danced around for a minute, which I was glad the boys didn't hear.

The maid now went out to the wood-shed, and John fixed the handle of the axe into the attachment at the end of one of the arms. Here was something out of the ordinary way, and John brightened up considerably as the axe began to move up and down with a regular, double motion, reached forward, struck a stick at random with the axe blade so as to catch the stick, drew it forward into position and struck it, splitting it in the center, and threw the pieces with two other arms, into the corner, and so till the pile began to get low. Any sticks that were not split fine enough, John threw back.

All proceeded well enough till the last stick was split. Then the maid started to buzz around in search of more. It attacked the sawhorse and demolished it, ran into a tub and reduced it to kindling wood, ripped up a barrel of ashes and raised a terrible dust which completely drove John into the house. All this time he was trying to get near enough to start it off on another track, but it wheeled around and flung the axe so menacingly, that John got excited and lost his head.

When the dust had subsided sufficiently we went out again. By this time the maid had anchored beside the new

wood pile and was splitting it over. This would not have mattered much; we didn't mind the wood being reduced to matches, but it was close to the shed window and the sticks were being flung through, carrying broken glass with them into the street. John did not care for another visit from the policeman, but he was completely nonplussed. Just then he heard a stifled chuckle and looking over his shoulder he saw several boys perched on the fence, and among them our own, who immediately dropped down. But what maddened John was the sight of a newspaper reporter also, who was evidently sketching the scene. Then the air began to be filled with missiles, which John threw at the maid, till, by some lucky hit, some of the machinery was jarred and the maid rushed wildly around the shed, the axe now slashing about with a motion evidently intended for some other office than wood-chopping. John ran to shut the door in the face of the reporter, who was filling sheets with sketches. The maid, however, started after him. John stopped, tried to dodge, hesitated, then ran out of the back gate and down the road, the maid thrashing at him with the axe. This was serious. I ran to the gate and anxiously looked after them, while the boys and reporter followed in the wake of the maid. I very much feared the maid would run into something and do some damage, but I soon saw that, as, of course, John avoided all obstacles, so did the maid and simply followed him. I wondered why he did not reverse and pass the maid, thus putting it off the track. Presently, however, John returned alone looking somewhat travel-stained. He pushed past me and went upstairs to the bathroom. I did not dare to follow to ask questions, but Fred and Tommy also returned soon and told me what happened after I lost sight of them.

It seems that, first of all, the axe flew off the handle, and chopped a rooster, which was scurrying out of the way, almost in two. Then they caught up with a cow. It was quite a bit out of the town, and she started to run in the same direction. John swerved to one side and the maid caught up with the cow and belabored her with the axe handle. This maddened the cow, so that she made for the river and rushed in, the maid after her. They clashed about in the stream for a minute; then the maid sank and the cow appeared on the other side.

Next morning, about an hour after John went down town, he sent up a new carpet for the dining-room. We have a German girl now, and I don't know but that she's better than the automatic maid-of-all-work.

## THE QUIET HOUR.

## The Morning.

Upon the battle field the soldier rests  
When evening closes in,  
But he rejoices when the morning comes,  
To see the fight begin.

The night is good that brings us sweet repose,  
And calm and peaceful rest,  
But, tell me, soldier of a heavenly King,  
Is not the morning best?

For in the night we cannot work for Christ,  
We cannot lift our sword,  
You would not rather rest and sleep, than fight  
A battle for your Lord!

No, fellow soldier, we have work to do,  
And though the night is blest,  
We love the day when we can fight for God,  
We love the morning best.

## Manliness.

There is nothing in Christianity incompatible with the highest and truest manliness. This needs to be emphasized, for there is an opposite idea quite prevalent which keeps many out of the kingdom. One can fully carry out all the precepts of Christ when they are properly understood without being a weak, colorless, inoffensive, insignificant sort of a stick who submits to be trodden upon and kicked about without limit.

There is no call for us to abdicate our common sense in seeking to become wholly consecrated. Reason need not be sacrificed at the shrine of superstition. A true Christian is not a "worm," but the noblest style of a man. There is nothing mean, or fawning, or cringing, or crawling, about him. He is the child of the King. He stands up straight. He has plenty of backbone. He gives his opinion, if called for, with emphasis. He has pluck in abundance, and plenty of spirit. He can flame forth against wrong, and blast it with the hot lightning of his hate.

Manliness does not at all consist in touchiness, or sensitiveness to a slight, or inability to bear a gibe. It is not the same as hotheadedness. Still less has it any connection with obstinacy, or bravado, or haughty insolence and superciliousness. These things are elements of cowardice, not bravery. The bully is never a hero.

True Christian manliness enables a man to be firm without being mulish, to respect himself and yet be free from pride, to be temperate in all things, to speak the truth, to be strong and independent. It endows him with that moral courage so shamefully lacking in most of those who take their ideal of manliness from worldly sources alone. The devout, the godly, fortified against all temptation by established Christian principle, is the only one who can properly lay claim to genuine manliness.

## Battles.

Nay, not for place, but for the Right,  
To make this fair world fairer still—  
Or lowly lily of a meadow,  
Or sun-topped tower of a hill,  
Or high or low, or near or far,  
Or dull or keen, or bright or dim,  
Or blade of grass, or brightest star—  
All, all are but the same to Him.

O, pity of the strife for place!  
O, pity of the strife for power!  
How scarred, how marred a mountain's face!  
How fair the fair face of a flower!  
The blade of grass beneath your feet  
The bravest sword—aye, braver far  
To do and die in mute defeat  
Than bravest conquerer of war!

When I am dead say this, but this:  
"He grasped at no man's blade or shield,  
Or banner bore, but helmetless,  
Alone, unknown, he held the field.  
He held the field, with sabre drawn,  
Where God had set him in the fight!  
He held the field, fought on and on!  
And so fell, fighting for the Right."

—Joaquin Miller.