

# A SMOKE OUT.

BY ELIA J. HUNTER.

The three unmarried daughters of the late General Goldfinch lived at the old homestead. Although the youngest was past forty, you observe that they were still "the General's daughters." Never, even in their young days, had vulgar par'ance styled them "the Goldfinch girls," for the dear, sainted General, among his other peculiarities, had chosen to ostracise his family from the world.

They were strange women. Spinsterhood had been the mode among the Goldfinches, and it was their proud boast that for seven generations no female of the direct line had committed the common feminine indiscretion of matrimony. Priscilla, Deborah, Elizabeth! No modern shortening of the dignified epithets was dreamed of. It would have seemed sacrilegious. None knew their resources, but it was supposed that the General had left them in comfortable circumstances. Well he might! For of all befuddled, irascible, gout-stricken old gentlemen, the General should have borne the palm.

Priscilla and Deborah resembled their father. A resemblance tempered, of course, by a few feminine limitations. They adored his memory. His temper, pride, insolence, his very drinking bouts, had never caused them to cease their adulation. He was their ideal of a gentleman. Some wag of the village had dubbed them the General's war horses, and the title still remained, although the General had died full fifteen years before.

Miss Elizabeth was Goldfinch only in name, and in name, from force of circumstances, not from choice. Ah! Miss Elizabeth, have you forgotten the pink billet in the hollow tree, so unfortunately found by the General?

A female Goldfinch addressed as "My Darling Betty!" Zounds! The General's language on this occasion was, to say the least, tropical. Highly seasoned, you know, as things are apt to be that come from India.

The General's wife had been a weak, frail, little woman, who, after introducing three unwelcome daughters into the world, made the effort of her life, produced an heir, and then, awed at her achievement, immediately departed from this earth, with a gentle satisfied smile on her lips.

Miss Elizabeth and little Reginald had grown up together—in a sense—for Reginald was still a lad when the testy General disowned him for some trifling offence. And now Reginald's daughter was coming to live with them; her father had left her to the care of his sisters. Priscilla and Deborah were not wholly charmed with the new responsibility. Still she was the "General's granddaughter, and a Goldfinch!" Miss Elizabeth's heart gave a flutter of delight. A young girl in the house! Her bright companionship! How it would revolutionize the old place!

But, then, what Miss Elizabeth thought did not matter. She did not resemble the General. She was a nonentity.

So Daisy Goldfinch, in all the youth and beauty of her eighteen years, became a member of this fossil household. She was received with due observance. The elder sisters eyed her askance; but Miss Elizabeth loved her from the first.

The staid old servants, Pomp and his wife Dinah, admired her from their distance. Pomp was bewitched. "Massa Reginald's own child!" She was not called "the General's granddaughter" in the kitchen.

Now Miss Daisy did not, by any means, intend to spend her days "vegetating," as she said inwardly, with a scornful toss of her head. Not she—because you see there was Harry, and Harry would be ready to marry her soon. She summoned all her courage one day, and announced her plans at the breakfast-table. Miss Elizabeth had long known of them.

Such a commotion as they made, for this Harry was no other than the son of Elizabeth's quondam lover, a man solemnly cursed by the General. The genealogy was produced. It was shown conclusively that spinster-hood was to be her future.

The old war-horses fairly snorted with rage.

From that time no letters reached her. Her goings out and comings in were carefully espied. She was practically cut off from Elizabeth's society, for she seldom saw her alone. Was it a wonder that she drooped and pined? Not a line from Harry for a month!

Old Pomp watched her closely. He remembered the old days when Miss Elizabeth had been young. How often young Reginald had stood between him and the General's wrath! Pomp burned to help the daughter, "if 'twas only to git eben wid de ole officer for his deblements."

One morning a strange young fellow accosted him in the market-place, and questioned him as to Miss Daisy.

Pomp was unused to subtleties of speech, but an idea dawned upon his dark African brain. "Am you her true love?" he asked eagerly. Then a long, quiet talk followed. Pomp's black face fairly shone with excitement on the way home. He chuckled until his fat sides shook. "Got ahead of de Gen'l dis time. A Goldfinch a goin' to be married, an' me a doin' it. Lor', how dey'll take on. Poor Miss Li-beth! She shall go too. Couldn't lobe her nohow. Spect I'll be eben wid de Gen't besfo' annudder night!"

Pomp had done the marketing for years, so, when he announced that "der wa'n't a 'spectable smoked ham in de place," and that "after dis he was a goin' to smoke dem hisself," no remonstrance was made. Indeed, Miss Deborah remarked, as she had many scores of times before, "that Pomp certainly was a faithful retainer." They habitually spoke of their two domestics as "retainers."

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In the meanwhile Daisy was fading quickly. The poor child was fast losing her hold on life. In vain, gentle Miss Elizabeth pleaded for her. The family record was unrolled. The General's curse solemnly referred to. These were unanswerable arguments.

But Harry, who meant to put a very stirring finger in the pie, was not far off. He had written Daisy. At last, fearing that some harm had befallen his darling, he had come from Virginia to the little Canadian village. He had even been at the house. Whatever passed between him and Miss Priscilla, who received him alone in the state drawing-room, never transpired. He did not return, but even Deborah had not known of his visit. At last he found a friend in old Pomp, and Pomp had a scheme.

Such a smell as greeted the sensitive nostrils of Miss Priscilla when she awoke next morning! Soot—burning grease—charred bones—she could not believe her senses.

Such smells in the aristocratic domicile of the late General Goldfinch! She must be dreaming.

A realistic odor of onions came floating up. Onions! The horrified spinster hastily drew her wrapper over her night clothes and ran downstairs. Smells such as she had never imagined—horrible odors! The house was full of them. In the kitchen the blinding smoke quite hid the fire-place. Out she rushed into the open air.

There, on the flat roof of the L, stood Pomp, excitedly prying into the chimney-flue with a poker, and wildly brandishing a pail.

"We'll sabel de placo yit, Miss Priscilla," he howled. "De engines is a comin'!"

Sure enough, up through the sacred enclosure of the park came dashing the firemen. Miss Priscilla gasped in horror at the desecration. A vanguard of small boys began to cheer for "the General's war-horae." Miss Priscilla fled into the house, and the excited women, in mondescript costumes fled from room to room, endeavoring to pack. Still these awful smells! No fire as yet in the main house, but the smoke was stifling. Pomp constituted himself master of ceremonies. He allowed no strangers to cross the threshold.

"Miss Daisy 'ill die in dese smells an' smoke; 'spect I'd batter gib her an' Miss 'Lisbeth to ole Dinah out dar;" and in the excitement of the moment he dropped the aunt and niece out of the window into somebody's arms—not Dinah's I fancy.

"Der ain' no danger now, we 'bout got it under," he explained, "but 'twas a narrow 'scape. 'Pears to me dat smell neber will stop. 'Twas all de fault ob dem nonsensical hams. I jus' built a rousin' big fire an' hung dem ober de chimney fur to git smoked. De strings got charred an' down fell de meat—kerplunk—till dey done choke up de draught. (He did not add that he had firmly wedged them in with the poker.) De hams is a fuzzin' an' a charrio' up der now, an' de fat is a weepin' into de fi'-place. Dot fool Dinah, she had to go an' put de bigges' mess of onions on, cause she thought dey'd draw de hams down. Oayons is might' drawin' she says. Ges' der wa'n't no fire, no how, nothin' but de smell an' smoke—but 'twas a narrow 'scape!" And the old man rattled on garrulously until the fugitives were well off.

Away down in Virginia live two happy couples. Daisy and her faithful Harry—and Miss Elizabeth, now no longer known as the "General's daughter," but as Mrs. Harry, Sr., for in her nephew's widower father she found the sweetheart of her youth, and the days of the pink billet were speedily revived.

Ah! Ghost of General Goldfinch, old Pomp was more than your match when he so unknowingly united these lovers, separated for so many years!

Priscilla and Deborah live on as of yore. Two names are never mentioned before them by the faithful retainers. They pride themselves no longer on the distinguishing trait of the female Goldfinches, for alas, the tradition has been violated.

As for Pomp—he still chuckles to himself, when he thinks how "he done git eben wid de ole officer."

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# AS HIGH AS HIS HEART.

A STORY IN WHICH THE UNUSUAL HAPPENED.

BY PROFESSOR CLARENCE MILES BOUTELLE.

## CHAPTER I.

Night had fallen early that stormy November day, and the rain was roaring against the sides of the cars like another deluge, when John and I went forward to the dining car for supper.

This is a world of coincidences. I wonder whether the next one will be? Or, is coincidence so characteristic of this world—our world—that a strayed soul, puzzled and belated in infinite space, a million or two years down into the margin of an unending eternity, would know this ancient and long-forgotten home, at once, because of it.

"I haven't seen Roscoe Valentine for two months. Do you know

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