

CASE of POTTER versus CUPID

ONE spring a queer thing happened in Dutton. It happened the day that Effie Potter went into Millar & Johnston's general store to buy a pair of rubbers.

In rubbers Effie took a small three. Young Mr. Smith, who clerked in Millar & Johnston's, knew this instinctively; it is the size all women take. But in order to find out how much room she needed in a small three, he had to get down on his knees and tug and strain at the rubbers until he was red in the face, and then get up and go away and bring other small threes, a trifle larger, with the numbers smudged out, and try them on; and keep on like that until he found a small three that would do.

When that happened, Mr. Smith, still kneeling, leaned back on his heels and looked triumphantly up at Effie. By the strangest coincidence she was looking straight down at him—or at the rubbers, he couldn't be sure which—and, like a flash, he discovered (this is the queer think I spoke about), discovered that she had blue eyes.

Mind you! blue eyes. He had know all along that she had eyes of some sort—at least, he had suspected it; but blue eyes! It was his favorite color; he assured himself right there that it was his favorite color.

Effie went home with the rubbers and told her mother that she didn't see how a young man of Mr. Smith's ability could be persuaded to stay in a place like Dutton; she didn't think that Miller & Johnston could afford to pay him what he was worth. She wouldn't be surprised, she said, to see him in parliament some day; he was such a clever young man, and took such an interest in politics. (Mr. Smith had remarked, while trying on the rubbers, that if the Government really wanted to save this country from going to rack and ruin, the sooner they abolished these mail order houses, the better.)

Mrs. Potter had been young once herself, which is not really an uncommon thing, and she recognized the symptoms. She didn't fancy Mr. Smith for a son-in-law; she fancied young Dr. Robinson. A doctor's wife, you know, has—that is—well, it's a much better thing socially than the other.

Dr. Robinson drank, but you'd never know it, unless you were told. Mrs. Potter herself had seen to it that a good many were told, but that was when the Doctor was going with that horrid Thompson girl. Now that he seemed to have taken a fancy for Effie, it turned out that he was really only a very moderate drinker after all—took it for his nerves. You know how doctors are troubled with their nerves.

The truth is, that for a long time Mother Potter had been privately rehearsing such speeches as, "My daughter, the doctor's wife, you know, is motoring to Winnipeg this week," and "My daughter and her husband are spending the winter in California," and to forget these and learn a new set to the tune of "My daughter, Mrs. Smith, is nursing twins," or "My daughter, Mrs. Smith, is prepared to do plain sewing at reasonable rates," required a mental effort for which she was not prepared. She therefore set about to discourage the affair.

The Potters were Methodists—that is, Mrs. Potter and the children were. Mr. Potter was a nondescript.

Mr. Smith was a Presbyterian. It always happens so. The reason Miller & Johnston kept a Presbyterian clerk was because they were both Methodists. Of course, you can see the sound business judgment in that. You can't? Well, you blockhead!

Effie Potter sang in the Methodist choir, and after Mr. Smith discovered that Effie had blue eyes, he began to haunt the Methodist Church, regardless of his employers' interests; sitting in places where he could get a good view of the choir and yet seem to be looking at the minister.

Effie, too, was interested in the minister, maddeningly so. Once in a while, it is true, her gaze would wander a little, and seem to fall directly upon the countenance of that defaulting Presbyterian young man; but only for an instant, and then it would flutter away again so quickly, and rest so thoughtfully upon the extreme southwest angle of the pulpit, that Mr. Smith couldn't really be sure whether she had looked at him at all or not.

Miller & Johnston were not close-fisted, but they

ANOTHER of those funny stories of what happened to the Potter Family in Dutton on the Prairie. This time Mrs. Potter began the management of that most precarious of all affairs, the love-making between her Methodist daughter Effie and the young man Presbyterian Smith, who sold rubbers. Mr. Potter took a hand, and oh, with what elephantine agility he managed it—supported by Effie's cold in the head.

By GORDON REDMOND

were careful people, and when they saw their young clerk's usefulness being impaired in this disgraceful way, they began to talk of cutting down expenses by reducing the staff.

But did the thought of his impending reduction deter that reckless and infatuated young man? Not so you could notice it. He said the course of true love never did run smooth, and he said he would try to bear it for her sake, whatever he meant by that. He seemed chuck full of those clever sparkling things. He even conceived the idea of writing a few verses in honor of his lady love's eyes; and he tackled the job, too, but the words wouldn't come—not the kind of words he wanted. The only words that did come were some that came from Mr. Miller, the senior partner. They were harsh, biting words, calculated to sear a sensitive soul like Mr. Smith's; and they did. He abandoned poetry during business hours.

WHEN Mrs. Potter saw a comparative stranger trying to flirt with her daughter in Church, she could hardly believe her eyes. A Presbyterian, too; just think of the audacity of that. She cautioned Effie to beware of the wiles of the tempter. She said, once let him find out that Effie wasn't taking any notice of him, and he would be glad to quit; so Effie never let him find it out.

It got to be the talk of the town. Some said that old lady Henderson should really have died that spring, and only held out till the middle of the summer because she was anxious to see how the affair was going to turn out. Mrs. Potter took Effie out of the choir.

That put a crimp in the game, but only for a time. It turned out that Mr. Smith himself was eligible for a place in the choir. He knew the leader well, had lent him money, in fact. That made him eligible.

So the burning glances continued to shuttlecock back and forth past the minister's bald head, without ever warming him up or getting into his sermons in any noticeable way.

But a Presbyterian in the Methodist choir! It was a precedent. Old lady Henderson said, Love will find a way. She was an original old lady.

Mrs. Potter was furious. So she kept on discouraging the affair, till she had it nearly discouraged into an elopement, and then her sister in Brandon took sick and she had to go over and take care of her. There was a trained nurse in attendance, but my land, what good is a trained nurse when there's anybody really sick around?

Mr. Potter had been watching the game from the sidelines. He judged it was time to take a hand.

Mr. Potter had his own reasons for disliking Mr. Smith as a prospective son-in-law. Chief among these was the fact that he believed Mr. Smith to be that most loathsome of objects, a dyed-in-the-wool Grit.

Believed him to be, I say, for if he had asked Mr. Smith out and out, he would have learned that Mr. Smith was a freethinker. All young men think they are free thinkers.

But he did not ask Mr. Smith out and out. Instead he had "sounded" him, when he first came to Dutton. As leader of the Conservative faction in Dutton—ringleader, the other side called him—he felt it his duty to sound all newcomers, politically.

Mr. Potter's first official act in the campaign he had planned was to go down to Miller & Johnston's and invite

Mr. Smith up for supper. That was the very afternoon that Mrs. Potter went away.

Effie, at her father's request, had baked a pan of biscuits. The wily old fox knew that biscuits were a chancy thing at best, and that with Effie they almost invariably went wrong.

Effie was just debating with herself the advisability of throwing the biscuits away on the dog, or rather of throwing the dog away on the biscuits, when her father hove in sight with young Mr. Smith in tow. She forgot the biscuits, forgot the dog, and fled upstairs to change her dress.

When she came down in a simple white frock, with a little dab of powder on her nose, Mr. Smith thought he had never seen so fair a vision. Mr. Potter asked after the biscuits.

Effie looked daggers at her father, and tried to sidetrack the biscuits, but Mr. Smith declared that biscuits were his favorite nutriment, and evinced such an interest in this particular batch, that there was nothing for Effie to do but bring them on.

The young man was lively and talkative, and ate as many of the biscuits as he could hold, to show that he liked them.

Afterwards, sitting alone with Effie on the veranda, in the moonlight, he began to wish that he had eaten one or two less. Mr. Potter left them alone on the veranda. He did it on purpose.

The young man's heart was strangely stirred as he sat there with Effie in the moonlight. That was the biscuits. As the stirring became more pronounced, the young man grew sad and thoughtful. Effie, on the other hand, had only eaten enough to make her sentimental. She wanted to know what Mr. Smith would do if she should die.

He said he would shoot himself. He counted on doing it, anyway, if the storm inside grew any worse. But that was not what Effie wanted. She wanted to die, herself—not permanently, of course, only for a few days—but she wanted Mr. Smith to keep on living, so she could hang around and watch him, and see how he took it. Thinking of these things, Effie began to cry.

MR. SMITH felt low-spirited enough to cry, too, but he didn't. Instead he drew Effie's head down upon his shoulder, and let her tears fall unchecked upon the bosom of his shirt. That answered just as well.

They said, wasn't it queer how people who were intended for each other always met at just the right time, even if they had to come from the ends of the earth to do it; and they said they couldn't understand why people who began by loving each other so fiercely, never kept it up very long, but always quit about the second week after the honeymoon. It must be that those people didn't really belong to each other. They never intended to quit.

The insurrection in the young man's stomach had now reached alarming proportions. He was beginning to gulp. He therefore took a melancholy but hasty leave and hurried home.

Effie asked her father if he didn't think Mr. Smith was looking kind of peaked. She thought he seemed to have something weighing on his mind.

"Yes," the old man chuckled, "I reckon that's about the size of it. I reckon he was weighted down considerably."

Effie went to bed to toss miserably about, telling herself over and over again that she was the happiest girl in the world, and proving it by crying until her pillow was soaked with tears and she caught a cold in her head from the dampness. Such is the power of the undigested biscuit.

Mr. Smith was tossing, too—tossing and ruminating. Every little while he would lean out over the edge of the bed and ruminate violently. At times he fancied that he must have been living on nothing but biscuits for years. His head threatened to split

SO IT SEEMS

*The year's at the spring,
The day's at the morn,
Morning's at seven,
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing,
The snail's on the thorn,
God's in His heaven,
All's right with the world.*

—ROBERT BROWNING.