

## LITERARY.

## "MAID-OF-ALL-WORKS."

Rachel Ramsey looked very pretty, indeed, as she came down the narrow wooden staircase in the little brown farm-house that afternoon, dressed in a white mu-lin dress strewn all over with tiny pink rosebuds, and a fresh lace frill around her neck, tied with pink ribbon, while her pretty feet were buttoned into a new pair of boots, with high French heels, and her hair was curled in loose, glossy coils of shining bronze.

"Eh!" said Granny Ramsey, looking up from her everlasting knitting-work, over which she was half asleep, "going to church, hey?"

"It isn't Sunday, grandma," explained the girl, laughing and coloring. "I'm going to the Tower, to see Miss Calhoun. She has often invited me there—she and Miss Bell."

"Pshaw!" said Granny Ramsey, who was one of those venerable people privileged to speak their mind on all occasions; what do the fine city ladies at the Tower want of a farmer's daughter like you?"

"But, grandma, they've invited me!" "It reminds me," said grandma, shrewdly, "of the old story of the iron pot and the china pot swimming down stream together and they don't nowise suit."

Rachel said no more, but escaped into the shady lane, where the maples were beginning to turn pale yellow in the first September frosts.

"Grandma is always criticizing everybody," she thought. "I know the ladies at the Tower will be glad to see me. Miss Alice wants to sketch my head for 'Elaine,' and Miss Bell asked me to sing duets with her. She said I had a voice like a lark. And perhaps Mr. Harold Haroldson will be there! For I know he often visits at the house."

And Rachel smiled to her self, as she crossed the rustic bridge and went through the woods to the Tower, a fantastic wooden cottage with a semi-circular front, which was let for the summer, the owner preferring to live in a square brick structure in the village.

The little side door was open and Rachel went in. From the left of the passage-way a door opened into the kitchen, and there, to her infinite amazement, she saw Miss Alice Calhoun herself, in an aesthetic dress of pale sage-green, and roses in her hair, contemplating a pair of decapitated fowls which lay on the table.

"Miss Alice!" she exclaimed. "Is that you, Rachel?" cried the city young lady, peouncing on her, as a drowning man pounces on the nearest floating straw. "Oh, I never was so glad to see anybody in all my life! These horrid hens! Bridget has gone away in a rage because I presumed to find fault with the coffee this morning, and we have got company to dinner, and I haven't an idea how to get the feathers off these creatures. But now that you are here, everything will be all right!"

And she shook off the leg bib-apron, and stepped back, with a sigh of relief.

Rachel looked perplexed. She had come there, not to enact the role of a kitchen maid, but to visit Miss Calhoun, to sit in her drawing-room and enjoy the conversation of her guests, and she did not exactly relish this summary dismissal to the kitchen.

"There is soup, look," went on Miss Alice, and a salad, and a delicate piece of halibut, and with the fowls roasted, and a pie or a pudding, or something

which I dare say you can make, we shall do very nicely. I'm particularly anxious about the dinner, because we are to have company. You'll excuse me now because I have to dress."

And away tripped Miss Alice, selfish and smiling as ever was Queen Cleopatra's self.

Poor Rachel! She stood a minute in the hot kitchen, the tears springing to her eyes, a pang of disappointment at her heart. She knew all about it. Harold Haroldson and Mr. Dallas were to dine there that day, and she—she was to be cook, waitress, maid-of-work—what signified it what she called herself? She remembered what grandma had said, and for once in her life gave that venerable old lady credit for discrimination.

There was no help for it, however. She tied on the bib-apron, tucked the curls back of her ears, and went to work to prepare the chickens for the roasting pan, now and then pausing to brush away the round, bright tears which rolled down her cheeks.

These young ladies evidently intended to make her useful. She might have known that they did, beforehand. She could hear the soft sound of Bell Calhoun's guitar; the sweet, subdued tinkle of Alice's laughter; the deep, monotonous under-current of gentlemen's voices; and then she glanced down at her pretty mu-lin dress and bows of pink ribbon, and began to think that Miss Calhoun had taken an unfair advantage of her.

If she could only have heard the rapid and energetic colloquy which transpired between the two sisters in their dressing-room, when first Alice came up stairs, she would perhaps have better comprehended the drift of things.

"Good news!" Miss Calhoun had cried, waving her scented pocket-handkerchief in the air. "I've got a girl in the kitchen!"

"No!" said Miss Bell, a fair-headed, cream-complexioned damsel, with blue eyes, and a perpetual smile.

"Rachel Ramsey," nodded Alice, came up here in her best bib and tucker, to spend the day. Of course I confided her at once."

"The bold, pushing thing!" said Bell, with a disdainful gesture.

"She's a deal too pretty to bring into the drawing-room for Haroldson and Armine Dallas to flirt with," added Miss Alice knowingly. "And I don't see any way that I could have avoided it, if it had not been for those lucky chickens, and Bridget's fortunate fit of temper. Make haste, now; they'll be here in a minute. And I know little Rachel is a first-class cook, for I've been there to tea."

So the young ladies of the Tower were enjoying the fruit of reason and the flow of soul in their cool drawing-room, with books, new-gathered roses and blue ribboned guitars, while poor Rachel Ramsey was brooding in the kitchen over peach tarts and Neapolitan creams.

She had forgotten her disappointment; but, artist-like, she had thrown herself into her occupation with engrossing interest and she was stirring the creams with a quick, energetic hand, when a step crossed the threshold.

"Here are some fresh trout, Bridget, to surprise your mistress," said a clear voice.

And to her infinite amazement Harold Haroldson stood before her, in his hunting costume, with a fishing rod lightly balanced on his shoulder.

"I'm not Bridget," said the girl laughing, but still stirring on. "I'm Rachel."

"Miss Ramsey!" he exclaimed, lifting his cap. "How in the name of all

that is wonderful came you here!"

And then, not without humor, Rachel detailed the manner and incidents of her capture.

"I am the maid-of-all-work, if you please," she said with a courtesy.

"Then let me help you," said Haroldson, briskly tying a second bib apron around his hunting suit. "I used to be a pretty good hand at spider and gridiron, when I camped out on Lake Capsuptic, up in Maine."

"But you're not engaged," said Rachel, half pleased, half frightened.

"I can volunteer," observed the young man. "Give me the oil and vinegar, and you will see what a dressing, *a la maitresse*, I can provide for that salad of yours."

And if a pair of cooks ever spent a delightful, unconventional sort of morning in the kitchen, this pair did.

They laughed, they made innocent jokes, they behaved like two school children.

And at last when Rachel ran out into the garden to gather some water-cresses to deck the newly roasted fowls, Mr. Haroldson heard the voice of Miss Bell Calhoun calling down the stairway:

"Rachel! Rachel! you may serve the dinner. Every one is here but that tiresome Haroldson!"

"And he's here, too," calmly responded that gentleman, who was washing his hands at the pump.

"What!" cried Bell, shrilly.

"The cook and butler are expected to take their meals in the kitchen," said Mr. Haroldson, with commendable gravity. "And I've no objection to that arrangement."

And nothing could induce Harold Haroldson to come up to the dining-room. He and Rachel together ate their picnicking sort of repast, and washed the dishes—although the matter somewhat lost its spice when the Misses Calhoun and their company adjourned, *en masse*, to the kitchen, and persisted in joining their ranks.

And when the purple sunset came drearily down over the dark colors that overhung the brawling stream, and the gay guests had all departed, Alice and Bell Calhoun gazed dubiously at each other.

"Was ever anything so provoking," said Bell.

"He has actually gone home with her," said Alice bursting into angry tears.

"And after all the pains we took to keep them apart!" sighed Bell.

"It was all your fault petulantly exclaimed Alice. "Noticing that farmer's daughter, and dragging her out of her sphere, in that sort of way!"

"But it was you that plumed yourself on getting her into the kitchen!" scolded Bell. "And a nice mess you've made of it!"

"But how were we to tell that it was going to end so?" groaned poor Alice.

"Well, Rachel," said Granny Ramsey, when the girl came in, just as the lamps were lighted, what sort of a day did you have?"

"Humph!" grunted Granny, after her answer. "That's a queer way of entertaining visitors. But perhaps that's city manners."

"Perhaps it is," said Rachel demurely.

"Who was it came home with you?" asked Granny, who was not quite deaf or blind as yet, "and left you at the garden gate?"

"One of the other servants," said Rachel.

"Well, I never," said Granny. "Where's all you pride, Rachel Ramsey?"

"I never was prouder in all my life than I am to-night!" said Rachel. "Listen, grandma, for I have so much to tell you. Mr. Harold Haroldson, of New York, walked home with me; and I've met him over so many times before this summer, at picnics and archery parties, and such places, but I never knew that he cared for me. And to-night he asked me to marry him, and he is to come here to-morrow morning to see father."

"Do you love him?" said Granny Ramsey, huskily.

And Rachel answered:

"Yes!"

"Then God bless you, my child, and give you both a long and happy life!" said the old lady, softly smoothing the girl's bright head.

And every one was satisfied, except the ladies of the Tower.—Helen Forest Graves.

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