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There's Many a Slip

By W. R. Gilbert

EILEEN was hanging out the washing in the back green, when she glanced over the hedge, and saw the motor draw up in the lane behind the house.

Within, in the front room which Eileen called the parlor, and Leonora designated as the "boudoir," sat Eileen's elder sister, the said Leonora, arrayed in her prettiest white embroidered gown, awaiting the coming of the lover whom little Eileen had never seen.

Leonora, though romantically inclined, would hardly have gone so far as to call Maurice Tregarthen her "lover." It was only Eileen who had dubbed him so.

Maurice Tregarthen was old Uncle Jacob's nephew; though no blood relation to the girls, who only recognized Uncle Jacob as Uncle Jacob by his marriage with Aunt Emily.

But now Aunt Emily was dead, and Uncle Jacob himself fast dying. He had always loved to poke his fingers into other people's pies, had Uncle Jacob, and now it behooved him, before he finally bade farewell to this scene of things, to find a suitable wife for his nephew, Maurice—Maurice, who would be the richest man in the countryside some not far distant day.

Uncle Jacob, in his will, had bequeathed the bulk of his wealth to Maurice, and it was perhaps some twinge of conscience on the old man's part which in those, his last conscious days, had directed his

upon this, the day arranged for Mr. Tregarthen's second visit, she attired herself in her prettiest and most becoming gown, and sat in the "boudoir" while Eileen, like Cinderella, hung the linen out in the back green to dry.

It was not out of absolute perversity that Eileen had chosen that particular day of all others for drying purposes. Eileen knew that Maurice Tregarthen was expected, and would have furthered her elder's sister's interests by every means in her power. But Leonora had informed her junior that she need not appear unless she so desired, and Eileen, who, unlike Leonora, had no pretty dress to display, had, no particular wish to make the acquaintance of this unknown young man. Yesterday had been wet, and the washing had had no chance to dry. Therefore, the little maid of all work, having been forbidden to move from the kitchen, upon pain of "missing the bell," Eileen took advantage of the fresh breeziness of the afternoon, and set about getting the washing hung out with what speed she might.

It was at this juncture, while she was fastening up the last sheet, that Eileen, craning her fair head over the hedge, met the motorist's interested glance. The motor had come to a pause by then. He touched his cap.

"I've had a breakdown, nothing very serious, if only I could get hold of a screwdriver and a little oil. Like a fool



Crossing the Athabasca—Colon Mountains in the background.

thoughts to dead Emily's orphan nieces, dead Emily, whose going, thirty years earlier, had left him so desolate and all alone. It had seemed a fitting thing that Maurice should atone for his Uncle's neglect by marrying one of the girls.

Uncle Jacob himself might have left some of his hard-won wealth to Emily's young relatives; but Uncle Jacob, money-grasping to the last, had shrunk from the idea of distributing the fortune which had taken him so many years to win. The girls had never looked for, or expected it, so no harm was done. If only Maurice was amenable, and would listen to reason, things would right themselves by and by. Maurice was amenable, and indeed quite ready to listen to reason.

He had no objection to marriage in the abstract, and was entirely willing to make the acquaintance of Uncle Jacob's nieces with a view to possible matrimony. Not but that he was singularly content in his single state, but Uncle Jacob was dying—Uncle Jacob's wishes must be respected.

Therefore, to gratify the old man's desire, he motored over the fifty intervening miles, and made the acquaintance of Leonora, Eileen being at that time absent on a visit. Maurice had vaguely admired Leonora, though in no way had he desired her for a wife.

As for Leonora, pleased and flattered by the letter which, unknown to his nephew, Uncle Jacob had written to her acquainting her with his desires, she felt she could not do enough for Uncle Jacob's young relative.

A wealthy marriage had been Leonora's ambition from her earliest years, and now it seemed as though her desire had come almost within hand-reaching. So

I've come away just without the things I most needed."

"Oh! if it's only a screwdriver," Eileen said.

She was naturally a helpful little person, much given to assisting "lame dogs over stiles," which was possibly the reason that, whereas Leonora usually enacted the part of fine lady, Leonora's sister played the part of necessary drudge. "If you can wait a moment I will get one from the house."

She secured her last clothes pin effectually, and hurried away, a rather untidy little figure in a tumbled green linen gown. Leonora put her head out of the parlor door as she passed.

"Have you everything ready for tea when Mr. Tregarthen comes, Eileen? I hope you reminded Hannah to go for the muffins and cream."

Eileen had not reminded Hannah. She had forgotten the muffins and the cream altogether. But she did not tell Leonora so. Instead she fled onwards to the kitchen to find the screwdriver and to despatch Hannah to the baker's and the dairy without delay.

But Hannah, usually only too ready for an outing, for once in her life absolutely refused to budge. It was as much as her place was worth, the almost tearful, maiden asseverated. The bell might ring when she was absent, and "Mr. Three Gardens," as she called him, make his appearance, and then whatever would Miss Leonora say or do to Hannah for deserting her post?

Hannah proving impervious to solicitation or persuasion, Hannah's mistress went her way a little lugubriously to the back green with the necessary screwdriver. The motor man was just alighting from

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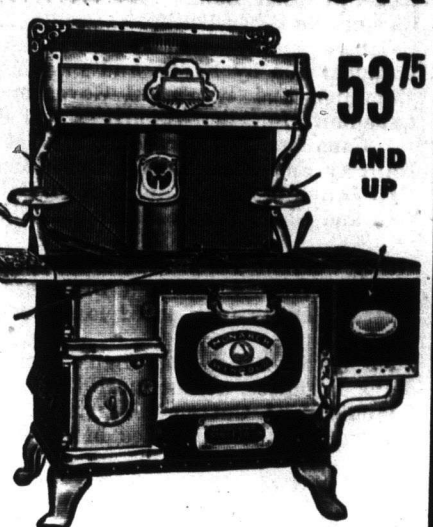
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