

as soon as the hen came off the nest, and the hens couldn't crow, and call it a story." He volunteered a great deal of original information in regard to "angery worms and caterpillows," and he recited some little verses about the brown seeds that were put into the ground and their ultimate attainments. In fact, he chatted about a hundred things, but to Ferris' pleased amazement, never introduced the subject of the war. It was all the more surprising, therefore, when they stopped at a toyshop to get a memento of their trip, that the little chap walked straight away from everything else to a display of soldiers and stood before them, blind to all else. There were a dozen different varieties, French soldiers, Italian cavalymen, Cossacks, Scotch Highlanders, American rough riders, and many more. Ferris, who had thought of a drum or a bugle, watched him. He saw his small face very intent, his eyes moving rapidly from one regiment to another. Presently he whispered to Ferris:

"Have dey got any more British sojers?"

YES, the clerk said, they had all sorts of varieties of British soldiers, and he brought them out for inspection. Box after box was opened and the contents displayed, Peter standing on tiptoe in his excitement, and his hot little hand holding tightly to Ferris', asked rapid questions about the names of the regiments. At last the largest box of all was taken down from the shelf. "This," said the clerk, with pride, "is the finest thing we've got. They're Indian troops, cavalry, the box is worth five dollars."

"Bengal Lancers," read Ferris, aloud.

Peter, his small face flushing from chin to curly head, held out his hands for the box, his sensitive little mouth and shining eyes expressing a delighted recognition. He looked at the tiny toys within for a long time, counting them, and holding his face close to them.

"Do you like these?" asked Ferris, amused and interested.

The child nodded. "May I see them standing up?" he asked. They were taken from the box by the obliging salesman and shown off to full advantage. Peter was fairly quivering with excitement. With reverent touch he moved them softly about, forming them in single file, in fours, in double fours, brought them to attention with the commander at their head, and otherwise arranged them. Finally, with reluctant fingers, he picked them all up and put them back carefully in the box, holding the gallant commander on his prancing horse in his small, moist hand, for a few seconds and gazing at him earnestly, then laying him with the others.

"Thank you very much," he said to the salesman.

"You are to have those, Peter," said Ferris.

The child looked at him and his chin quivered. "No, thank you," he said.

"But you like them, don't you?" Ferris asked, amazed.

Peter nodded, pressing his lips tight together to control his emotion.

"Then you shall have them." Ferris spoke with finality.

"N—n—no, th—th—thank you," again the small man with greater finality, but with a still more trembling lip.

"Doesn't mother want you to take presents, dear little chap?" asked Ferris, stooping to whisper the question.

The child whispered back, "Not sojer presents. I mustn't ever have sojer presents."

"I see," said Ferris, gravely, though for the life of him he did not, and taking the small man away from the "sojers," they chose a small engine and a train of cars "to give my angery worms and caterpillows a ride."

GOING home, Ferris, with uncontrollable curiosity, wanted to know if Peter's mother did not like "sojers," to which Peter replied soberly that she "des loved dem." But that was all the information that was vouchsafed him.

When at last they reached home, Ferris was told by Peter that he was expected to remain to tea, and Ferris, after a moment's hesitation, accepted the invitation. The gates being opened by the surly

Chinaman, the car was left in safety, and Ferris, with pleasant complacency, sat himself down again in one of the comfortable chairs on the verandah, and waited the advent of Peter's mother, whom Peter had gone to fetch. Ferris had formed an opinion of the mother, he pictured her as a buxom, apple-cheeked young woman with capable butter-making hands, and whether she was the proprietress of the farm or one of those vague persons known as "lady helps" mattered not a whit to Ferris. He was quite sure of having home-made butter on his bread and

It's not Peter at all,
Philip, it's you.



cream in his tea.

Presently she arrived. She came through the glass doors toward Ferris, quickly and softly, and Ferris stumbled to his feet and started toward her, then he dropped his stick and in reaching for it jerked his eye-glasses from his eyes; so he came to a halt and stood staring, muttering with the utmost banality.

"By—b—b—Jove," and then again, "b—b—b—Jove," Ferris always stammered when he was excited.

For the woman coming toward him was not the buxom, rotund person he had expected; she was a slender little slip of a woman, with a pile of gold brown hair, and wonderful dark eyes, and moreover, she was the woman, or the exact counterpart of the woman, whom Ferris had mourned as dead ten years before. So, when he had recovered his stick and his eye-glasses he stood still and simply and unequivocally stared. The woman smiled. That settled it. Either Ferris' nerves were getting the better of him again or a miracle had happened.

"Is—is—is it you, Mirry?" he faltered.

"Yes, Philip," she replied, quickly, and she smiled again. "I am Mirry, and I am Peter's mother, and I thank you very much for being kind to Peter."

What was there for Ferris to say? You cannot tell a perfectly healthy young woman that according to the best of your belief she should be ten years dead. It seemed to Ferris that that would be the ghastliest kind of impertinence, almost a sacrilege. Neither can you ask a settled, complacent, butter-making mother of a family what she means by getting married to another man, when the last time you saw her, she had promised, under the most solemn conditions, never to marry any one but you. So Ferris kept silence until the woman had come near enough to him to offer her hand, when he took it in his and, holding it fast, looked at it.

"It's—it's real, isn't it?" he said, with a little forced laugh. "Somehow I can't quite believe my senses."

"Oh, it's real," she laughed. "I need to be real, with one thousand things to do from morning to night." There was no mistaking her. Poor Ferris tried to accept a completely revolutionized world in a moment and found it very difficult.

"You—you make butter, don't you?" he hazarded, brilliantly. "Peter says you make butter. I can't imagine you making butter, you know. You—you used to be such a little delicate—er—dreamy—er impractical sort of person, eh?"

"Not in fact," she said, "only theoretically. I had not been put to the test, you see. At heart I was always very capable and industrious. I not only make butter, but I make bread and wonderful cakes, and I raise chickens and vegetables. I can milk, too, if necessary, and drive a plough. Oh, you did not know me, Philip," she laughed, "not the real, sensible me," she talked rapidly, and watched him with veiled anxiety. When she saw the colour coming back into his cheeks she laughed gaily. She made him sit down in his comfortable chair again, and then the Chinaman, still surly, came in, dressed in immaculate white and carrying the tea. Peter came also. They had the most delicious meal Ferris had ever tasted if he had only known it, but he didn't know it, because he kept his eyes on Peter's mother and took and ate what was handed to him without noticing whether it was cake or scone or toast. Peter's mother had the most infectiously merry manner in the world and chatted away in apparent unconcern and unconsciousness of the unfathomable mystery that was baffling Ferris, and little Peter was her able second, saying a great many droll things at which his mother laughed with irresistible

gaiety. At last this evidence of good spirits began to jar upon Ferris. He could know nothing of the herculean effort behind it. He resented this apparent frank happiness; rather inconsistently he resented the fact that she did not speak of the war, or his wound, did not mention personal things at all. They were not very long over their tea, and then they made a tour of the farm, little Peter trotting along at Ferris' side and explaining everything in an ingenious way all his own.

IT was seven o'clock when they came back to the verandah, and Ferris, unaccountably irritated, realized that for all that Peter's mother seemed to care they might have been merely chance acquaintances who saw one another every week or so. She had talked and laughed about the most trivial things, and in spite of the vaunting of her domesticity seemed as inconsequential and care-free as Peter himself. She had not once spoken of old times or even of her husband. If Peter had not made that casual mention of him he would not have known that such a man existed. So Ferris was about to say "good-bye" in a very impatient and unsatisfactory frame of mind, though with great outward civility, when Peter's mother said,

"Please wait, Philip, until I have put Peter to bed. I have something to say to you." It was then that the first note of what seemed to Ferris real feeling had come into her voice, so, a little less disgruntled, he shook hands with Peter and promised to see him the next day to say a final "good-bye." Then he walked up and down the lilac walk and smoked while he waited. His subconscious self was looking at one of the most glorious sunsets in the world, but his conscious thoughts were all with Peter and Peter's mother.

At last she called him from the verandah.