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A Happy Day Cottage

Very Natural Mistake.

By MARGARET B. CONWAY

****** "You can't miss it, Nell," called Mrs. Beekman as the big motorcar drew away from the curb. "The sign is over the porch, 'Happy Day Cottage,' and if you arrive first just go ahead and start the dinner, will you? Jackman said the supplies would be waiting there. Goodby. Sorry you won't come with

It was 11 o'clock when Nell reached Silver Lake. The road was an unfamiliar one, for she had never been to the little resort before. It was late otember and most of the cottages edging the lake were untenanted, but Happy Day Cottage was at the very edge of the short road, and Nell left her car in the shade of the trees and went up on to the little rustic porch.

The door was locked, and it was evident that she was the first on the scene. She determined to go ahead and prepare dinner for the hungry mo torists, for it had been agreed that the women of the party were to do the

Around to the back door went Nell her arms burdened with luscious peach es she had found in town, and a bottle of cream, which delicacy she was cer-

Miss Gaines stepped into the little kitchen and found a grocer's basket heaped with packages and tins. She



SHE STOPPED SHORT AND STARED. nung her hat and cloak in the little passageway and pinned a convenient towel over her linen gown in lieu of an apron, and set to work to evolve a meal from the contents of the basket.

There were bread and butter, cereals, flour, eggs, sugar, coffee, tinned meats and fish, vegetables and, last of all, a torn bit of paper on which was scrawled in pencil; "The stake is in the refrijarater."

And in a tiny ice filled box in the pantry Nell found a juicy sirloin steak—about large enough for two people! Where were the other hungry six to come in? Nell shrugged her shoulders and set the sardines and tinned salmon aside.

Nell Gaines was an excellent cook. Deftly she flew here and there, makng herself quite at home,

When everything was ready Nell went into the living room and sat down by the window.

Her eyes became accustomed to the cool dimness of the little room, and she noted with growing surprise that it was rather disorderly. Pipes and tobacco littered a smoking stand, books and magazines were heaped on chairs and tables, a tennis racket lay on a window seat and an artist's easel and painting kit cumbered another corner. A pair of masculine slippers



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stood invitingly before the empty firere was a sound from the kitchen

and Nell hastened there, flushed and and Nell hastened there, flushed and lovely with the anticipation of the general surprise when they should find dinner in readiness.

She stopped short and stared.

Framed in the open window, with his elbows on the sill, was a perfect giant of a young man, attractively hemely set to features with steady gray.

homely as to features, with steady gray eyes and stubby brown hair. His face was tanned to a warm brown and his hands and arms above his elbows, where his shirt sleeves were rolled up. were the same golden tan. So Nell stared at him and he stared

at Nell until her face flushed a deeper rose and she made another step forward. "Good morning," she said rather

coldly. "Ah, good morning," he said, still staring

"Mrs. Beekman has not arrived yet," she said significantly.
"Indeed?" he asked, with polite sur-

prise in his tone. "If you care to walt for Mrs. Beckman I am sure she will be along any

moment now. I promised to have dinner ready, and there are some comfortable chairs on the front porch," said Nell, feeling rather frightened at the presence of this grave faced young

Perhaps he recognized her fear, for ilmost at once he lifted his head from his fists and went around the path to the front porch, the sun shining warmly down on his untidy thatch of hair. "Qh, dear, I wish they would come!

The dinner will be spoiled!" At that instant came the distant toot of a motor horn, and Nell fled back to the kitchen and prepared the coffee and oroiled the steak. Between whiles she laid another place at the table for the unexpected

guest who was undoubtedly some friend of Mrs. Beekman's. At the end of another fifteen minutes Nell went out and looked up and down the road, but there was no sign of mo-torcar or the expected party.

"I'm hungry as a bear," sighed Nell at last, "It's after 1 o'clock, and i've simply got to eat!"

Back in the kitchen she found the

strange young man filling the doorway into the hall.

said diffidently, "but I've been in the woods all morning, and I'm about starved. Can't we have something to eat without waiting for Mrs. Beekman and the rest of 'em?"

"Why, of course," said Nell slowly, and with a charming smile she admitted: "I'm hungry as a bear myself.
That's a very small steak for nine people, isn't it?" she asked anxiously.
"I could eat every scrap myself," he
announced as he neatly slipped the
steak to a hot platter and carried it

into the dining room.

"I forgot to introduce myself," he said pleasantly. "I am Delbridge Ellis." "And I am Eleanor Gaines," said Nell, acknowledging his introduction with simple courtesy. "Will you have a cupful of coffee now, Mr. Ellis?" "If you please," he said, passing her a plate containing the choicest portion of the steak.

"This is great," he said as he attacked the mealy baked potatoes. "I tell you keeping bachelor's hall isn't all it's cracked up to be. Why, I've eaten so many sardines that the junkman has to call once a week for the empty tins. That's almost a fact."

"Then you live around here, too?" asked Nell, with interest.
"Why, yes," he answered, with a puzzled glance at her. After that he was silent for a long time, but they fell to chatting on indifferent subjects, and by the time they had discussed the sliced peaches and the thick, yellow cream the time had passed so swiftly that Mr. Ellis announced reluctantly that it was 3 o'clock.

that it was 3 o'clock.

"Oh, dear! I am afraid something has happened!" cried Nell anxiously as they arose from the table.

"Pardon my asking the question, Miss Gaines, but will you please tell me who is Mrs. Beekman?"

Nell stared. "Who is Mrs. Beekman?" she repeated. "Why, don't you know?"

He shook his head, smiling in the particularly winning way that was very attractive to Nell Gaines. "I never heard of her before, and I am wondering why she has honored me by holding a sort of glorified picnic here in my bachelor quarters."

"In your bachelor quarters!" echoed

Nell blankly. "Why, Mr. Ellis, surely you are mistaken. This is Mrs. Beek-man's place, isn't it—Happy Day Cot-tage? Why, I read the sign over the

"To be sure you did!" he exclaime after a moment. "I see it all now. It was a very natural mistake to make, Miss Gaines, and I'm in a perfectly glorious dinner, but I'm afraid you have missed a delightful time with your friends. Please come around to the front porch with me."

A very bewildered Nell followed him around, and together they gazed at the little white painted sign nailed over the porch.

"Happy Day Cottage," it read, sure

"You see, Miss Gaines, the village boys run down here out of season and amuse themselves by transferring the signs from one cottage to another, much to the indignation and confusion of the owners. This 'Happy Day' sign has been on my cottage for a week and I let it stay. This is really Pine Cottage, and I saw that sign down on the big red cottage at the end of the row. Very likely your friends are down there feasting and wondering where you are. Shall we go down there now and explain?" "Oh, let me think for a moment!"

cried Nell. The result of her cogitations, together with the sage advice of her host, was that she alone should drive up to the real Happy Day Cottage and say nothing of her odd adventure.

"You must let me clear away this wreckage," insisted Ellis as he helped Nell into her cloak. "I don't mind in the least, and I shall never forget my surprise at finding you here and the pleasant hours we have spent. Indeed, this shall always be to me Happy Day Cottage, for it marks a very happy day."

So Nell allowed him to put her into the runabout and gave him permission to call upon her some day, and she rolled slowly up to the real Happy Day Cottage, where the astounded motorists brought her remains of their cold dinner and marveled at her lack of appetite.

And the next year, after Nell had married Delbridge Ellis, they spent the summer at Silver Lake, and Ellis al ways called the place "Honeymoon Cottage." though the name over the door plainly said "Pine Cottage."

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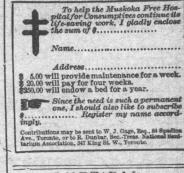
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of a little bit of the money some other fellow was throwing away?
WOULD IT MATTER when Christmas came if there were nothing for you to do but sit on the edge of the bed and stroke the whitehand on the coverlet and realize that this was the last Christmas?

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