

OUR FARM HOMES



He that seeks even the highest good for himself alone will be disappointed.—G. S. Merriam.

Mr. Watson's Little Vacation

By HILDA RICHMOND
(The Indiana Farmer.)

"ANNA, I see no way out of the difficulty but for you to drive over to Sheldon and look after that tax business," said John Watson turning from a prolonged scrutiny of his swollen face in the kitchen mirror. "I can't go out with this confounded rag on my face and I can't go without it in this keen wind."

"But I had planned to peel the apples for the last apple butter," objected Mrs. Watson, "and to do the mending and wash out the baby's flannels. I was going to have a pick up dinner and get a lot of work turned off because the day is bright and sunny."

"As far as that's concerned," said Mr. Watson loftily, "you don't need to worry. If I can't wash out a few flannel petticoats and peel a peck of apples I'll give up entirely. You only want to make four or five gallons of apple butter, I heard you say. Women magnify their little tasks until they look like mountains. I'll do the apples and call this my vacation. That worries me is that you can't adjust the taxes and this is the day for the Commission to hold its last session. Now do be careful, Anna."

Mrs. Watson dressed and kissed the children good-bye during a perfect stream of what to do and what not to do from her husband's lips. The two older children she took with her to deposit at the school house and the baby, a little girl of two and a half, was to keep Mr. Watson company. The day before Mr. Watson had had a painful, but not serious, accident with some farm machinery, and while he was well and able to do a day's work the doctor warned him not to go out in the wind without the bandage on his bruised and swollen face.

"First, the flannels," said Mr. Watson briskly as the buggy rolled away. "There goes the telephone the first thing. I think Anna and the neighbor ladies have the habit of visiting a little too much over the telephone, and that is what makes them complain of always being behind. 'Hello!' he called. 'O, you, Smith? Yes, this is Watson. What's that? Say, excuse me a minute! The baby is pulling the cat's tail and I can't hear. I'm chief cook and bottle washer to-day. The Mrs. has gone over to the country seat to look after some business. Yes, I'll be home all day. Run in and we'll talk about the deal.'"

Mr. Watson put the receiver in place and shut the crying baby into the little pen Mr. Watson used for her when she had to leave the room. He hastily tossed the child a few play things and then hurried to the kitchen to begin on the flannels. "If Smith is coming over I'll have to hurry," he said. Gee! The fire's

dead out. And such wood! If I get over this trouble I'll attend to the wood." He hastily cast a glance at the weeping child and hurried to the wood house. There gnarled and rotten wooden limbs confronted him in a most uncompromising array. "I declare I forgot all about bringing home that coal," he said aloud. "Anna spoke of it several times, but I've been so busy."

Back again into the house with enough wood to last about half an hour he filled the reservoir to the brim with rain water before remembering

now roaring its best. Mr. Watson had forgotten to close the damper and the wood was rapidly being devoured. "I didn't want to come without sending you word but he said that you insisted on our dropping in whenever we could. Since we have the automobile we never know till the last minute that we really are going on account of the weather."

"Women always have the idea that you have to send word ahead," said Joe Watson, "I say, give visitors what you have and don't make any fuss. Molly here, she makes a fuss if I bring in a stranger or two at the eleventh hour, but what's the difference? What's good enough for the home folks is good enough for company."

John Watson was too busy watching the eggs he was frying to say much though he had often said the same to his own wife, and finally the little group gathered about the fearful and wonderful dinner the man of the house had raked and scraped together. He had some cold fried meat from the day before, the scrambled eggs, lukewarm coffee, a dish of apple butter, bread cut in chunks, two pieces of cold pie, a few ginger cookies, a can of salmon served right in the can, several kinds of pickles and preserves hastily gathered from the store closets shelves and some mashed potatoes, made into cakes, and warmed through in the oven. The children ate with one eye on the clock, and raced off unprepared with bread and butter in the hands, while the grown people ate very little. John Watson hoped that his sister-in-law

several times, while he dashed around getting the baby into dry garments, and wrapping her in a blanket, but he paid no attention at all. Next he went at the fires and saw that the house was as comfortable, but the sleeping child was comforting heavily, and he was greatly worried. He watched the clock anxiously but knew Mrs. Watson could not baby get home before dark. The apples he had forgotten entirely, but he was still striving to get to the flannels. With one eye on the baby and the other on the disarray in the dining room he began to wash the dishes without previously scraping and piling them up. Three times he dipped into the leaky reservoir for hot water and each time he remembered that his wife had told him many times that it needed attention but he had put her off. All this time the telephone kept on ringing, but he did not have time to answer, but he was too busy to answer.

"What in Kingdom Come is the matter with your telephone, Mrs. Watson?" said a voice at the back door and Mrs. Simms entered amid the ceremony of knocking. "Oh, it's you, Mr. Watson! I've been ringing and ringing the last hour and can't get a soul. I declare some days the phone just won't work at all entirely. I've wasted more time trying to get you folks than it took me to put on my things and walk down here."

"The baby's asleep and I took the receiver down," said Mr. Watson lamely. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Simms. Won't you sit down?"

"No, I haven't time," said the lady still provoked and disturbed. "I've only a few minutes. We're expecting ready to go to Susie's to-morrow and I wanted to tell Mrs. Watson that I would not be at home. She was planning to bake her fruit cake in our oven, but we got this chance to go to see Susie so I knew that she wouldn't mind."

"Bake her cake in your oven," said Mr. Watson. "I don't understand."

"There's something wrong with your stove, and she's been having her baking in our oven," explained the guest. "I don't mind it at all," said Mrs. Simms hurried as she noted the look on her host's face. "Mrs. Watson has done lots for me and John Watson! That baby has the crop as sure as anything. Don't you know any better than to scrub the kitchen floor on a raw windy day like this. Get me a tub at once, I hurry!"

The good woman quickly and skillfully relieved the suffering child and then turned her capable hands toward the disorderly kitchen. Mr. Watson meekly did as he was told, but he was so tired he was half asleep. He left the house. Thanks to her vigorous work and directions the floor was dry, the fires in good order and the house clean and tidy, and all in a few short hours. The door closed behind her Mr. Watson flew to the telephone and gave some vigorous directions to several firms in town, with directions to carry them out before dark.

"Mamma! Mamma! Mamma!" cried Rose and Fred the instant their mother entered the house and they felt her cold cheek on theirs. "Mamma such—"

"Why, John! A new range!" cried the lady of the house blushing her eyes in the sudden light. "When did that come?"

"About an hour ago," said the gentleman rather sheepishly. "And there's going to be linoleum on the floor and a washing machine and a decent churn and some other fixings. And there's coal in the coal house, and I'm going to have some dining there to-morrow."

"Why, John, what is the matter?"

(Concluded on page 16)

Beauty According to Nature—One of the Blessings of the Country

A scene such as this might well be that of the approach to a millionaire's country estate. Instead, it is the view that presented itself to an editor of Farm and Dairy from one of the front windows of the home of J. N. Saxton, at Euro.

What can the city offer to equal it would offer to clear the table and wash the many utensils but in a few minutes after they left the messy table the guests announced that they must be moving on.

"Consume it all!" said John Watson in irritation as he discovered that both the sitting room and the kitchen fires were out. "With that light flimsy wood no man could keep up a fire." He strode to the telephone and called up the village coal dealer.

"Is that you, Archer?" he called savagely. "Send out a ton of soft coal, to my place, and have it here before two o'clock. Two o'clock, can't you hear? What's that? Charge extra for hauling? Well, what of that? I've got the money to pay for hauling one ton of coal, I guess."

"Papa! Papa!" wailed the baby. "Mr's told!"

"Four good little chickens!" he said kissing the blue chick in his arms. "I'll wrap you in a blanket till I get the fires started again. I'll bet a dollar that this baby will have the crop this very night. Gee Whillikins! I never told off that we'd dress when the earth shelled I do first? It's enough to drive a man to the insane asylum."

The telephone jingled wildly so

"There comes Aunt Molly and Uncle Joe!" cried little Fred and Watson. Goody! Goody!"

Mr. Watson was forced to shake hands and smile at his brother and tell them that they were welcome, but he sincerely wished that they were miles away. "You seem to be having a strenuous time, John," said Mrs. Joe Watson sitting down comfortably before the fire which was