

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT.

Not that his name was Jack, by any means —on the contrary his name was Sam—Sam Rushemup. We say *was*, that is, when he was a kid, for now he was known as Alderman Rushemup, of Rushemup Terrace, Brannewton. He came, or rather was sent out, to this country among lots of other flotsam and jetsam which is yearly thrown up by the annual emigration spring tide, and, being disgusted with this "blawsted country" where he couldn't get a "penn'orth o' pud-din'," as he had been used to, he drifted to the dominions of Uncle Sam, where he served an apprenticeship to a speculator in shells.

These shells were not inhabited by horned snails—the horns were owned entirely by the speculator only; they grew inside, not outside, his skull. No! the tenants of these shells were hornless and harmless; moreover, they paid rent for the shells, and were a source of much profit to the builder. They were made chiefly of two by four scantlings, crossed by thin joints of rotten lumber, and covered over by a thin veneer of bricks, plaster and paint, and were crowned by a mansard roof with flashing blue iron balustrades adorning the bay windows. These were advertised as "Substantial Brick Houses in a Healthy Locality," though they had been "run up" regardless of drainage, and built on the site of an old swamp: still they sold and let readily to people who wanted to move and who believed the advertisements which cracked them up as Al brick buildings.

Acres of lots, swampy or otherwise, were purchased for an old song, a few carloads of unsound lumber, costing less than half the price of good building material, was purchased, bricks ditto; and presto! the wilderness blossomed like the rose, and the desert places grew gay with rows of flashy new brick-shells which people called dwelling-houses. True, they were frequently blown down by the same breezes which shook the red and yellow leaves from the trees, and if a few unfortunate inhabitants were buried in the debris of rotten lumber and crumbling brick—what matter? So long as the rent was paid in advance the speculator merely turned on the other side and went to sleep again.

This was the game: cheap land, cheap labor, cheap lumber, flash advertising, high rents; result—100 per cent. on investment.

Our Sam was an apt pupil. Having scraped a few dollars together he came over to Canada, and in Brannewton he bought a lot, built a fairly substantial house in which he lived. This house he mortgaged, and with the borrowed money he got another couple of lots—ran up a few shells—over which several workmen shook their heads gravely. These he also advertised, selling some, letting others, repeating the process until he was pointed out as a striking instance of how a man in this country can rise from poverty to affluence by industry, perseverance, and economy. As the town grew he was elected alderman—being a considerable property-holder—although certainly he would have been indicted for manslaughter and sued for damages had the prosecuting parties been able to hire a lawyer.

He was now the father of a beautiful grown-up daughter, and this daughter was sought in marriage by the son of a wine clerk, who had also amassed a considerable pile in the licensed victualling business. The young man was ardent, nor was this ardor at all cooled by the knowledge of his beloved being the sole heiress to whole streets of brick shells, which yielded a handsome yearly rental. Moreover, the Scott Act, which at one time appeared to the wine clerks to be but a contemptible little cloud no bigger than a man's hand, had developed into a mighty storm which loomed not "in the blue distance many a mile away," but right over their heads. Indeed the thunder had already begun to

mutter, and the lightning to flash, and they expected nothing less than a second flood of cold water on which they and their casks would certainly be borne down into beggarly oblivion. So the wine clerk's son made himself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness in the person of Miss Rushemup, so that, when the deluge came, he would be received into these brick habitations which, if anything but everlasting, had at least money in them.

"Papa," said Miss Dolly Rushemup to her father one day at breakfast, "do you know what I would like for a wedding present?"

"No, my dear; a thoroughbred pug?"

"Pug! Nonsense! I hope I am not a fool. I want something substantial, something useful. In short, papa, I want one of those 'substantial brick houses with all modern conveniences' that I see you have so well advertised. You have so many; I know you can spare me just this one—that particular one on Brown Street—you know, that one with the bay window, looking south. Do! there's a good, dear papa."

Alderman Rushemup sat aghast. His sin was finding him out. That house! Why! he was glad to see it safely roofed in. But what excuse could he offer? He could not tell his daughter that he was a patent swindle—a mere speculator in shells. A bright idea struck him.

"Wait a bit, my dear, and I will build you a good house."

"But I'm tired waiting, papa, and Fred won't wait. Do let me have that house."

Sam (we beg his pardon), Alderman Rushemup, argued and reasoned in vain. There was a scene—tears and kisses, amid which he consented to give her the house, against his better judgment and in spite of his inward misgivings. So the house was finished; the happy pair were married; had returned from their wedding tour; and were having a grand reception and house-warming. Over a hundred guests were invited, and all went merry as a marriage bell; although the cold sweat broke over Ald. Rushemup's countenance several times as he felt the house vibrate with every throb of the dancers' feet. With a sigh of relief he saw them depart one after another till the last was gone, and only he and his family and his daughter, and the bridegroom, the son of the wine clerk, sat chatting over a last tumbler of punch! Crick!—crack!—cr—r—ack!—crash!!!—rumble!—tumble!—thunder!!!—Eh—oh—oh—oh!—Silence!—the silence of death! The Rushemup family were "in one brick burial blent!"

The funeral was a large one, the hearse being literally stuffed with flowers as frail and ephemeral as the houses he built. On the following Sunday the minister of the church he attended (to the funds of which he was ever a liberal contributor) preached a strong sermon on the uncertainty of life, and the necessity of being prepared for sudden calls, such as had come to their worthy brother. But a sneering sceptic who had lost a bosom friend by the collapse of one of the worthy brother's shells leant over the pew and whispered into the ear of his next neighbor the words of a well-known Hindoo proverb, viz., "Sic semper tyrannus," which, for the benefit of those ignorant of Hindostanee, I translate, "Thus perish all dishonest contractors."

Rushemup's eternal doom was to be supernatural and ghostly inspector of buildings in the absence of an efficient living inspector in Toronto. Nightly his wretched ghost revisits these glimpses of the moon, and wherever he sees a rickety flash building in course of construction he immediately telephones to his Satanic Majesty, who dispatches old Æolus with a mighty wind with which he blows down the edifice without a word of warning. The other Sunday he blew down one on Clinton Street while the pious occupants were at church. And a couple of weeks later, while

inspecting a building on Bloor Street, he unwittingly gave it an extra shake by way of testing it, when down it fell, crushing the leg of the owner's little boy. And this is the very latest edition of the story of the "House That Jack Built."

THE DECORATIVE MANIA.

Put away the little coal hod that our darling wants to paint.
For she fain would decorate it with devices queer and quaint.
Hide the dish pan and the wash tubs, and likewise the garden hose.
Or Matilda will adorn them with the lily and the rose.

When our Bridget in the morning gets the wooden chopping bowl.
To concoct the morning corned beef hash, it vexes of her soul
To uphold a wreath of pausies where she most must cut and slash,
So she scrapes it off because the paint might permeate the hash.

On the household rolling pin is tied a pretty yellow bow,
And its lilies of the valley, oft commingle with the dough.
While the new potato masher and the kitchen pans and pots
Are magnificent with butterflies and sweet forget-me-nots.

All our articles of furniture, the ancient and the new,
Are resplendent quite with drapery and bows of brightest hue.
In the house we look about with mingled sorrow and amaze,
For Matilda is afflicted with the decorative craze.
—Chicago Rambler.

AN UNVOUCHED-FOR ANECDOTE.

At the Hamilton Church Fair was a sister who would give a kiss for ten cents. The Toronto drummer went up and paid his ten cents, and was about to kiss her, when he noticed that her mouth was one of those large, open-faced, cylinder-escapement, to-be-continued mouths. It commenced at the chin and went about four chains and three links in a northwesterly direction, then round by the ear, across under the nose, and back by the other ear to the place of beginning, and contained about twelve acres, more or less. The travelling man said he was only a poor orphan, and had a family to support, and if he never came out alive it would be a great hardship to those dependent on him for support; and he asked her as a special favor to take her hand and make a reef in one side of her mouth so that it would be smaller. She consented, and puckered in a handful of what would have been cheek if it had not been mouth. He looked at her again, and found that the mouth had become a very one-sided affair, and he said that he had just one more favor to ask. He was not a man who was counted hard to suit when he was at home in Toronto, but he would always feel as if he had got his money's worth, and would go away with pleasanter recollections of Hamilton if she would kindly take her other hand and draw the other side of her mouth together, and he would be content to take his ten cents' worth out of what was left unemployed. This was too much, and she gave him a terrible look, and returned him his ten cents, saying:—"Do you think, sir, because you are a Toronto drummer, that for ten cents you can take a kiss right out of the best part of it. Go; get thee to a nunnery." And he went, and bought lemonade with the money.

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