

AS IT IS IN SUBURBANVILLE

Where They Use Party Telephone Wires.

Mrs. Onering and Mrs. Tworing Quarrel Over the Line and Fleet at Home of Mutual Friend.

Since telephones on party wires were introduced in Suburbanville there has been a very thorough readjustment of old feuds. The party wire system permits three or four telephones on the same wire. Every telephone bell on this wire rings at the same time. The special telephone that is wanted is indicated by the number of times the bell rings. Each subscriber on a party wire quickly acquires a decided contempt, if not hatred, for every other subscriber on the same wire.

Suburbanville's social lines were formerly marked by membership in church congregations, in some one of the dozen or more whist clubs and lastly by the butcher who supplied the family. When Mrs. Smith wanted to invite a dozen congenial women to form a whist or bowling club, she sorted out on her list the women who patronized the same butcher and went to the same church.

Since the party telephones have been put in it has made the problem of collecting a dozen congenial women so complex that it would puzzle a graduate in double entry bookkeeping. Not only must the hostess bear in mind the congregation to which the women belong and the butchers whom they patronize, but she must be sure not to bring together two women who use the same party wire. Such a disaster happened last week.

Mrs. Onering had never met Mrs. Tworing, though their telephones were on the same wire. When Mrs. Tworing's telephone was put in, she thoroughly enjoyed the novelty of calling up all of her friends who had telephones a dozen times a day. Mrs. Onering had become accustomed to her telephone, and the continual jangling of Mrs. Tworing's calls annoyed her. Several lively skirmishes followed over the wire.

One morning when Mrs. Onering was anxious to telephone for a cab to catch a certain train she waited for Mrs. Tworing to get through telephoning until her patience was exhausted. Then she broke in on the wire with the request:

"Won't you please give me a chance to call up the livery stable? I'm in a hurry."

"Are you, indeed?" said the voice. "Who are you?"

"I am Mrs. Onering. Who are you?"

"I am Mrs. Tworing, and I shall complain to central that you have been listening."

"Well, then, I will tell central that I can't help listening because you are using the telephone all the time. I have as much right on this wire as you have."

"Comes from having ill bred persons on the wire, and—"

"People who never had a telephone before, and—"

"I'll complain, and—"

"I won't stand it!"

"Such impertinence!"

Burr-r-r, and both telephones rang off at the same time. It so happened that Mrs. Onering and Mrs. Tworing did not know each other by sight. They were both guests at a Helping Hand social, and, happening to be seated together, they opened conversation without the formality of an introduction.

They agreed beautifully about butchers, and each wondered why she had not happened to meet the other before. Then they came to the subject of telephones.

"I find my telephone a great convenience," said Mrs. Onering, "but I have the most disagreeable people on it. One woman has just had her telephone put in, and she works it to death. She has been telephoning all this last month. I think I will apply to have my wire changed. I can't stand it."

"That's just my experience," said Mrs. Tworing delightedly. "There is the most impertinent woman on my wire. I know from her voice that she is a perfect fright. She is so curious that she listens whenever I use the wire. If one could only chase the other subscribers on her party wire, it would be a great advantage."

So many common experiences made Mrs. Onering and Mrs. Tworing very chummy, and each was just about to invite the other to call when the hostess came up and said to them:

"Why, I did not know that you two people new each other."

"We have just scraped an acquaintance," said Mrs. Onering, "and I wish that you would introduce us formally."

"Certainly," said the hostess. "Mrs. Onering, I want to present a neighbor of yours, Mrs. Tworing."

"Tworing, did you say?" asked Mrs. Onering. "Yes, I remember the name

perfectly. I have had a lovely afternoon." And out she went.

"If she had not gone, I would have done so," said Mrs. Tworing.

"Why, I thought that you were getting along beautifully," said the hostess.

"Her telephone is on my party wire, and she bothers me very much."

Mrs. Tworing and Mrs. Onering pass each other on the street as strangers, and when they conflict in using the telephone each treats the other with frigid politeness.

So many hostesses in Suburbanville have had similar awkward experiences that they have now applied to the telephone company for a classified list of the party telephones in use, so that two women who use the same wire may not be invited at the same time.—New York Sun.

The Harvest-Mouse Family.

Little Mrs. Harvest-Mouse loved a hedge bottom. She always said it was more private than the open field, and also she thought about the farmer and how he comes to cut the corn, but leaves the long, stiff grass in the hedge bottom safe and standing when the corn is all carried away to the barn.

So when Mr. Harvest-Mouse began to talk to Mrs. Harvest-Mouse about where to build their home she begged him to choose the long, stiff grass in the hedge bottom—rather than the corn in the field. That is how it happened that their tiny nest was built between the grass stems, and they built it very cunningly of narrow blades and bits of feather or any soft and bending stuff that they could find, and they fixed them all in such a clever way that at last a weevil round nest no bigger than a cricket ball was fixed high up among the stiff green stalks as if it grew there by itself. It was soft and light and very thin, so the summer air blew gently through and kept it nicely aired.

The taller grasses standing round about hid it from the hawks, and a little birdweed then grew up and helped them. It twined around the stems and wisted its tendrils from one to another, then hung its tiny bells about and made a merry garden near the nest.

Mr. Harvest-Mouse was very pleased when all was done and felt happier still when eight little baby mice were snug and safe inside. They fitted into the soft, round ball quite perfectly, which shows how we they were.

And now through the hot summer days, while Mrs. Harvest-Mouse was busy with the children, Mr. Harvest-Mouse was running here and there collecting news for his wife and flies and other food for himself and for his family. What a gay, clever, little mouse he was, and as for her, she was the quickest, daintiest little lady in the land, and she taught her children to be quick and dainty too. She also taught them to be good, though what she would have done had they been naughty I cannot tell, for there was not a corner in the house to stand them in.

She ran nimbly all about the outside of the nest, and when the little ones began to bite each other's tails for fun she patted gently through the open network of the walls and told them how their long tails would be useful when they came to climb the tall, stiff grasses in the green and mazy world of the hedge bottom where they lived. And the birdweed quite agreed in what she said, for it knew the value of a tail to hold by.

One warm evening the little mother sat on the top of her little round house, while Mr. Harvest-Mouse was chatting with a neighbor or in the corn close by, and then it was she told the children a great deal about the world. She told them how as she sat there she could see the green grass blades bending over her and a sweet birdweed bell swinging gently under the weight of a bumble bee. She said that far away, quite high above the grass blades in the hedge bottom, even higher than the corn, there was blue, blue sky. She could see patches of it now as she looked up through their tangled screen.

The tiny mice inside the nest got restless at the very thought of that, and they asked her to get a bit and poke it through for they to see.

"You silly, silly ones," said she, "there are great things that you cannot understand in the big world, and one of them is the blue, blue sky. It is only to look at, not to touch, and some day you will learn that it comes with the sunshine and goes when it rains. A lark once told me that he loved it even more than the green world, for though the sweet grass cools his breast and holds his nest, and his little ones, yet the blue, blue sky is quite full of joy and goes far up above the farmhouse smoke and above the hawks and is wider than the widest field, and though he were to sing his heart out from dewy dawn to sunset he could never fill it all with music. Oh, the big blue sky is very wide, indeed, and very far away, as you will see one day when you are strong and quite grown up."

Just when a gnat flew by, and Mrs. Harvest-Mouse sprang up and caught it and gave it to the children through the wall, for though she talked about the sky she knew that they were hungry and saw the gnat and caught it cleverly. And now that the sun was getting low she talked about the winter. She said as surely as the night came on when the daylight died away so surely

would the winter come when summer time was ended.

What could the winter be? the children thought, and one wee mouse made bold to say he did not care, and it might come any time for him. He had just caught and eaten a tiny fly that had crept through the network of the nest, and he would catch and eat the winter, too, no doubt. Why not? He was getting strong and bold enough for anything.

His mother gave a pat where his little ear showed pink between the grasses and silenced all his silly talk at once and then went on to tell how the winter was as far beyond their thinking as the blue sky was high above their heads.

"The warm, soft wind that rings our birdweed bells," she said, "and makes sweet music in the grass will turn to cold and bitter blasts that will blow the leaves about, and then the bells will wither one by one and fall away, and the grasses will turn quite dull and dry and run against each other with a shrill and fearsome sound as the wind sweeps up along the hedge bottom."

At that the little mouse, whose ear was tingling still, felt frightened, and he quivered while his mother talked and wondered what would come of it. She knew just how he felt, and now she gave him comfort and advice about the future, and she told them all what they must do. "For," said she, "the winter is too great and strong for tiny creatures like ourselves, and so while the big world and the hedge bottom are bearing the cold weather we may sleep quite peacefully, each in a tiny hole, until the winter time is over and the summer comes again. You must seek your holes when the right time comes and then be sure to curl your tails well in to keep them from the frost."

They all squeaked a little promise to remember what she said and not think they knew better, and then they whispered softly to each other of the great world and the sky and the winter time and how quite soon they should be grown up mice. And while they talked and chattered merrily, catching flies from time to time and trying who could be most clever and saying how much they had grown since yesterday Mr. Harvest-Mouse came home and rubbed noses with his wife with a grave and anxious air, for he brought bad news from the corn close by. The hawk had come and caught their kindly neighbor, Mr. Field-Mouse. But this he said quite gently, sitting close to Mrs. Harvest-Mouse, lest the little ones should hear. "Ah," she said and heaved a sigh, "how glad I am we chose the long, stiff grass in the hedge bottom rather than the corn in the field!" "Yes," said he; "we did well to choose the hedge bottom." And with that he ran about the nest and counted his eight children anxiously and scolded them a little and then went a-hunting for his supper till by and by the quiet night came down and settled on the little family and all was peace and darkness for awhile.—Black and White.

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