

Of one thing, at any rate, she was certain: before The Jefful would wake, and the children and her husband return, she would have two full hours to give to that party dress, of which the facing had worn in holes that would persist in turning upward whenever she happened to see the end of the train in a parlour. So she left Bobboker with Bridget, and hurried upstairs and to work. She began ripping the binding from the bottom of the skirt, and was getting along nicely, considering the tediousness of the work, when, just after eleven o'clock, Bridget brought up a card, from which mamma read, "Mrs. Marston Ballamore."

Mamma thought a great many things all at once. She did wish that ladies like Mrs. Marston Ballamore, who were rich and always faultlessly dressed, would call on the afternoons of her reception-days, when mamma was sure to be well dressed herself, and could be certain that her parlour was in perfect order. But now, with the parlour probably in the disorder in which she and her husband had left it the night before, after lounging in it all evening, with the piano littered with music, and a student-lamp at one side the music-rack, with a newspaper for a mat. And she had nothing better than a rather common merino to wear down, for her handsome morning-robe

in which she thought she really looked as well as any one could in anything—had on one shoulder a stain of rhubarb syrup, which The Jefful's lips had wiped upon it a morning or two before. But repining did no good; so mamma put on the merino dress, and did what she could in a moment or two with her hair, and wiped the lint and dust of the ripping from her fingers with a damp towel, and descended to the parlour to apologize for neglecting Mrs. Marston Ballamore so long. But Mrs. Marston Ballamore had not been neglected, for Bobboker was devoting himself to her. He had followed Bridget upstairs when the bell rang, and as he could not travel as fast as Bridget could, he had entered the parlour just as the domestic had reached his mamma. When mamma appeared, he was doing his very best to entertain the visitor, and the grace with which Mrs. Marston Ballamore was accepting and returning his courtesies, without allowing him to come within reach of her dress or her gloved hands, which latter seemed particularly to delight him, would have been very entertaining to mamma, had her aesthetic tastes been in that reposeful balance which is so necessary to the proper estimating of social amenities. As it was, mamma flushed deeply, banished the little fellow with great eclat, closed the door against him, and explained painfully to her visitor, while Bobboker remonstrated most vociferously through the crack of the door. Mamma thought Bridget might hear him and take him away, but Bridget was chopping the stuffing for the leg of lamb which mamma had ordered for dinner; so mamma excused herself for an instant, and called Bridget through the dining room pipe, returned to have Mrs. Marston Ballamore tell her what a vivacious, intelligent little fellow Bobboker was, and to think that of all detestable things in the world, the attempts of society women to smooth over the things they particularly disliked was the worst. She recovered her temper and her wits, however, under the influence of the older lady's good heartedness and tact, and spent a really enjoyable quarter hour. As for Mrs. Marston Ballamore, when she finally stepped into her carriage, she exchanged her company face for a very sober one, as she wished that her own married daughter had as healthful a face, as decided a character, and as fine children as Mrs. Mayburns. But mamma knew nothing of this, and thought only that she hoped that, when she reached Mrs. Ballamore's age, she might have only full-grown

children, so that she also might be able to appear as if she never had anything to disarrange either dress or temper.

Back to that dress facing went mamma; but, before she seated herself, she heard in the adjoining room a very sweet voice remarking:

"Obhoo gobhoo yabhy yabbee ah hoo um hoo baa. Iddy, iddy, iddy, iddy."

There was no Greek or other unknown tongue to mamma about this; it was perfectly intelligible, and it meant that The Jefful was beginning to get ready to begin to want to get up. Then there was a spirited race between mamma and The Jefful, the former endeavouring to get all the braid ripped off before the latter should reach that point where she might legitimately insist upon arising. Rip, rip, rip went the blade of mamma's little knife upon the stitches.

"Bibble, bubble -ob -ob -ob -ob -ob!" said The Jefful, and again the little knife said:

"Rip, rip, rip."

"Attee pattee okky pokkey poo," remarked The Jefful, and the knife said:

"Rip, rip, rip -rip -rip."

Then The Jefful took a rest of about two minutes, and the knife gained nearly a yard before its antagonist resumed with:

"Uppee -chip--ah--wa wa wa."

"Rip, rip--r-r r-r r-r r-r ip."

"Boo ga. Ommul lummy ummy moo."

This was rather discouraging to the knife, for when The Jefful got to the vowels that caused her lips to protrude it generally indicated serious business; so the knife went:

"R-r-r r-r-r r-r r-r r-r rip ip ip."

Then The Jefful refreshed herself for a moment or two with her thumb, which gave the knife an advantage that it was not slow to improve. But there was something frightening in The Jefful's next remark:

"Mom mom mom -mom mom mah!"

The knife had but two more yards to go before completing its work, and away it flew, literally snapping out, as mamma drew the braid to its full tension.

"Rip ip ip ip ip ip ip ip ip—ip."

"Ya!" said The Jefful.

"Rip, rip, rip!" replied the knife.

"Ya!" repeated The Jefful; then she jumped a whole octave and continued: "Ya a a a a a a a a. Mom -mah!"

By this time every nerve in mamma's body had got into that little knife. Physiologists may say "pooh!" and explain that nerves cannot get into inanimate objects; but we know what we are talking about, and physiologists don't. Again The Jefful raised her voice and said:

"Ya ya ah ee -ee um um -nga—ya oobutty ubbut tub tub kuppup non koo poo choo."

This stimulated mamma to the utmost; she had only a scant yard to go—then only two feet—then only one—then only eight or nine inches. Just then The Jefful started again, at which mamma gave a harder tug than usual at the braid; and crack the braid flew backward to the full length of mamma's arm, tearing a strip several inches wide of the facing and silk and taking them with it. And that tram had been none too long, either.

(To be Continued.)

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Old gentleman (at head of stairs) "Sally, ain't it time to go to bed?" Sally "Yes, father dear, don't put it off another minute; your health, you know, is not of the most robust kind."