

Mrs. Perry's Grievances

BY SUSAN BROWN ROBBINS

"No, the day of miracles ain't over, and folks dream dreams and see visions even now. You don't believe it? Well, I'll tell you of a case.

"It was a year ago this coming month that I went over to spend a couple of weeks with Cousin Elvira at Marshall's Corners. Now, you probably don't know it, but Marshall's Corners ain't exactly the liveliest place in all the world. They are mostly farmers there, and a mile from Elvira's is a store and post office and a tack factory. Oh, yes, and there's a schoolhouse in a pine grove half a mile from her house the other way.

"I guess it was the third day I was there that I says: 'Elvira, who is it lives in the house across the road, and what's so much coming and going there for? Seems to me there's some one calling there every half hour.'

"Elvira, she folded up her work and stood up. 'Come along with me,' she says, 'and you'll see why there's so much calling there. It's Mrs. Perry lives there. Her husband's sick, has been for a long time, but he's getting better now. We all think everything of Mrs. Perry, though we didn't like her a bit the first month or so she was here.'

"I noticed, as we went across the road, what a pleasant look the house had. The curtains were raised quite high, so's to let in a lot of light, and there was one window full of bright, clean-looking, blossoming plants. A big yellow cat set on another window sill and blinked at us as we went by. I never like a yellow cat, but somehow this one seemed different, and no other kind would have seemed so cheerful.

"The minute I laid eyes on Mrs. Perry I knew why everybody liked her. You know there's some folks you just meet on the road; they don't do nothing more than nod and smile at you, but you somehow feel better for seeing 'em. Mrs. Perry was like that. She wa'n't what you'd call pretty, but she had nice clean-looking teeth and her hair was tidy, and she had the pleasantest cordial smile I ever see. She had on a plain calico dress, but it was clean and whole and fitted her nice, and kinder looked stylish. 'She's just what she appears to be.' Her house was just like her; it was plain and neat; there was comfortable chairs, and there was books and a piano.

"Mr. Perry was lying in a reclining chair, and although you could see that he was a pleasant sort of person enough, it was his wife that was the one folks liked best.

"Well, we had an awful nice call, and just before we went, Elvira asked her to play and sing for us. She never made a word of objection, and she didn't say she had a cold and couldn't, but she went right over to the piano and set down and begun to play. Now I've heard more or less good music in my day, and when I heard Mrs. Perry sing I knew she wa'n't no ordinary amateur. Her voice wa'n't nothing wonderful, but it was sweet and true and she sang with some life and snap.

I says something about it after she got through, and she said she'd studied a good deal and been to some good teachers, but she didn't put on no airs about it.

"After that first call, I went over there pretty often, and we talked together like old cronies. It was one day towards the end of my visit that we had a specially long talk. It was a rainy day, and Mr. Perry was asleep in the next room, so we had quite a spell to ourselves. We'd come to a kind of pause in our conversation, and there wa'n't no sound in the room but the clock ticking and the cat purring. Finally, Mrs. Perry laid down her work—she was one of the busy kind and we was both sewing—and she says, with a queer little smile: 'Aunt Asenath, I'm going to tell you a strange experience I had when I first moved into this neighborhood. I never have told anybody but Alfred, and I was ashamed to tell even him all of it.'

"You see, when he was taken sick and the doctor said he must come into the country, it was a terrible blow to me. I'd always lived in the city, all my friends were there, and I went about a great deal. To leave all that and go into the country, which I hated, especially with winter coming on, with nothing to do but take care of a sick man—well, it nearly broke my heart. I actually was so childish and horrid that I felt as if Alfred was somehow to blame for getting sick. This wasn't all; I had a sort of compound grievance: Alfred chose to come to the lonely, out-of-the-way place, where was sure there was no society. I did not like the town itself, and I did not like this neighborhood nor the house and I made up my mind that I should not like the people. They called on me very soon after I got settled, and I was just as horrid as I could be to them. I told them how lonesome and homesick I was and how I disliked the country, and I bragged about my life in the city and of all the advantages I had there. After my callers went I told Alfred how countrified and boorish I thought them, and I declared that I never would return their calls. Poor Alfred, what he had to endure! I thought the country was a good place to wear out my old clothes, so I wore old gowns that had seen better days, and I looked like a fright, especially as I neglected my hair and wore shabby old slippers.

"The doctor came out to see Alfred, and he looked puzzled and shook his head. 'I don't see why he don't gain more,' he said, and he looked at me sharply and with a gleam of suspicion in his eyes.

"I don't like to think of that time. The neighbors did not call a second time, of course, and I was really very lonely, though I did not admit it, and kept saying how glad I was not to be bothered by them. I could see that Alfred was getting worse instead of better, and I knew the doctor thought I was somehow to blame for it. I never was so wretched in my life. I began to be really alarmed about my husband, and it was when I got my mind off myself that the revelation came.

"It was one night after one of Alfred's very worst days that I lay

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	Rate	Price	Rate	Price	Rate	Price	Rate	Price	Rate	Price	Number of Lines	
25	7	22 75	6½	43 87	6½	42 25	5	65 00	7	91 00	1500	
30	7	27 30	6½	52 65	6½	50 70	5	78 00	7	109 25	1500	
35	7	30 45	6½	61 43	6½	59 15	5	91 00	7	127 40	1820	
40	7	36 40	6½	67 00	6	62 40	5	104 00	7	145 60	2080	
45	6½	38 02	6½	73 13	6	70 80	5	117 10	6½	152 10	2340	
50	6½	43 25	6½	81 22	6	78 00	5	130 00	6½	169 00	2600	
55	6½	46 48	6½	89 38	6	85 90	5	143 00	6½	185 90	2860	
60	6½	50 70	6	93 00	5½	89 70	5	156 00	6½	202 80	3120	
65	6	52 50	5½	97 18	5½	92 95	5	169 00	6½	211 25	3380	
70	6	54 00	5½	104 05	5½	100 10	5	182 00	6	218 40	3640	
75	6	58 50	5½	112 12	5½	107 25	5	195 00	6	234 00	3900	
80	6	62 40	5½	119 06	5½	114 40	5	208 00	6	249 60	4160	
85	6	66 20	5½	127 08	5½	121 55	5	221 00	6	265 20	4420	
100	5½	71 50	5½	146 50	5	130 00	4½	234 00	5	280 00	5200	
125	5½	89 38	5½	170 63	5	162 50	4½	290 50	5	325 00	6500	
150	5½	105 39	5½	204 75	5	195 00	4½	351 00	5	390 00	7800	
175	5½	125 13	5½	238 75	5	227 50	4½	409 50	5	455 00	9100	
200	5	130 00	5	260 00	4½	234 00	4½	442 00	4½	494 00	10400	

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