

week. Not an egg nor a potato is there in the house, even."

Mrs. Callender stopped, confounded. The shops were all closed at that hour.

"Why, I saw Jack Rand myself, after he had given the order!" she exclaimed, and then—she knew: like lightning her association with the sheet of blue writing paper was revealed to her; on the other side of it was written the address of a newcomer who lived across the track at the other end of the village. The marketing had gone there!

"Well, I never heard of such a thing!" she commented blankly, and as usual, laughed.

It was but a brief ten minutes later that her husband was presenting his guests to her—they had come! She had been hoping against hope that they could not.

"Cynthia, I want to introduce Mr. Warburton and Mr. Kennard. I have persuaded them to dine with us tonight."

"It was awfully good of your husband to invite us," said Mr. Warburton, who was the elder, pleasant-faced and gray-haired, with the refined accent and accustomed manner of a gentleman. "I hope we'll not inconvenience you, Mrs. Callender."

ly jolly of you both to treat us in this way."

"I remembered that you said we were to have a particularly good dinner tonight, so I didn't telegraph you when I found that they could come," said Mr. Callender when the party had separated to dress and he and his wife were alone in their room. "Nichols is very anxious to have them pleased—I told you that before, I think. They're looking at machines, and if they take the London agency for them it will make a big difference. Why on earth did you look at me in that way down-stairs? Is there anything wrong?"

"No; nothing is wrong," said his wife ironically, "except that we haven't any dinner—to speak of. Oh, dear, if you make me laugh I'll never be able to hook this gown. No, it isn't the least bit tight, it's almost too loose, in fact—but I can't hook it when I laugh. Chauncey, the order went wrong in some way, this morning, and the marketing never came at all. Just stand and take that in. If you had only helped me at breakfast when I asked you to, it wouldn't have happened. I was away all the afternoon, and, of course, Catherine never sent for anything—just sat and waited. There's nothing in the



"I WANT YOUR DINNER."

"No, I hope we're not inconveniencing you," murmured the other, who looked nineteen and was twenty-nine, who spoke from somewhere down in his throat and blushed with every word.

"Not in the least," said Mrs. Callender, immediately and intrepidly rising to the occasion. She was a stanchly hospitable little soul, and to have refused a welcome to the guests foisted on her would have been as impossible to her at any time as to the proverbial Arab. There was an inscrutable defiance in her eyes, however, when they met her husband's, which puzzled him uncomfortably.

"Mr. Nichols wished us all to dine at the Waldorf-Astoria," he explained—Mr. Nichols was the senior partner of the firm. "But I found, accidentally, that these gentlemen were extremely tired of living at hotels, and longed for a little home-like dinner, by way of variety."

"We have been so much in your big hotels," said Mr. Warburton, apologetically. "It makes one very dull, after a time, I think. You can't imagine, Mrs. Callender, our joy when Mr. Callender so kindly offered to take us in. It's so uncommon-

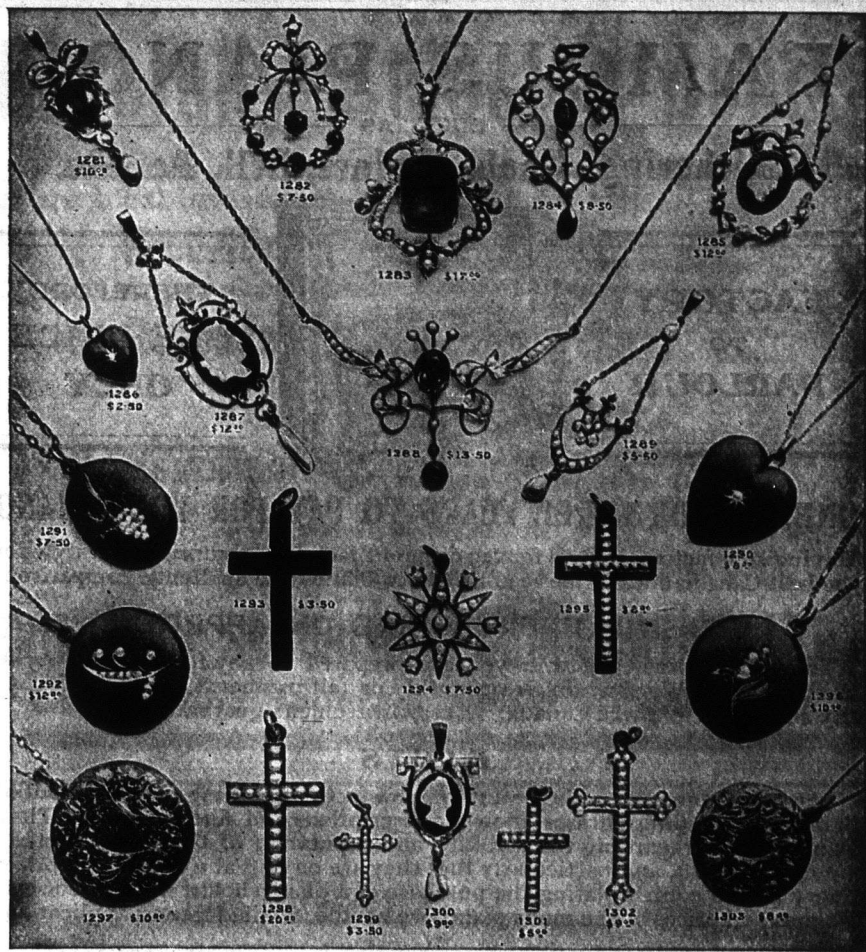
house but some cans of mock-turtle soup and tomatoes, and one can of corned beef, and a small one of plum pudding. Catherine is going to warm the beef in the tomatoes, and make a sauce for the pudding. I'd die before I'd apologize beforehand to those men; they'd never forgive themselves for coming."

"Mr. Callender whistled. "Good gracious! And to think we've come from the Waldorf-Astoria for this! But I don't see yet how it happened," he incautiously objected. "I should think you could have managed better in some way, Cynthia."

"Oh, you do, do you?" said Mrs. Callender. "Well, I don't. If you had the housekeeping to look after in a place like this, Chauncey, where you never can get anything you want, and there's not a shop open after half-past six—"

"Yes, I know, I know," interposed Mr. Callender hastily, dodging the subject with the ease of long practice. "But couldn't you knock up an omelet, or Welsh rarebit, or some sort of a side dish? Couldn't you borrow something?"

Mrs. Callender shook her head tragically.



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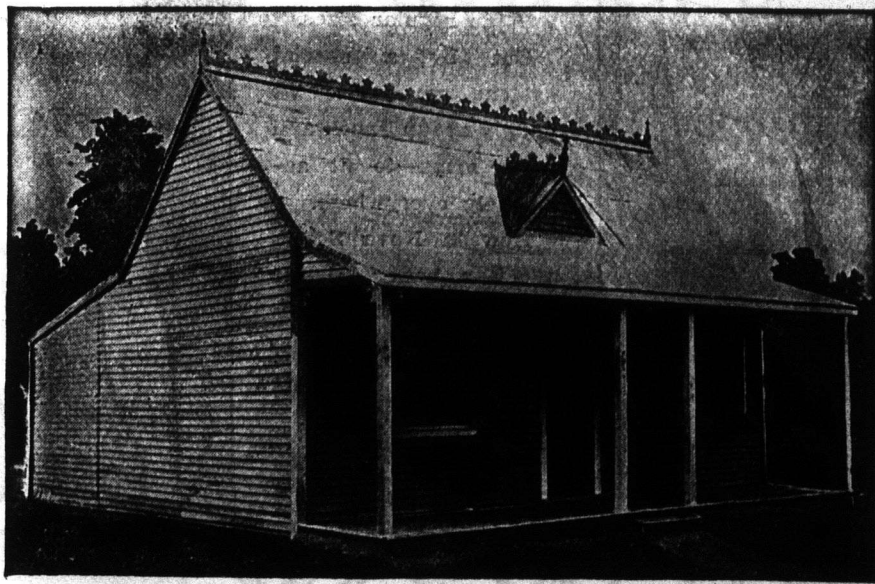
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