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## The Pink Sunbonnet

How an Artist Found His Model

By CLARISSA MACKIE

Neal Whitcomb whistled cheerfully as he climbed the hill to the low white farmhouse. On every side the ground sloped away from the hospitable looking domicile. In front was a tree covered lawn, on the north was a vegetable garden, on the south a flower garden and on the east sunny fields of strawberries.

Neal went up the front walk and rang the doorbell.

A middle aged black woman responded to his summons.

"I am looking for Mr. Huxford," said Neal.

"Mistah Huxford am gone to town with a load of berries," replied the servant, "and Missis Huxford am gone to de 'serrin' 'sisty'."

Neal smiled pleasantly. "Then I'm afraid I must call again. Perhaps you can tell me if there is a Miss Huxford here?"

The woman shook her head. "No, sah; ain't never heard of no Miss Huxford. Dere's young Master Huxford, but he's away at school jes' now."

"I am a painter—an artist," explained Neal as he turned away. "I am staying at the hotel. The proprietor told me I might find a young lady to pose for me up here at Huxfords. I told him I wanted some one dressed as a country girl in a pink sunbonnet—put in a picture, you know." Then, suddenly realizing that he was doing

started down the path when the servant ran out and spoke to him.

"Scuse me, sah," she said timidly. "I hope yo' all don't think I was gettin' a joke off on yo'?"

"Not at all," said Neal stiffly.

"If yo'll scuse my presumption, mistah, I'd like to say somethin'," went on Della. "Yo' was sayin' yo'd like to paint a young lady inter yo'r pictur'?"

"Yes."

"I expects dere's money in it fer de young lady, sah?"

"Of course I always pay my models," said Neal.

The woman came closer and spoke confidentially.

"Den, sah, I'd like to recommend

Miss Sally Bemis, the pretties' young lady in de county, lak a rose, sah—so pinky and sweet! Her folks has come down in de worl', and dey's livin' in dat little cottage yander on a weeny corner of de big plantashun dat belonged to Miss Sally's grandpaw, old General Bemis. Dere's jes' Miss Sally and her ma, and her ma's delikt, and Miss Sally works all kinder ways to earn money. Now she demans herself by pickin' strawb'ryrs fer Mr. Huxford. It ain't no ways fer a Bemis to earn money erlong wid de village gals hereabouts."

"Thank you, auntie, for the information," said Neal, who was much interested in the story of the plucky young girl. "Shall I call upon Mrs. Bemis?"

"Well, sah, suppose yo' tak' a look at Miss Sally fust. If yo' spoke fust it might lift up dere hopes, and mebbe she might not suit. If she don't yo' must be mighty particular!" she ended rather belligerently.

"Where shall I find her, auntie?" asked Neal patiently. "I certainly can't go into the field and face that battery of sunbonnets."

"Why, jes' set here on de end of de veranda behin' de honeysuckle vines. Dey'll all come trillin' past pretty soon, and yo' jes' fix yo' eye on de pretties' and most upsy one of de whole lot, and dat's Miss Sally. If yo' satisfied yo' can go and see 'em. I gotter go, sah."

He went up to the wide piazza and sat down in a great easy chair close to the honeysuckle that screened the piazza from the path around which the strawberry pickers must come.

Two years ago, at the art school, there had been a little student, and he was sure her name was Sally Bemis or something of that sort. He had given several talks to the students, and he remembered the girl's lovely, earnest face upturned to his. If he had met her oftener he would have fallen in love then and there, but he was very busy at that time, and he was about to sail for Italy, and the little student had drifted out of his memory.

Voices were heard approaching from the rear of the farmhouse, and presently there strolled past, singly or in groups, the strawberry pickers.

Nineteen girls had gone out of the big gate, and he confessed himself disappointed that not one would do. There came a light step along the path and a rich contralto voice trilled softly. Through the honeysuckle vines he saw her coming, sunbonnet slipped back on the dark masses of her curls; her fair face with its magnolia-like complexion tinged with soft pink; her lovely dark eyes, fringed with long, curling lashes; her sweetly curved lips, so tenderly smiling.

It was Miss Sally Bemis. More than that, she was the one girl for his picture. She was the girl of his dreams, and she was the little student of the art school!

Neal overtook her at the gate. She turned lovely, surprised eyes at him, and suddenly a deep rose flush stained her cheek from brow to chin. There was embarrassed recognition in her glance.

Neal lifted his hat.

"Miss Bemis, I wonder if you remember me?" he asked eagerly.

"One does not soon forget a celebrity like Neal Whitcomb, the artist," she said quickly, holding out a stained little hand. "What are you doing way down here in Dixie?"

"Painting," said Neal, falling into step beside her. "I've been looking for a model to pose in a daisy field. I wanted a girl in a pink sunbonnet, and when I expressed my wish somebody sent me up here to Huxfords. Fancy my dismay when I went out to the strawberry field and saw twenty pink sunbonnets!"

Sally laughed deliciously.

"The pink sunbonnets are Mrs. Huxford's idea. She bought a piece of pink calico, and made sunbonnets for all the girls; said she liked to see us in the field."

"It's an amazingly pretty sight," agreed Neal as he went down the hill beside her. "You are taking home some of the strawberries?"

"Yes, to my mother. She is an invalid. Her failing health, combined with lack of money, compelled me to abandon my art career," she explained cheerfully.

"That was a hardship," said Neal sympathetically.

Sally laughed again.

"It was at the time, but I have found

out that my talents are more in the domestic line than otherwise. I am fortunate in finding it out in time, don't you think so?"

"Brava!" cried Neal. "And now tell me, Miss Sally, is this your home that we are approaching?"

"Yes, and there is mother on the porch waiting for me. You will come in and have a cup of tea with us, Mr. Whitcomb?"

"It will give me much pleasure," he said, so emphatically that they both laughed with some sudden knowledge of good fellowship.

Sally led him to the porch and introduced him to the sweet faced little lady who was her mother, and then she disappeared while Neal talked to Mrs. Bemis.

Mrs. Bemis declared that she and Neal fell in love with each other long before Neal fell in love with Sally, but they all agreed that it didn't matter in the least so long as Neal and Sally were married and lived happily ever after.

If you ever see Neal Whitcomb's famous painting "He Loves Me—He Loves Me Not!" showing a pink sunbonneted girl telling her fortune in a daisy field you will recognize the lovely girl stripping the petals from the daisy as Miss Sally Bemis, and those who know will add that she is the artist's wife.

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