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ere had Tom's said. didn't There's that works vou your lump ut of

away

at workin' all the time with nary a rest or change, and wear starched collars all the time, and never make a mistake in grammar nor etikit like them Sinclaires and Kinnifics."

The metaphor was too much for Marian's gravity, and she laughed until the tears rolled down her cheeks, laughed as she had not for months, but the outburst did her good.

but the outburst did her good.

'But if I don't do as they wish I shall displease them all," she said, presently.

"Let it. Tom's more to you than them, and if you're going to wind up by bein' cranky with Tom—homemakin' first, etikit and house-keepin' second, say I. I believe in folks bein' clean, and I'll defy anyone to say my house isn't clean; but I don't believe in makin' oneself a slave to work altogether, nor makin' one's life out with rule and tape-measure like out with rule and tape-measure like them Kinnifics do. Lord save us! Hester Kinnifics wouldn't go over to Brown's rasin'—the biggest time o' the year-jist because 'twas washday, and the clothes would have eaten them out of house and home if they'd stood over till Tuesday! Don't you go turnin' into a machine like that, Marian.'

That night Marian faced the question fairly. Yes, she was just growing into a machine, as Mrs. had said,—no time to read, Flarity or to think, or to rest,—and she was so, so tired! True, perhaps, she had been worried more than necessary by Tom's folk; perhaps she had not made enough allowance for them; perhaps her eyes had been open to all their faults, and shut, too much, to their good qualities. Come to think of it they had done many kind things for her. After all it was not their fault if they were built differently.

But, with her strength, she couldn't keep up all the ends as the Sinclaires and "Kinnifics" (with a smile) did. She must bring in a new state of affairs. But she would do it gently—oh so gently-and she would try to keep her temper, that wretched little temper that made her feel, sometimes, so bitter and rebellious. Yes, she would begin the very next day. She had intended to make a big plum-pudding and a lot of pies, but she would leave that out. She would just get a dear little lunch ready, and go off to the ravines early in the afternoon, and take a book, and have Tom go there for tea. The have Tom go there for tea. cardinal flowers must be out along the brook now-the cardinal flowers —the cardinal flowers—oh she was so, so tired—so tired—"

But Marian did not go to the woods next day. Instead she tossed and turned in a burning fever, and raved about the work, and how Tom's folk would be vexed with her if she didn't keep it up. "It's killing me, mother!" she would say, and then she would babble of the brook in the rayine, and babble of the brook in the ravine, and of the cardinal flowers, always of the cardinal flowers, and she would call Tom to come and see the pretty luncheon she had. After that the refrain "So tired! So would come again,

And all the while Tom's mother, and sisters and aunts stepped about on velvet feet, waiting on her, and sobbing their hearts out, while Tom ran out from time to time to hate himself where no one would see. "We've been blind, sister," sobbed

Miss Cora, "oh, poor child!"
And the aunts nodded. "Yes. We've all been blind! Think of those two bits of hands trying to keep up with what it took all of us to do!" and then

again the tears flowed When Marian came to herself it was in a darkened room, but across in the hall she could see a bar of golden

sunlight. "Have I been ill?" she said, and a cool touch came on her forehead, while a gentle voice almost breaking in sobs said, "Yes dear, you must hurry and get well, and go back with Tom for that little picnic—in the—the

"Miss Mattie!" Marian exclaimed, in a voice whose surprise broke Miss

Mattie's heart.
"Yes, it's f," she said, "and no wonder you ask that, we've"—hurrying in a sudden rush to get through with it "We've all been too hard on you, but we're not going to be any more, and we've taken the chickens and little ducks over to our house, and

you're never to bother with them more, at least until you get stronger than you were, or have more help, and want to yourself,—and," but Miss Mattie could say no more.

Marian closed her eyes. "Where's Tom," she said. But Tom, hearing her voice, her old fiatural voice, was coming up the stairs three steps at a time."

Marian was too weak yet to samuch, but closed her eyes very happily, while Tom sat drinking her face almost. Presently she looked up and

whispered.

"Tom are the cardinal flowers all gone yet?"

"No dear, no," Tom said, in a breaking voice. "There are lets of them yet, and we'll have our little picnic just as soon as you are able." picnic just as soon as you are able. He knew she was thinking of the little picnic in the ravine of which she had raved all through her illness.

At last a day came when Marian was able to sit up and make ready a dainty luncheon with her own thin white hands, sandwich, and salad, and raw fruit and cheese-sticks, each wrapped in its own bit of white waxed paper, and with a few glowing nasturtiums on top. It was very pretty, and when at the last minute Miss Cora came running over with some cold chicken and a glass of quivering orange jelly it was perfect. At first Marian had thought of having the whole connection, sisters, aunts and all, to her little picnic,—they had been so kind to her through those weary days of illness, and she, perhaps, had been too hasty. But on second thought it seemed better not. Again, assuredly, but not to-day. This day should be sacred to Tom and to her,—this the day of her emancipation, when she should bid adieu to the old worry and, she trusted, to the old bitter thoughts, and welcome in the idea! life of which she had dreamed. There would be worries of course, and there would be many modifications, but things would be different,-one can do so much towards making things different if one only sets about it in the right way.

Tom would not let her walk, but came in from his harvesting to put Dobbin in the buggy, and drive her back to 'the ravine. As they entered it he said, "See Mike, the cardinal flowers are still out," and she said, "Yes, the cardinal flowers are out."

He had to leave her for a while, but she took out her book and read a bit, and then she lay down as in the old days under the trees and looked up and up, and listened to the leaves. When at last Tom came straying

into the ravine at tea-time, it was a very happy little wife who met him and conducted him to the spot where "covers for two" were laid in the very loveliest spot of the ravine, with a tiny bouquet of cardinal flowers at each place: Very sweet and child-like she looked too, with her pink dress turned in comfortably beneath the round white throat, and her fluffy hair all towsled by the wind, and the

color coming back to her pale cheeks.
Tom could not keep his eyes off
her, as she chatted away merrily, laughing as in the old, care-free days; and a hundred times he said to himself, "Oh heavens, what a fool I was not to understand!" But he said nothing about it aloud, for Marian had forbidden him to say more.

He did however, say something that pleased her very much

"I say Mike, this seems like old times. It's jolly."

And Marian felt that her little

picnic by the rippling brook was by no means a tailure.

From that day Marian went on living up to her own ideals, slept out on the upper verandah, took her sewing to the fields, had tea in the woods whenever she took the notion, and did all sorts of unconventional things. Perhaps Tom's folk did not always approve, but there was no open rupture, for the Sinclaires were too proud to quarrel. As for Marian, now that her eyes were opened, she began to see very many nice things in Tom's folk. "I see," she said to herself. "People just have to live their own lives, and keep ready to see all the good in other folks. We can't all think alike or act alike. -And this, probably, was about all the philosophy of it.

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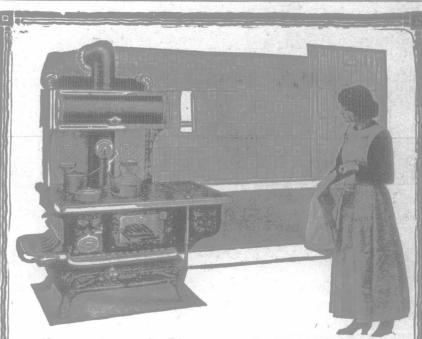
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