

let me return after the domestic wheels are again running smoothly," he added complacently.

Constance murmured a polite reply. She was genuinely tired and overwrought. Moreover she had flattered herself that she had kept the household running smoothly. The talk drifted into safe channels for a time. Then Albert said softly:

"You know I love you, Constance. Won't you give me your answer before I go?"

"Yes, I will," she snapped. "It's 'no,' and if all men are like you I shall be an old maid, so there!" Constance was distractingly pretty as she lifted her flushed face. "A nice chum you'd make!"

Albert blinked. Nothing like this outbreak had ever happened before during all of his well-ordered, conventional existence.

"Why — what — what have I done?" he demanded.

"Nothing, nothing at all, Mr. Pearson. That is the difficulty," Constance's tones were chillingly formal.

An ugly light gleamed in the man's eyes.

"I refuse to be dismissed for a mere whim," he asserted. "You owe me an explanation."

"I'll write it—for the benefit of the next girl whom you may honor with your preference," said Constance rising. "But the answer is final," and she fled.

"Exeunt the adorable Albert and his tennis racquet," she whispered to her

Wilson, the barrister who spoke and the tins were deftly returned to their place. "You are to go to no extra trouble for me. There is plenty of bread—I saw it, and it will answer admirably."

When the breakfast had been eaten and after the cook had received so many compliments that she declared she should ask for an increase of wages, Burke demanded: "What about luncheon and dinner?"

"I'll manage—yes, I will," she added firmly. "You said last night that you had to go to the city. I'll write a list and you may send me out some canned things—soups and chicken and mushrooms."

Burke's remonstrances were in vain. Constance could be a very determined small person when she tried.

"All right, comrade," he finally yielded. "I'll obey. But if I find that this is a ruse to get me out of the way while you overwork and overworry, there'll be things doing when I return."

"Now some girls would permit a nice, willing man like that to spend his entire day in the kitchen," mused Constance with a self-righteous air as she busied herself deftly with household tasks. "And after they were married,"

she blushed rosy red, "they would continue the performance, and as a result the man could not do his best work in the office, and at some future day he'd be a failure instead of a success. I am glad that I can manage a house, unaided, if necessary, but," with a rueful glance at the luring green fields and cool



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aunt. "You couldn't find a bit of that halo with the Lick telescope."

The next week brought "My friend, Burke Wilson," blonde, bland and blue-eyed. The week was an encore of the initial performance with a different leading man. Only Burke played golf instead of tennis. The scene shifted at the psychological moment of the announcement of the coffee to be ground and of the strawberries to be hulled.

"No," he replied, "I was not aware of your proficiency in domestic science, but are you aware that I was chief cook in our Adirondack camp last summer? There was never a word of fault found either—not because my flapjacks were always tender," he grinned reminiscently, "but because I had made a rule that he who dared to question the quality of the grub should cook the next meal. I'll just attend to that coffee and those strawberries myself if you please, young lady."

Constance caught the infection and laughed merrily.

"There is a big gingham apron that Jane left," she replied demurely.

They raced into the kitchen like two school children, chatting gayly over each task.

"And phwat might ye be afther doin' wid thim little pans?" demanded the assistant Bridget, as Constance took down the muffin pans.

"Shure an' it's muffins I'd be makin' for yer lordship's breakfast!" she replied with a mocking courtesy.

"Not much you don't." It was Burke

rippling water, "I hope it won't often be necessary." Then calling to her aunt:

"Come on down, Auntie. I wonder if all of the folks on the car can see Burke's halo as clearly as I did when he departed. No, Auntie, you shall not help. I said I should do this work alone and I intend to play fair."

When Burke returned he was greeted by a vivacious and faultlessly gowned hostess, attractively served food and complacent guests. His anxious eyes could detect nothing amiss—but the curtain went up for the final performance, discovering the heroine huddled on the Davenport and shaking with sobs.

"What's this?" demanded Burke. Without waiting for an answer, he picked her up and carried her over to a big, comfortable chair.

"The kitchen was hot and you have worked too hard and had no fresh air," he declared soothingly, "and now you are tired out and nervous. Tell your chum all about it."

"The salad wasn't right," she began in a choked voice.

"What was the matter with the salad?" he demanded calmly.

"It didn't have enough lemon juice in the dressing," she declared weakly.

"I was too busy watching you to observe," was the matter-of-fact reply.

"I don't believe anyone else detected it either. If they did you can have 'em here again and show 'em what you can