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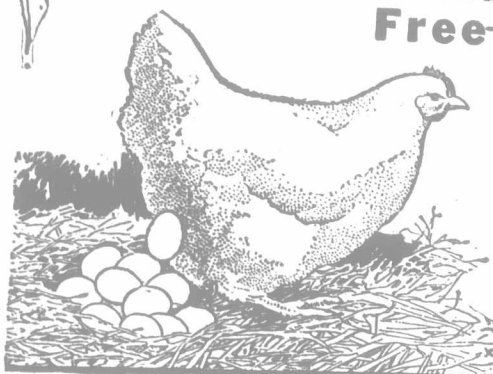
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streaming through and a blue-bottle buzzing on the pane, the girl almost trembled.

"Sunshine fades things dreadfully," remarked Aunt Hester laconically, and Aunt Ellen solemnly added, "And lets in flies."

Marian promptly assailed the fly, and by the time its mangled body lay on her hand she was ready to go off into hysterics, of restrained temper it must be confessed. It was not what Tom's folk said, but the way in which they said it, that was exasperating.

That was just the beginning. "The connection" evidently soon came to the conclusion that Tom's wife was a most wonderfully ignorant specimen as regards the rule and order of things, and straightway, with the compassion which people feel towards relatives, they hastened upon the task of instructing her. They inspected her little dairy room critically and methodically twice a week; they made pretexts to go down cellar, and although nothing was found to complain of, Marian resented the intrusion; they looked interestedly at a table cloth she had hemmed, and offered to teach her hem-stitching; they sent her cooking recipes ad infinitum, and insisted on staying to "help through" with the first trying of each.

Alas, poor Marian! Awkward with confusion she found herself dropping pans and burning her fingers, and throwing dry corn starch into the boiling blanc-mange milk, while her dreams of the simple life and a cream and eggs and raw fruit diet went up into thin air with the steam of "Welsh rabbit" and English plum pudding. Of a Sunday, it is true, she was able to escape with Tom to the ravines; but when, one day, she attempted to settle down with her fancywork by the fence and watch him at his work, Aunt Serina—there was no end to Tom's aunts—came and found the kitchen door blown open and the kitten in. So she gave it up and stayed in the house and scoured well-nigh spotless floors, and burnished scarcely dulled stoves, and made Prince of Wales cake and Welsh rarebit.

Marian now thought that the whole of her annoyances had surely been accomplished. But scarcely were the housekeeping arrangements well in order, when a new series appeared,—this time in the shape of baskets, and crates and droves of feathered things, chickens and ducks, and goslings and turkeys, in all stages from the fluff to the half feather. Tom's folk, it will be seen, believed in thriftiness. Thriftiness, in fact, was a tenet of the family—of the Kenwig branch, of course, not the one that bore two baronets on its outermost twigs, and it was among the ethics of thriftiness that every young wife owed it to her husband to help him along. That Tom was a trifle more than well-to-do made little difference. So there was nothing for it but to accept the gifts graciously, and make the best of an unaccustomed and uninvited business.

The sequel came, however, when the secret leaked out that Tom had to undertake all the care of the goose detachment because Marian was "afraid of the gander," while she, unthrifty housewife, managed to forget the old sitting Dorking in the box, and left her there until she was nearly starved.

The tears rushed to Marian's eyes when she beheld the poor wreck. "Oh I am so sorry!" she cried, but Tom's mother merely said with more emphasis than ever before—

"My dear, young women should keep their wits about them."

After that Marian trailed dutifully after turkeys in the wet grass, and down the creekside after the young ducks, as had been the way of the Pennsylvania Dutch ancestry, and scrubbed and baked, and boiled with such assiduity that the most critical could not have found room for a word or a thought as to her management. But she was not a strong girl, and the ceaseless work began to wear on her. Tom was kindness itself, but he did not seem to "see," and so, sometimes, the hazy thought began to float around if marriage were worth while, or if it were not a great mistake. So tired! So tired! came to be the main story of her life, and yet she did not complain. Neither did she ever think of getting a maid, for that had never been the

way of the maternal Sinclair ancestry. Only she did not feel spirited enough to talk to Tom as in the old days, and sometimes she felt annoyed at him. Then, one day, she actually "snapped" at him.

The way of it was this. She had been ironing all the afternoon, and after that, in fear of Aunt Hester's almost daily visit, there was the extra polishing up to do and the tea to get. She was very tired, but the house was in perfect order. Then just when when she had settled down for a little rest, Tom, in carrying a can of machinery oil, managed to spill a great blot of it on the kitchen floor.

"Tom! How careless!" snapped Marian.

Tom looked at her for an instant solemnly. "I'm sorry, Mike," he said, using his pet name for her, "I'll scrub it up."

Almost hard at heart she watched him while he blotted and rubbed at the spot. At last it was finished, and he put the scrubbing cloths away. In a moment he came back and looked at her for a moment again.

"I'm sorry Mike," he repeated, laying his hand on the fluffy, curly hair which he would never let her brush down into Kenwig trimness.

That one touch undid her. "Oh Tom, Tom!" she exclaimed and burying her curls on his shoulder she sobbed her heart out.

"Why, what's the matter, girlie?" he said soothing her, and she could only sob, "Oh I don't know! I'm—I'm—horrid!"—to all of which Tom protested, as a young husband must who has not got wholly over the romance of the honeymoon.

Presently Tom had to go, and Marian, much relieved after her crying, watched him as he strode off to the barn, with the sunset light following on his straw hat and broad shoulders.

"Poor Tom! How could I have said it!" she mused, then—"Oh dear!—Here's Aunt Hester!" as a step sounded on the veranda.

But it was not Aunt Hester, prim in ancient bombazine and a bonnet with an ostrich tip in it. It was good Mrs. Flarity from across the way, panting and red, with her big straw hat in her hand, her print apron fluttering in the breeze, and smiling good-nature beaming out all over her fat commonplace face.

"Mrs. Flarity!" exclaimed Marian, almost flying to meet her, while the thought flashed through her naughty mind, "Oh how I wish Tom's folk were like Mrs. Flarity!"

"Never mind a chair. I'll just pop down here on the step," Mrs. Flarity said, fanning herself vigorously, and then Marian became conscious of her red eyes.

"I've been—crying," she faltered, half ashamed. "I don't know what made me so—so cross—but I got so impatient and then I cried."

Mrs. Flarity sat for a moment thinking. "If you don't know, I do," she said briskly. "I don't want to be meddlin', but I'll just say this,—you've had too much to do, that's what you've had. Mebbe it's none of my business, but them Sinclaires and Kinnifics (she meant Kenwigs of course) is just killin' you by inches, and if I was you I'd just cut loose and take things easier. If things has to be kept up like they are over at Sinclair's and Kinnific's, where there's six hands for your two, Tom ought to get a girl. Tisn't as if he couldn't afford to, dear knows, nor as if his wife had to work like a poor man's."

A great throb came to Marian's heart. Yes, this great, kind hearted, perhaps, vulgar Mrs. Flarity understood. And then for the first time the poor girl's lips were opened, and cuddling down by Mrs. Flarity, with her head buried in the blue spotted apron, she sobbed out a bit of the story, of her dreams and ideals and of how there had been so much to do that she could not realize any of them. "Of course Tom's folk did not understand," she said.

But Mrs. Flarity was not disposed to be over-lenient. "If they didn't they ought to have," she said, "There's none so blind nor deaf as them that won't see nor hear. Them folks works by rule and measure, and if you know what's what you'll just go your own way, and let them like it or lump it as they choose. An angel out of heaven couldn't stand it, to scrape away