

THE AUTOMATIC MAID-OF-ALL-WORK.

A Possible Tale of the Near Future.

BY M. L. CAMPBELL.

YES; I mean what I say—an automatic maid-of-all-work, invented by my husband, John Matheson.

You see it was this way,—the old story of servants, ever since we began housekeeping. We've had every kind, and if we did get a good one, something would come along to take her off.

You know John has invented lots of things. There's that door-spring now,—not much when you look at it but it brings in quite a little income. He used to say that he was spending his spare time on an automatic maid-of-all-work. Of course, I laughed, said I wished he would, and thought no more of it.

Well, the day the last girl left, John announced that the automatic maid-of-all-work was completed, and that he would stay at home next day and show me how to work it.

Of course, I didn't believe in it.

It was a queer-looking thing, with its long arms, for all the world like one of those old-fashioned wind-mills you see in pictures of foreign countries. It had a face like one of those twenty-four hour clocks, only there were no hands; each number was a sort of electric button. It was run by electricity, you know. The battery was inside. I didn't understand it very well; I never could see into anything in the way of machinery; I never pretend to listen when John tells me about his inventions. The figures, as I said, were buttons, and you just had to connect them with some wires inside. There were a lot of wires, each for some kind of work which would be done at the hour indicated by the button you connected it

with. This was handy, so that we would not have to get up in the morning till breakfast-time, and would be handy in lots of ways.

"Now look, Fanny," said John; "do try and understand how it works. You see this wire now; I'll connect it with button number six, and at that hour the maid will light the fire, sweep the kitchen and then the dining-room. Now this button number seven will be the one to set the alarm to. It will sound for about ten minutes (I'd sound it now only it makes a fearful noise); then the maid will go upstairs to turn down the beds—a convenient arrangement in many ways. Then it will go downstairs, lay the cloth for breakfast, make the tea and toast, bring in the things, and ring the breakfast bell. You'll have to leave all the breakfast things on one shelf, of course, and measure the oatmeal and tea also. We won't set any more buttons to-night. It's just as well to be around at first to see that all goes right. There may be some adjustment necessary."

We went to bed then, and it was daylight when I awoke. I was conscious of a peculiar whirring noise, but I hadn't got thoroughly awakened when I heard the most awful screams and thumps, and the two boys came running into our room in their night-dresses, and after them the automatic maid-of-all-work.

By this time I was out of bed, but John sleeps very soundly. He started as the maid jerked the bed-clothes down and laid them over the foot-board, but he wasn't quick enough. It took him under the arm. It had an awful grip, too,—and laid him across the foot-board, after giving him a