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When Mary Ellen Left Home.

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MARY ELLEN'S life had been made unhappy to a large extent, by a painful sense of eternal unfitness of things as things exist, and by her conscientious efforts to conduct her life in accordance with her disappointed sense of proportion. The dreadful mechanism of life and of the soul had been made a very part of her existence by the influence of a well-meaning but mentally circumscribed set of parents.

As Mary Ellen stood in the dining-room, hooking her son's hair behind his ears before putting his Sunday cap on his head, she said to her brother, with a look of trouble:

"There is something I wanted to say before I left, Manville." She hesitated.

"Can't you think of the word you remembered to remember it by?" asked Manville, with ambiguity. It was Mary Ellen's habit to adjust her memory by means of a mnemonic, and she oftenest remembered the main fact while forgetting the help to memory.

"No," she said, "I can't recall it. I'd know the word in a minute, if I heard it. Oh—the thing I wanted to tell you was to say to the Reverend Peters that I don't see how we can get over to Stafford for Thanksgiving service, to save our lives. I shan't get home 'til the day before, and with Thanksgiving dinner to get, tell him it's just no use for us to try. I know the Whiffleses won't go."

"No," said Manville, "I don't believe Lineville'll try to go. Stafford's too far."

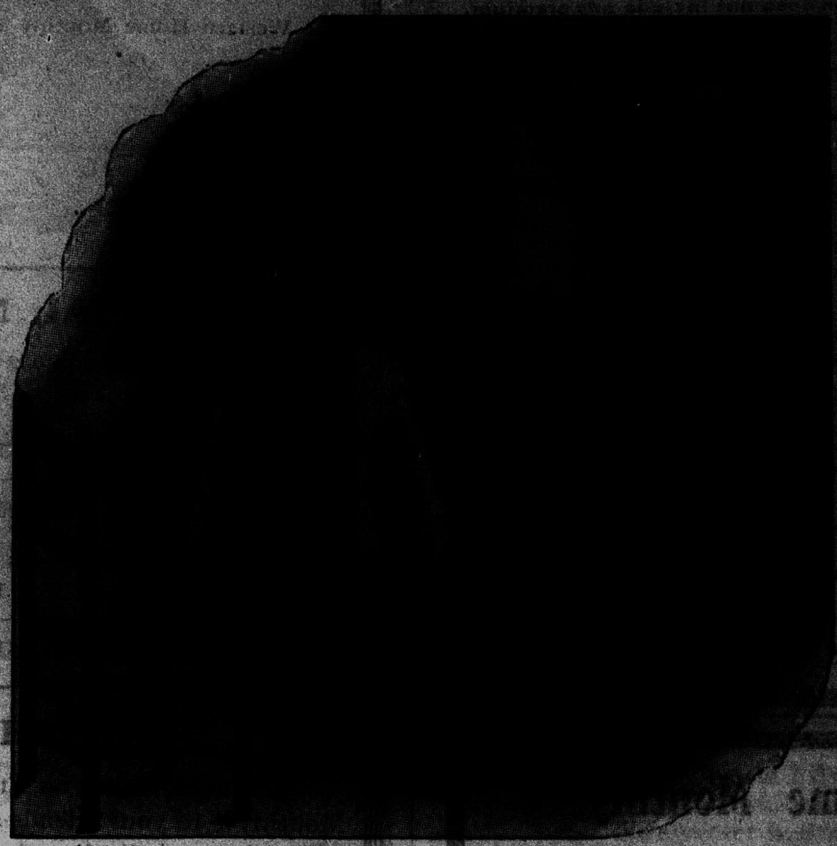
"Tell Reverend Peters I'm real sorry, but I just don't see my way to it. Well," she said, looking around, "I guess that's all. John and I'll be home about Wednesday noon. That'll give me time to get Thanksgiving dinner."

"Don't worry about anything, Mary Ellen. Just have a good time."

"I shall worry, half to death, if I can't get that word I was to remember it by." And Mary Ellen and her son John went down the walk to join Johnnie, husband and father, who was to drive them to the station. When the fall house-cleaning was fairly over it had been decided in family council that Mary Ellen should visit a cousin living at Eden Center. It was her purpose to be away two weeks, returning home the day before Thanksgiving.

Ever since this visit of Mary Ellen's had been under advisement, Manville had had certain helpful purposes in his mind for his sister. Manville had a genius for experimentation with electricity. It is doubtful if he knew a volt from a revolt, and the word ampere—which he mistakenly spelt a-m-p-h-e-r-e—had some analogy in his mind with a Grecian water-vase; however, up in his attic workshop he had a list of household articles to which electricity might be helpfully applied. Manville had already "tacked the force" on to a machine of Johnnie's out in the barn, by which a large number of bushels of something were winnowed or threshed or cradled or done something agricultural to, with only a guiding hand at the machine.

The Allen farm included a cataract which served various vulgar purposes, but Manville had found a scientific *raison d'etre* for it. He had rigged up a plant in Johnnie's cellar for the purpose of generating electricity, and had attached it to the cataract. Thus he was at no expense, save the initial expense of the machine, and he could turn on the several work-saving contrivances with which he had equipped his brother-in-law's house, and be certain that nothing would run down. During this absence of Mary Ellen, Johnnie had decided to go duck-shooting with Marsh Marriam, thus Manville would be left alone to look after the place.



"Johnnie jumped back and said something."

Soon after all had left the farm but himself, Manville set off to the town of Wingate, five miles away, and bought a new stove. It was the usual cooking stove type of thing, constructed somewhat differently from the one formerly in use. Manville brought it home with him in the wagon and set it up in place of the old one, and strung some wires from the stove to the wall. He put in a switch board locating it in a little blind cupboard at the right of the chimney place. Instead of constructing his switch board in a way that permitted the electric force to be turned on and off from the same little plank, he cut out a corresponding section of wainscoting at the left of the stove, and fitted another little plank carrying apparatus for the purpose of disconnecting the household furniture from the cataract when it should become desirable.

Aside from the complicated but orderly and symmetrical arrangement behind the kitchen stove, there was a lever under the kitchen stairs, by turning which the little engine could be entirely disconnected from every electrified article in the house.

When Manville found that he could induce incandescence in the new stove within a few moments, he considered the experiment a success. He so arranged the household implements that Mary Ellen could carry on many domestic pursuits at the same time. The new conditions mainly required tact—and Mary Ellen had a great deal of that. When all was done a child could run the household.

On the fourteenth day of Mary Ellen's absence, Manville sat in the