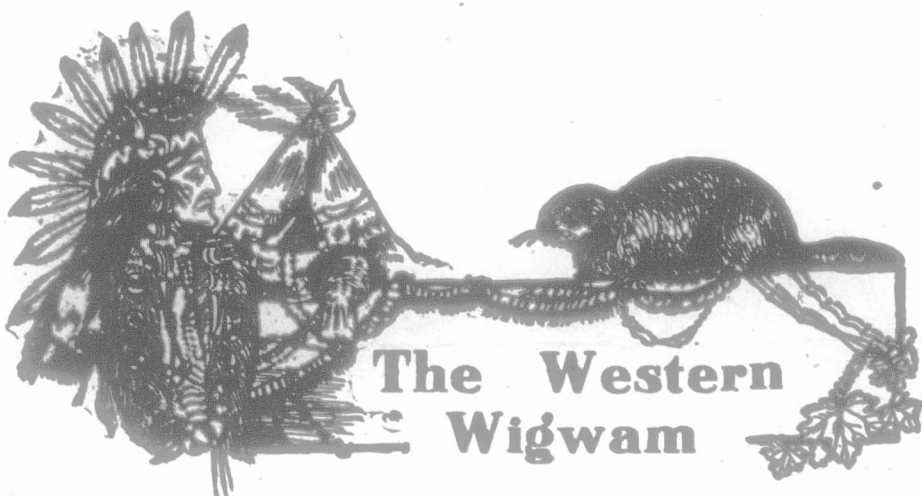




The Green Paper Doll

(Continued from last issue.)

Maude Miller and Ethel Caswell were from New York, and proved to be pleasant and kindly, so Martha was not shy or embarrassed, and soon the half-dozen were chatting away like old friends.

Halstead House was a large colonial mansion with innumerable rooms and wide porches and gardens.

Irene was the eldest child, and there were also a small boy and a baby girl of three. The little Daisy reminded Betty of Baby Polly, and she made friends with her at once.

Friday was Irene's birthday and in honor of it there was to be a May party, with a May-queen, May-pole, and all the traditional features. Of course this was the principal event of their visit, but the six girls managed to have a lot of fun besides. There was a lake on which to row, a pony-cart to drive, tennis-courts, croquet-grounds, and everything that could make country life pleasant.

On Thursday afternoon the girls decided to walk down to the village.

It was a pleasant walk along shady roads, and in a short time they found themselves in the tiny hamlet, with its little post-office and two or three small shops.

Martha had been in especially gay spirits all the way. She had laughed and joked until Dorothy began to feel she had reason to be proud of her merry friend instead of ashamed of her.

But Betty looked at Martha curiously. She couldn't quite understand her to-day. Several times Martha had started to say something to Betty, and then stopped, as if afraid the others would hear.

"What is it, Martha?" asked Betty, at last, dropping a little behind the others. "What are you trying to say?"

"Oh, nothing," said Martha, turning red and embarrassed. Then, as if with a sudden determined effort, she turned to the whole group and said:

"Will you—won't you—all come in and have ice-cream with me?"

It was a pleasant invitation, but Martha stammered so and seemed so nervous about it that Irene hesitated before replying. Betty hesitated, too, for she knew that Martha had little, if any, spending-money, and she wondered at this unexpected hospitality.

But Martha turned pleading eyes upon her.

"Make them come, Betty!" she said. "I'd be so glad if they would."

"Come on girls," said Betty. "Indeed, Martha, we're very glad to accept your invitation; it's so warm and dusty."

Dorothy, though mystified at Martha's sudden role of Lady Bountiful, took her cue from Betty and said:

"Oh, how lovely! I'm just famishing for ice-cream."

The others accepted gracefully, too, and they all went into the latticed inclosure where ice-cream was sold. There were many little tables and chairs, and pushing two tables together, the girls all sat round, and Martha asked each one to choose her favorite flavor.

Martha looked very happy and a little excited; her cheeks were red and her eyes bright, and Betty thought she had never seen her look so pretty.

"Aren't we having a good time?"

said Ethel Caswell, as they slowly ate the refreshing dainty.

"Yes, indeed," said Maude Millre. "It's my turn to treat next. Let's come down here again to-morrow morning, and I'll buy the ice cream."

"All right," agreed the others, and Betty and Dorothy secretly resolved to find some pleasant way to do their share of the "treating." Martha beamed with pleasure to think she had been the one to start a round of merry times, and, as an additional touch to their present feast, she ordered some small cakes. Betty and Dorothy looked frankly astonished, for it was an expensive little place, and they wondered if Martha knew how much her "spread" would cost.

But Martha smiled so gaily that they couldn't offer any remonstrance, and the pretty cakes were bought and enjoyed by all.

When at last the little feast was over, the check was brought and handed to Martha. Betty didn't see the amount, but she saw that again Martha turned scarlet and looked embarrassed. But with an air of endeavoring to look unconcerned, she drew a crisp, new five-dollar bill from her purse, and then, receiving her change, she put it away with the same elaborate carelessness, not stopping to separate the notes from the silver.

"Whatever is the matter with Martha?" thought Betty. "She's trying to act a part, I think."

Back walked the merry half-dozen girls to beautiful Halstead House, and grouped themselves on the veranda to wait for dinner time.

"Let's build air-castles," said Irene. "What would yours be, Betty?"

"Do you mean that could be real or couldn't?"

"Yes, that could be real, but aren't likely to be, you know."

"Yes, I know," said Betty, promptly. "Well, I'd be a princess, with golden hair all twined with pearls; and a long white satin train, with little page boys holding it; and slaves fanning me with long peacock feather fans."

"My, how fine!" said Dorothy, "but it's too story-booky for me. My air-castle is just to travel all over the world—not by any magic, but just travel in real cars and boats, and see all the countries there are."

"I think that's a nice air-castle," commented Irene. "What's yours, Ethel?"

"Oh, I'd like to be famous; a great celebrity, you know. I don't care whether it's in the musical or artistic or literary line. But I'd like to feel, and have other people feel, that I'd done something grand."

"I don't believe you ever will," said Maude, laughing. "Now, my air-castle is awful prosaic. I'd like to be a nurse."

"Oh, what a funny air-castle!" exclaimed Martha. "How can you like to be mixed up with sickness and medicines and such things?"

"That's just what I should like. And then to feel that I was helping to make people well! Oh, I think that's fine!"

"Yes, I s'pose it is," said Martha. "Mine isn't so noble; I'd just like to be at the head of a big house—about like this—and have lots of money. Not a great fortune, but just enough to entertain my friends and give them good times—just as Mrs. Halstead does."

"That's very pretty, my dear," said Mrs. Halstead herself, who had just stepped out on the veranda to summon the young people to dinner. And again Martha became embarrassed and

16 OUNCES TO THE POUND
and best quality in every ounce.
That's what you get when
you buy



**If you don't find it superior to the tea
you have been using, your money
will be refunded by your grocer**

blushed rosy red, as Mrs. Halstead smiled at her kindly.

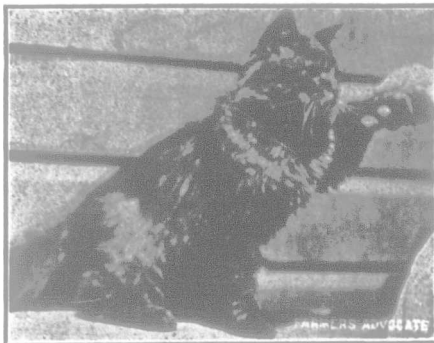
The next day was fair and beautiful, a perfect day for a May party.

"It's a few days past the first of May, which is the real May-day," said Mrs. Halstead, at breakfast, "but as it's Irene's birthday, we thought we'd celebrate it by a May party. So it's an afternoon affair, from four to seven, and we'll have a May-pole dance to wind up with."

"And a May-queen?" asked Betty. "Queen Irene, of course."

"Yes," said Mrs. Halstead, "Irene will be queen, as it's her party. And all you girls must be ladies-in-waiting. You may make wreaths for yourselves and trim your dresses with flowers or garlands any way you choose. Now, scamper, and don't bother me, for I've lots of things to attend to."

"Mayn't we help you, Mrs. Halstead?" asked Betty.



GOOD MORNING, PUSS!

"No, my dear, There's really nothing you could do to help. Indeed, you'll assist me most by entertaining yourselves."

"All right," said Ethel. "As Maude has invited us to go to town with her, we'll have that to entertain us this morning."

But as they walked out of the dining-room and through the broad hall, Maude said:

"I'll have to take back my invitation girls, I'm not going to take you to get ice-cream this morning."

"Why not?" said Ethel, impulsively, and then, as they all saw that Maude did not smile, they felt rather uncomfortable.

For a few moments nobody spoke, and then Betty, to change the subject, said:

"All right, let's play tennis, then."

But there was a constraint over them all, and no one knew exactly why.

To be sure, it was strange for Maude to invite them to go for ice-cream, and then to recall her invitation so

suddenly. But they each felt there was more than that in the air, and Maude looked so disturbed that it seemed there must be something serious the matter.

So strong was the conviction that it would prove embarrassing, that Betty repressed her inclination to invite the girls to take ice-cream with her instead of Maude.

Instinctively she felt she had better not do this, and so she proposed tennis instead.

Half-heartedly they went for their rackets, and as they went toward the courts, Irene and Maude fell behind and talked in whispers. Then they turned and went back to the house.

The other four went on, and had nearly finished a set of tennis when the two re-joined them.

Maude looked angry, and Irene looked as if she had been crying, but on questions were asked, and no information was offered as to the cause.

"Take my racket," said Betty to Maude, "and play a set with Martha. I'd just as lief sit down and watch you."

"No, thank you," said Maude. "I don't care to play."

Betty looked up suddenly at this, and saw Maude give Martha a contemptuous glance and turn away.

Martha turned red and looked dismayed, as she well might at such a speech.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Betty, ready to take up the cudgels for Martha, if need be.

"Never you mind," said Maude. "Martha knows what I mean!"

"I don't!" stammered Martha, choking with mortification at being thus spoken to.

"Oh, yes, you do!" said Maude. "I'm very much obliged for your ice-cream!"

"Betty, what does she mean?" cried Martha, turning helplessly toward her friend.

"She doesn't mean anything," said Irene, looking angrily at Maude. "Mother told you to wait."

Maude turned sullen and refused to say anything. Betty looked mystified, but wasn't sure whether she ought to insist on an explanation or not.

She had been responsible for bringing Martha, and if Maude didn't like her, it was unfortunate, but to discuss it might only make matters worse.

Dorothy, with her ready tact, came to the rescue. "You four play," she said, throwing down her racket, "and Maude and I will go for a row on the lake."

Maude brightened up at this, and Betty concluded that she had been merely ill-tempered over nothing, after all.

(To be continued)