HOW IT CAME.

A witch, a fairy and an elf
Met, long ago, to find,
To brew, to conjure or to raise
A plague for humankind.

They brought from far below the ground
A mighty magic pot;
They piled it round with hazel boughs
And made it seething hot.

The witch poured poison jealousy,
With incantations grim;
Then watched it boil and bubble up
Half to the caldron's brim.

The elf brought sorrow's token tears;
The laughing fay came last,
And all her blossom sprays of joy
Were in the caldron cast.

Dan Cupid chanced to spy it all
While straying through the grove;
He dipped his arrows, every one,
And called the mixture "love."

—Gladys Hyatt in Leslie's Monthly.

THE ESCAPE.

How Martha Sessions Attained the Object of Her Ambition.

For 20 years the town of St. Johns had taken the drudgery of Miss Martha Sessions for granted. Her place, it was tacitly admitted, was in the kitchen of the Witherspoons. This did not mean that she was the servant of the Witherspoons—no, no! There were two respects in which she differed from the ordinary servant. One was that she received no salary. The other was that she was of high birth. A common person may receive pay for service and rejoice in it. But Miss Sessions, daughter of the Hon. Peter Sessions, now many years with his respectable and dull forbears, could not, even had she been offered money, have accepted it. What she did was to live in the home of her married sister, conscious morning, noon and night of the fact that she was the recipient of bounty, and to do anything and everything that other folks objected to doing.

Sarah Witherspoon had not been one to let the distinguished name she bore die with her generation. She had given seven pawns to fortune in the shape of her sons and daughters, and for each and every one of these little ones Martha Sessions, her sister, had cared. In short, Martha was the lubricator of the domestic wheels and did everything for the family that she could do, from hemming the napkins to sitting beside sick beds. She was the first up in the morning and the last to bed at night. She started the kitchen fire at dawn, and she locked the front door and wound the clock after the others had retired to their rooms.

Yet it was generally understood in the Witherspoon household that Aunt Martha was to sit silent at the table, especially if there was company. If a dinner was given, she did the most difficult part of the cooking, and if she did not stay in the kitchen to direct the serving she perched uneasily on the edge of her chair ready to rush into the fray at the slightest sign of confusion.

There was one cause of chagrin, however, which even this modern Griselda did not bear patiently. She was too much occupied on the Sabbath to attend church, for the large family dinners and the suppers at which friends were informally and generally invited kept the household drudge at her post at the hours of service. Moreover, she had the pain of hearing her own particular church and rector spoken of in terms of derision, and the unfashionable, cultivated and conservative congregation of which she would fain have been one was the source of much mirth to the Witherspoons, who went to the smartest of sacred edifices and whose preacher was renowned as an after dinner speaker and a social lion.

But one day an astonishing thing happened. It is difficult to believe it, although it is now ancient history. Frederick Sessions, granduncle to Martha Sessions and to Sarah Witherspoon, died at so great an age that he seemed already to have been dead for a decade when his obituary was published, and in dying he bequeathed to Martha Sessions, the most uncomplaining and self sacrificing woman of my acquaintance, all lands, funds and properties of which I stand possessed."

The news was brought to Martha Sessions one morning when she was sorting over the week's washing, and she came down to the parlor in her worn gray frock and white apron and met the intelligence with incredulity. But when she was quite convinced of the truth of the thing she astonished the little lawyer by laughing in a youthful way. He had expected nervous and grateful tears.

"And when can I have possession of this property, sir?" she inquired.

"The formalities are few, Miss Sessions, considering that you are the only heir. Within a few days you can do as you please with your own, and I can advance you money today to any amount you may desire. What would you like?"

Miss Sessions did not entirely understand the drift of the question and answered with a vague smile:

"I should like to ask the rector to tea."

"Madam!"

"The Rev. Mr. Ellison, you know. I'm not much acquainted with him, but he's the rector of my church, only unfortunately I've not attended church for the last few years. But I can now. Do—you think, sir, that I could have a new bonnet by Sunday?"

"I will write you a check for any amount you desire."

"Thank you. I should like to build a house if possible before I had Mr. Ellison to tea. It would be much pleasanter to entertain him at my own board, of course, than"—

"Certainly, Miss Sessions. Why not build a house?" He was an astute and sympathetic little man, and he knew something of the story of Miss Sessions' life and understood by a sort of intuition that she was groping for her individual form of expression. To have the minister to tea was her dream, and the lawyer reflected that each human creature is entitled to his own particular sort of dream.

But he was entirely unprepared for the decision with which this hitherto patient woman acted.

"If you'll be good enough to wait for me a moment, Mr. Osterman," she said, "I'll put on my bonnet and go down town with you."

"To the bank?"

"To see a contractor about my house."

It appeared that here was a rampant imagination, given rein for the first time in its existence.

"Your family will be much interested in your good fortune," said the lawyer kindly. But Miss Sessions smiled an enigmatical smile and made no reply.

That evening when the family sat in the drawing room Aunt Martha, to the amazement of every one, entered and took a seat as one having something to say. Every one looked up in surprise and waited. They knew the occasion could not be an ordinary one. She told her news with dignity. There was a gasp, and the face of Sarah Witherspoon turned scarlet.

"Of course you will not permit such an unjust thing to happen!" she cried. "It has always been my expectation that I would be Uncle Frederick's heir. Think of the times I have entertained him and the favors he has received at my hands!"

Martha Sessions smiled dreamily.

"Of course you will see that the property is divided half and half, Martha," pleaded her sister.

Martha shook her head slowly.

"No," she said, "it is mine. I have never had anything before. I am going to keep what is mine."

Her sister sprang to her feet, blazing with wrath and incredulity at the turn of the worm.

"I shall contest the will," she screamed.

Her husband pushed her into a seat.

"Sit down, Sarah," he said in a magnificent voice, "and let me talk with this viper we have nursed in our bosoms, this beneficiary of our bounty, who forgets the little children who have played about her knee and all the years she has lived upon our generosity."

But Martha interrupted him and arose.

"I'm afraid I haven't time to listen," she said. "I know what you will suggest. You will kindly offer to invest my money for me. You will speak to me about sending the boys through college and the girls to a seminary. When have any of you, young or old, come to the room where I sat alone, wondering what I had done to be put aside like an unloved dog? When have you spoken to me, except to ask me to do some favor for you? What standing have you given me in the community? How have you allowed me to go clothed? What esteem do you suppose people have for me? Many do not know me from a servant—me, Martha Sessions! No, I haven't time to listen. I've too much to think about." She started toward the door and then turned and held out her hand.

"I'll take all my words back," she said, "if only some one will say—say he is sorry—that I am going."

No one spoke. Her sister turned her back violently. Her bother-in-law wore a face of stone. The four boys, big and little, feigned to be occupied with other things, and the girls stared and made no reply, but at the last second David, the youngest boy, who was 8 years old, ran to her and caught her hand.

"Can't I come to see you sometimes after you go away, Aunt Martha?" he said. There were tears in his eyes. The lonely woman snatched him to her hungrily for a moment.

"I think he has lifted my curse from your roof," she said and went out. The Witherspoons were still incredulous. But when they heard the front door slam they ran to the window to look out. Sure enough, Aunt Martha was walking down the path bravely, but with her handkerchief at her eyes. One of the girls was sent up to her aunt's room, but it was found that of her poor belongings none had been taken from its place. Nor did she ever send for them.

The town was all agog over the activity of Martha Sessions, the heiress. Within 24 hours she had purchased a village lot, much beautified by trees which had years before been planted about the site of a house since burned. She contracted for the building of a tiny home and herself directed the plans. She appeared dressed in simple but fine garments, and she wore an air of amiable distinction. It was the same air she had always had, except that her liberated spirit looked out of her eyes. People enjoyed the romance of it all, and they enjoyed Miss Martha, whom they discovered to be a singularly well informed woman and a lady of excellent taste. She was invited to tea at the most exclusive houses in town. She moved at last in the society to which she had been born. People offered to assist her in the buying of pictures and china and linen.

And at the end of three months she was settled in her own home. She sat before her own fire, looked about at book lined walls, smiled at the pictures for which she had always longed and by touching the little bell at her hand could summon her white capped maid, who was delighted to serve her. She could look with happy eyes at her own gold banded china and have the pleasure once a week of polishing her dainty silver and glass. She was full of domestic enthusiasm and as important as a child with a new toy. She had her charities, and she was already recognized as an ardent member of the church.

Moreover, there came the hour of the perfect climax—she had the rector to tea. It was a wonderful occasion. Mrs. Delizan, the widow, was there, and Mr. and Mrs. Wynant—he was the principal of the high school—and young Caroline Arnold, the artist, and the Rev. Mr. Ellison, of course, at Martha's right hand. What an hour! How the gold bands on the china shone! How the glass sparkled! How snowy was the linen! How delicate were the pinks!

But what were these glories to Miss Martha herself in her gray silk gown with the honiton lace and the garnet brooch, with her gray hair crimped and her hands decorated with two modest diamonds? What a lady! What a mistress of a fine occasion! Really it was a great hour. But it may be that the thing which made her happiest, even happier than the presence of the Rev. Mr. Ellison, was the fact that close beside her, in his Sunday best, with a smile of contentment on his face, sat David Witherspoon, dividing his delighted glances between his surprisingly beautiful aunt and the quince preserves.—Chicago Tribune.

Resources of Culture.

A distinguished lecturer once told a story of an engagement he had made to deliver a discourse in one of the interior towns on the subject of "The Beacon Lights of Civilization."

"I reached the place," he said, "a little behind time and went directly to the hall. A large audience had assembled. I was introduced in due form by the president of the literary society under whose auspices I was to appear, and, laying my manuscript on the desk before me, I opened it and waited a moment for the applause to subside. Imagine my horror when I found I had accidentally brought along the wrong lecture—one on the 'Wonders of Modern Electrical Science!'"

"What did you do?" asked one of the group to whom he was narrating the incident.

"I went right ahead," he replied. "The audience didn't know the difference."

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