

noticed the sudden flight of his hereditary enemy.

Peggy lifted the latch of the front door and walked in, followed closely by the dog.

"Any one at home?" cried the girl gaily.

She was answered by sudden screams of delight from various directions. A tall, dark girl tore downstairs and kissed her effusively; a cracked piano suddenly ceased from troubling, and a thin, leggy girl with a pigtail burst out like a cyclone and got herself inextricably mixed up with Peggy, while from the kitchen a vision presented itself clad in an overall, with doughy hands and round arms white with flour.

At once there was a perfect hurricane of noise—babel was let loose, every one was talking at once, and no one was able to hear a word of what the others were saying. Laughing and breathless, Peggy was pushed and pulled into the faded drawing-room, where she sank on to a sofa with broken springs. Roy lay down at her feet, silent but disapproving.

A sudden hissing in the kitchen, accompanied by a strong smell of burning, caused the girl in the overall to give a shriek and rush out of the room. "Gracious! there's the milk boiled over!" she cried.

"Another burnt blanc-mange," groaned Albert, a tall, sunburnt youth who had just strolled in from the vegetable garden; to learn the cause of all the noise, and now smilingly advanced to shake hands with the visitor, a big black collie following at his heels. Roy sat up expectantly, and the two dogs exchanged civilities, the collie throwing herself full length on the hearth-rug, and laying her head on her paws with assumed indifference, her eyes fixed on Roy, who thumped his tail and grinned at her from ear to ear.

"It is all my fault," laughed Peggy.

"NOT at all," protested the youth; "we are used to Mildred's cooking"—this ungalantly.

"What has happened to Polly?" asked Margaret.

"Oh—Polly! She has gone to one of the new houses; they offered her double the wages we could afford," was the united answer.

"How mean," cried Margaret indignantly. "I shouldn't have thought Polly would have listened to them."

"Oh, well, she wants to get married next year, and is saving up to furnish. I suppose she thought it would be a good help to get double wages. One can't blame her. Nobody can keep the servants they bring with them here, you see. It is too lonely, unless they are brought up to it—no theatres, no picture shows, no young men. You would be surprised how hard it is to keep a girl here!"

"That is why we are all doing our own work," said Albert gloomily. "Mabel does the beds—jolly lumpy they are too, at times," he remarked, with a brother's candour. "Maud teaches herself the piano, and Mildred does the cooking—oh, my!" He doubled up as if suffering from acute indigestion.

"And pray, what do you do—except grumble?" asked Margaret with severity.

"I? Oh, I superintend the others," replied Albert easily, "and—er—dig up the vegetables, harness the pony and drive to Falmouth to do the shopping; occasionally I cut the grass or water the garden—in fact, do all sorts of odd jobs—pump the water—and—er—clean my own boots," he concluded tragically.

"It seems a long time since they were cleaned," observed Peggy, looking at them critically.

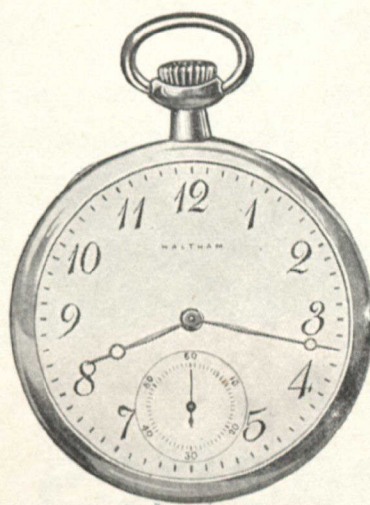
"We lead the simple life here," returned Albert, looking at his soil-laden boots serenely; "the 'back to the land,' 'close to nature' life—you understand! It is very beautiful—in theory," he added earnestly.

"And what is it in practice?" laughed Peggy.

"Chiefly backache," groaned Albert feelingly. "I'm simply worked to death."

(To be continued.)

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