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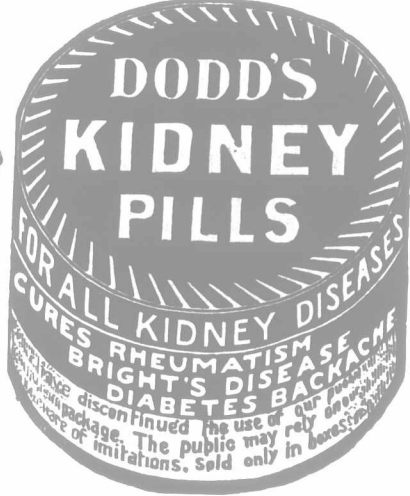
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A London newspaper man who has been staying at Stratford-on-Avon says he asked his landlady one day: "Who is this Shakespeare of whom one hears so much about down here? Was he a very great man?" To which she replied: "Why, sir, 'e worn't thought nothing on a few years ago. It's the Americans as 'as made 'im what 'e is."



MY WIFE'S FUNCTION

Sallie was nibbling the end of her pen, and frowning. That the moment was portentous, I was certain. I had not lived ten years as Sallie's husband without becoming acquainted with that thoughtful frown.

"I don't see how we can get out of it," she finally murmured abstractedly.

"Do you want to get out of it?" I asked, with as much interest as I could assume, considering that I had no more idea than the man in the moon what she was talking about.

Ignoring my question, she continued her monologue, "Everybody else has them."

"Oh!" I exclaimed optimistically, a light breaking in on my bewildered brain, "if it's the measles you mean—we don't necessarily have to have them, just because all the children in the neighborhood and a few adults—"

"What are you talking about?" And Sallie turned upon me such a look of scorn that I fairly quailed beneath it.

"You began it," I stoutly asserted.

"I certainly never mentioned anything so silly as measles," said she. "I don't call them silly. Why, the Archers' little boy was left deaf with them—"

"I can't imagine what that has to do with our dinner we were discussing."

It was now my time to stare: "Our dinner! We were not discussing it; but, since we are on the subject, I would like to say that the roast was villainously cooked, the coffee was muddy, and as for the pudding—"

"Oh, poor, foolish boy! I did not mean to-night's dinner. I referred to the one we are going to give next week. I have a few of the items jotted down now." And she held up the paper over which she had been wrinkling her brow.

Sallie had made up her mind. Knowing what that meant, I was silent. Pursuing her own pleasant thought, she continued: "Just a little informal affair, only it must be very swell. The Appletons, you know, and—"

"The Appletons! That snobbish little woman who has been introduced to you dozens of times, and always accepts each fresh introduction as though it was the first!"

Sallie squirmed. I know it would be more poetic to say she winced. Perhaps ten years ago I would have used the nicer expression. But, if it has done nothing else for me, marriage has taught me honesty. Sallie calls it painful exactness. But, whatever it is, it compels me to reiterate that Sallie squirmed.

"Well, of course," she began, lamely, "she had no cause to remember me—"

"I don't agree with you, my dear, for it was a reproach you dinned in to my ears, that you wore the same dress every time you met her. I should have thought she would have recalled the dress; but I remember that the last time you were abusing that lady, you said caustically that, if you had worn a different dress each time you had met her, her memory would have been better."

"Oh, don't be disagreeable. Anyway, when I called on her—"

"You called on her?" I asked, rebukingly.

"Yes, I did. Everybody else had, and—"

"Did she recall having met you before?" was my stern question.

"No," Sallie reluctantly admitted, but added hopefully, "She said she had heard of me."

I laughed. It was mean; but I laughed, anyway.

And then my imperious Sallie, quite humbled and apologetic, laid down a dozen good and sufficient reasons why she should have this particular lady

snob and her prissy little old husband to dinner.

I couldn't commend one of the reasons, but I summed it up tersely in a few words: "You think she will begin paying her social obligations, and are afraid you will be left out unless you entertain her. That kind of a woman would likely forget to invite you, anyway, so what's the use of going to the expense of entertaining her?"

"You are not only coarse, but peevish as well," my lady informed me.

After we had sparred a little longer, and I knew I was beaten, we settled down into an amicable discussion as to ways and means, and decided to let the rent go over another week, so that we could have that much more to spend on the dinner. I was for having carnations for the table flower for several reasons. But Sallie thought nothing but American Beauties, at \$12 per dozen, were suitable for the Appletons. I tried to make her believe that the odor of American Beauties made me ill, but Sallie settled the matter by saying I probably confused them with sunflowers, and that she didn't believe I had ever seen an American Beauty rose; that certainly we never had any in the house, though Mame Sexton always had them on her wedding anniversary from her husband.

That reminded me of something else, so I said, hastily, "Of course we will invite the Sextons."

"Oh, no," I was informed. "Certainly not! Mame and Luke wouldn't expect it! At least, they ought not to!"

"I don't see why," I protested. "Mame has more sense than that Appleton woman, and she's much prettier. And, as for Luke, why he's twice the fellow that dub of an Appleton is—"

"Physically, perhaps, not socially," my wife blandly informed me.

"Well, he ought to be. He is smarter and more upright in business. I can't understand this sudden popularity of the Appletons, except that he made a lucky speculation which brought him in a few thousands and made a fool of his wife. They have no family to boast of, they are both ill-bred—"

"We won't discuss that," said Sallie. And I saw that she meant it.

Then everything proceeded smoothly for ten minutes, during which time Sallie informed me that my old dress suit would do very well for me, but that she must have a new evening gown. That point conceded, all was lost. In another five minutes the most exclusive caterer in town had been settled upon—not exclusive because he was any more proficient, but because it was "the thing" to have him.

Inside of half an hour everything was arranged, even to the excluding of the Wilsons, our two very best friends, because they wouldn't "fit in." They were not in "that set."

"Are you in that set?" I idly queried.

Sallie had scarlet fever when she was a child, and I sometimes think it affected her hearing. At any rate, there are times when she appears to be deaf. This was one of the times. "I can have Mame and Louise here to spend the day soon," she threw out as a sop.

"That's a good idea," was my response. "Have them the next day, and make hash of what's left from the dinner."

Sallie gave me a withering look; and our conversation came to an abrupt end, only to be revived long enough for Sallie to announce that she would ask the Worthings, as they were so intimate with the Appletons, for the other couple. "For it will be a small affair, just six of us—that will make it more cosy than to have a large number."

"Yes, it will be deuced cosy with those two imbeciles, Appleton and Worthing," I admitted.

And then Sallie left the room. She

(Continued on next page.)

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