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**When the Minister Came to Tea**

By Harriet Paullin Fenton, in "C. E. World"

"We'll have to have the new minister to tea, of course," said Mrs. Sanderson with a frown of finality as she passed the rolls.

The Sandersons had a reprieve over the breakfast table.

"Everybody'll be inviting him," continued Mrs. Sanderson sagely; "so I'm set on having him among the first, before he gets tired going around to other folks' houses."

"You'd better ask him quick, then, ma," spoke up ten-year-old Henry. "I heard Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Simpson invitin' him right after church last Sunday."

"For the land's sake!" Mrs. Sanderson clicked the nickel coffee-pot down on its wooden stand. "I declare some people haven't a mite of sense in their heads!" she exclaimed. "Why, last Sunday was only his first Sunday here! I really thought more of Susan Brown and Maria Simpson than that," she finished in a tone of disapproval.

The forwardness of her two ambitious neighbors still preyed on Mrs. Sanderson's mind as she rode in silence by her husband's side in the old buggy that night. Amos Sanderson was one of the deacons, and never missed a prayer meeting.

In spite of their reputation for punctuality the deacon and his wife were late for the service. They entered the church as quietly as possible just as the young minister in the pulpit started to read the Scriptures. Richard Hilton's addresses were simple, clear and earnest. Mrs. Sanderson felt a fluttering in the cardiac region as she watched him.

"Just as the one for Mary Ellen" she thought to herself. She looked around blushing as guiltily, as if she had given voice to her reflections and Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Simpson had heard. Fifteen minutes later Amos Sanderson helped his wife into the buggy.

"I've asked the minister, and he promised to come Wednesday," she announced triumphantly, as he tucked the carriage robe about her.

"To-morrow" asked Amos.

"No, of course not," responded Mrs. Sanderson quickly, "a week from to-morrow. That'll give me time to 'peel things up a bit, and get ready for him. Besides, Mary Ellen'll be home!"

"She gave a sigh, and clasped her hands in her lap."

Amos turned his horse's head to the road on the right, and checked to old Doll. Away in the distance a sharp whistle rent the air. The carriage rattled over the stony way to the foot of the hill, arriving at a small wooden station, just as the headlights of a train showed around a curve. Amos helped his wife out, and tied the horse to the lithograph post while the train slowed up with a shriek.

One passenger jumped lightly from the steps while one trunk was thrown from the baggage-car. A slight young lady in some kind of a well-fitting dark travelling-suit threw herself joyfully upon the two old people.

"It's Mary Ellen!" cried the older woman, trembling in her pride as she pressed her daughter to her. "And she won't be going away from us any more!"

"Now that you've got your 'deacon,' you won't, will you, Ellen?" said Amos, patting the girl awkwardly on the shoulders.

"You mean my degree, father," laughed Ellen in joyful, musical tones. "No, not for some time, anyway. We're going to have great times together now!"

Ellen was twenty. Her features were not handsome, but her intelligent, merry brown eyes and smiling mouth made her face attractive and interesting. She was rather tall for her build, but she had learned to move about with the careless, natural ease that only four years' training at a typical American college could give her. The constant mingling with girls of her own age, of equal mental gifts, had given her that polish, so indescribable and yet so effective, which is characteristic of college women who have lived dormitory lives. The old people had done a great deal of scripping to give their daughter this opportunity, but, as she sat between them on the wide bugle seat, dainty, refined, radiant, and full of life, every sacrifice seemed to them well repaid. Mary Ellen was different from other girls. The children thought so too.

"So the minister's coming to tea," said Ellen at the breakfast-table the next morning, after the news about town had been told.

"And I've got so much to do before he comes that I don't know what to do," added Mrs. Sanderson. "There's every room in the house to clean, to begin with. Then some of the chairs need new chintz covers. You can get some real pretty stuff at seven cents at the store. Then, ya, you'll have to mend some of the shades, and beat the rugs, and now the grass, and weed the flower-beds. O, yes, before I forget it, I need to get some new curtains for the front room. That's got to be all aired out, Mercy! I almost wish I had asked him two weeks ahead instead of one."

"Way, what's the matter with things as they are, mother?" spoke up Ellen. "I'm sure that everything looks as cheerful and homelike as it can. I wouldn't do a thing if I were you."

"That's what I tell her," put in Amos. "There's no sense in women folks cleaning house so often that they rub the paint off it!"

Mrs. Sanderson arose quickly, a flush on her face. Her wisdom as a housekeeper had been challenged.

"Have the minister come to tea, and see a speck of dust, or a hole or a darn, or a tear or a worn spot in my house—never! Mary Ellen! but you are changed. I can remember the time you nearly cried your eyes out when Elder Pierce first came here, because you had speckled your green gingham dress, and you were afraid he would see it. As for you, Amos, I can't say as I expected much different from you; but, however, if you be, you must make up your mind to wear that new stand-up collar I bought you, your stiff-bosomed shirt, and your meeting suit. If you get scratched, there's plenty of cold-cream in the house. They say the young parson has been a city fellow all his life, an assumed-morning-evening dress day and night both, I guess."

Ellen checked behind her napkin, but Sanderson glanced up mischievously.

"What are you planning to have, ma?" Mrs. Sanderson inquired mildly.

"Sliced ham and chicken, began Mrs. Sanderson; "perhaps a little tongue, too; it looks so well mixed in. Then of course I shall make some rhubarb and blackberry pies, fruit cake, sponge and lemon cake, hot biscuits and muffins. Then there'll be pickles, sliced tomatoes, radishes, lettuce, and currants, not speaking of apples, pears and plums, and strawberry shortcake."

"Hope he'll have enough," commented pa Sanderson.

"Ma, let us sit up!" begged Johnny, and Henry in a chorus.

"Provided you don't ask for a second helping of things," responded their mother, quick to seize this opportunity of laying down the law in preparation for the coming event. "If there's any more for you I'll ask you to have some."

That very morning, preparations for the minister began at the Sanderson home. Mrs. Sanderson first opened up and aired the ottoman, grown rusty from disuse, took down the curtains and started to work with pail and water. Ellen, who had not forgotten the knack of housekeeping to which she had been inured at an early age, accepted an equal portion of the cleaning, although she did not appreciate the necessity of so much preparation just because the person invited happened to be of the cloth of a minister.

"Well, just about get this room cleaned today," remarked Mrs. Sanderson about three o'clock that afternoon, as she leaned against the step-ladder to rest for a moment. "We won't stop to get much for supper."

There's some cold things in the pantry. Amos won't mind a pick-up tea for one."

"Ma," said Johnny from the door-way, where he stood rubbing one bare foot over the other, "I met the minister, and he said he was coming up to tea to-night."

Mrs. Sanderson started so that the cake of soap she held in her hand splashed into the bucket. She crossed the room, and gasped the way by the shoulder.

"What did he say?" she demanded nervously, giving him a little shake.

"He said that he believed he had the pleasure of dining with me to-night, and he said the 'to-night' as plain as could be. Johnny hastened to explain.

"He's made a mistake in the day, and I said as plain as could be a week from Wednesday, and not Wednesday. What shall we do?" exclaimed Mrs. Sanderson. "I haven't a thing in the house! She sank down on the bottom step of the ladder.

"Send word for him not to come," advised Mary Ellen calmly as she kept on wiping the pail.

"That would be dreadful," he mother almost wailed. "We couldn't do that. What would Mrs. Brown and Maria Simpson say? What shall I do?" she reiterated. "He'll be here in an hour, for I asked him at four, and there's not a mite of pie or cake made, nor anything. And I wanted everything to be particularly nice!"

"Don't worry," said Mary Ellen soothingly. "If we've got to have him, let's make the best of it. We can also the cold chicken in the pantry. We've plenty left over and I'll make an egg salad. The strawberries are ripe in the garden, and I'll whip some cream for them. Perhaps we can borrow a cake from one of the neighbors."

Mrs. Sanderson bounded up suddenly with determined lips around her mouth.

"Never," she said grimly. "I'll bake a sponge this minute, Johnny, she called sharply as she hurried down the hall, "go out and pick some strawberries; and you, Henry, go out to the orchard, and polish up the best dish of fruit you can find there; then both you come and get into your best clothes mighty quick!"

For the next few minutes she fairly flew around the sitting room, for using the parlor was out of the question now. The chairs were put into their proper places, a tidy was carefully thrown over a thin spot on the arm of the big rocker, and a pile of sofa-pillows completely hid the darn on the couch-cover. The setting of the dining-room table was a more complicated matter. There was some consultation for her disappointment in the knowledge that neither Sue Brown nor Maria Simpson could boast of so fine china and silver as she possessed. As the clock struck the half-hour, she rushed to the kitchen where Mary Ellen was hastily preparing dishes for the table.

"We'll have to go up and get dressed now," she began excitedly. "He'll be here any minute now—with the house as dirty as it is. I should die of mortification if he should get a glimpse of this door from the dining-room!"

"I'll wash it, mother," announced Mary Ellen. "Run along and make yourself sweet."

"You!" exclaimed her mother, starting. "You'll have hardly time to dress yourself as it is!"

"I'll wash it," she laughed. "You know father was to go for my trunk to-night. This waist I wore home yesterday is soiled, and there's nothing up in my closet but my o'g gymnasium blouse; and you won't let me have my dress!"

"No!" Mrs. Sanderson dropped into the nearest chair, and put her hands over her face. "But I wanted you to meet him," she said faintly, making no effort to conceal her disappointment.

"Oh, I'll see him again," Ellen assured her cheerfully. "Now, hurry, mother. Everything's about ready, and the children are cleaned up."

Mrs. Sanderson allowed herself to be led to the foot of the back stairs, where she stood leaning against the door-jamb disconsolately.

"Lacy Dean is about your size," she began. "Can't you borrow a waist from her?" she added hesitatingly.

"Mother!"

After she had handled her parent upstairs Ellen returned to the kitchen, where she rolled up her sleeves, and checked herself in an old blue checkered apron. Next she brought from the laundry closet a pail, scrubbing-brush, cloth and soap. A minute later she was down on her knees, vigorously applying soap-suds to the brown oilcloth about her.

"What a fuss all for a minister!" she thought to herself contemptuously. "I wish people around this town would hurry up and find out that because a man belongs to the clergy it does not follow that he is an archangel." She laughed gaily. Just then her soliloquy was interrupted by a rap at the door.

"Come in," called out the young lady cheerfully. When neighbors ran in on one another in the little village, knocking was hardly considered necessary.

Mary Ellen did not bother to change her position as she knelt, back to the door. The screen door opened and shut hesitatingly; and Ellen, looking under her right arm to survey the newcomer, saw something that made the pink flush her cheeks. It was nothing more or less than a pair of well-polished black shoes protruding from two immaculately creased gray trouser-legs. She waited for the stranger to speak.

"Er—er," came a faint burr from the door.

"Well, what is it?" snapped Ellen. She gave the cloth an impatient slap. It struck the wet cake of soap, which promptly took a slide in the very direction it shouldn't have. The next minute she saw a hand grasp it gingerly. Then three bold strides were taken toward her.

"Miss Mary Ellen Sanderson, allow me to make you a present of—"

Mary Ellen was on her feet in a minute.

"Richard Hilton low in the world did you get here?" Her embarrassment of a few minutes previous disappeared as she gazed at the good-natured, freckled face before her. She calmly wiped her wet hands on her apron, while the Rev. Richard Hilton, dropping the grocery cake, dabbed his dry on a silk pocket-handkerchief.

"One of the archangels you were speaking of," he answered mischievously; "so perhaps I swooped down here rather suddenly." Then he laughed at the amazement depicted on her face.

"You don't mean to say you are a minister—the new minister here?"

"Minister I am called," he answered a little gravely as he thought of his responsibilities. "You see I decided last fall on this profession, and they let me preach in a place like this after the first year in the theological school. But let me help you while I tell you about it. Let's renew the old camp rule. All pitch in and help."

"There's a mop over in that closet," laughed Ellen, pointing to an old-fashioned cubby-hole.

When Mrs. Sanderson, still, except in her best no-hair, opened the kitchen door to see that everything for supper was ready, she came upon a scene which nearly took her breath away. Mary Ellen with rumpled hair, water-soaked apron, and rolled up sleeves was calmly scrubbing one corner of the kitchen floor. That was no more than she expected. But when in the opposite corner, with his coat off and his trousers turned up, the Rev. Richard Hilton was applying the sopping mop with vigor.

"It required a great deal of explanation to make things clear in Mrs. Sanderson's mind.

That the minister had come to the door by mistake, that was plain enough, but not until she had apologized shamefacedly for the appearance of Mary Ellen who evidently was not at all concerned about it, did she understand that the conventionality of dress was not a sensible point with ex-campers and that a man could be just as much a minister without a frock coat and a grave as with those accessories.

It was a merry party that gathered around the Sanderson table that night, but Sanderson who had occupied the tortures of a high collar and the uncomfortable of a Sunday suit, beamed upon the young elegy man. The boys, though they thought longingly of the promised strawberry shortcake, reflected that there had not been time to cram them full of table manners; so they pronounced him "bully" on the spot. As for Mrs. Sanderson, she felt that the last quiver of disappointment had vanished when the minister remarked, as he took his third helping of sponge-cake, that he had never felt more at home in all his life. Then it was that she noticed with pride how young and girlish Ellen looked in the hastily-donned gymnasium blouse.

After the minister had gone, much later than Elder Percy's hour for departure, and Mary Ellen was putting the boys to bed, Mrs. Sanderson joined her husband on the old-fashioned porch.

"Well," she began suggestively, as she took her place in the low rocker by his side.

Amos thumped the front legs of his chair down.

"That young preacher's alright. He's the very man we need, and he's got backbone enough to make that church move," he said mixedly.

There was a silence, while each seemed to read the others' thoughts. Suddenly Mrs. Sanderson leaned over and placed her hand on her husband's shoulder. She looked around nervously before she spoke in an anxious whisper.

"Amos, do you think Mary Ellen has a show?" she asked hesitatingly.

Her husband looked quickly at her, and laughed.

"Show?" he exclaimed amusedly. "It seems to me that she's the bull show."

**CRIPPLED BY RHEUMATISM**

**Gentleman in Vancouver Owes His Recovery TO "FRUIT-A-TIVES"**

Vancouver, B. C., Feb. 1st, 1910.

"I am well acquainted with a man, known to thousands in Vancouver, Victoria and New Westminster, who for nearly a year was practically a cripple from rheumatism. He was so troubled with the disease that he found it difficult to even turn over in bed. His heart appeared so weak that he could hardly get upstairs. Last June he received a sample of 'Fruit-a-tives.' He used them and dates his recovery from that time. To-day there is no other man in Vancouver enjoying better health. He was building a house this fall and shingled a good part of the roof in a driving rain storm without suffering any bad effects."

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50c a box, 6 for \$2.50; trial size, 25c. At dealers or sent on receipt of price by Fruit-a-tives Limited, Ottawa.

**WOMAN'S HIGH POST.**

Washington, D. C., March 27—Secretary Macveagh approved an order which will place a woman in direction of the mint and assay offices in the United States for short intervals at various times during the year.

The woman is Miss Margaret V. Kelly, of the Mint Bureau, one of the three highest paid women in the government service. George E. Roberts, director of the mint, is obliged to be absent from the Treasury much of his time, and R. E. Preston, the mint examiner, is also away much. In such cases Miss Kelly will be acting director of the mint with full powers.

Charles Kershaw, a shoe hand, committed suicide at Leicester, Eng., by taking poison. At the inquest it was learned that he had his name on the waiting lists of sixty factories and that he had been trying desperately to get work for six months.

**Shiloh's Cure**

quickly stops coughs, cures colds, heals the throat and lungs. 25 cents.

The Canadian Farm, an agricultural paper published in Toronto, in seeking a reciprocity census by card finds that its readers are two to one in favor of reciprocity.

**JUMP IN WESTERN CANADA LAND VALUES**

The Hudson Bay Company Has Almost Doubled the Price.

Winnipeg, March 31—Western Canadian lands are rapidly increasing in value, and it is quite evident that there will soon be no more \$15 an acre land in the West. Whether it is through reciprocity talk, railroad construction, or the national law of supply and demand, reasonably priced land as measured by former standards is certainly vanishing at a wonderful rate. It was learned today that the Hudson Bay Company have put into effect a remarkable increase in price of their lands, ranging from \$5 to \$10 per acre additional. Lands along located lines which three weeks ago were generally quoted at \$14 and \$15 per acre cannot now be purchased from that company at less than \$20 and \$25 per acre.

This will no doubt be a signal for a general increase on part of all companies in the price of their lands in the West. Notwithstanding the increased prices buying is extremely active, and sales are daily reported at from \$20 to \$30 per acre. There is every indication that in the matter of farm land values the West has entered on a new era, and that 1911 will usher in the establishment of a considerably higher standard of prices.

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