

started to her feet and drew something from the bodice of her gown.

"Here," she said, pressing it on the woman, "this will pay your fare to the city. I'd saved it up for mine, but I ain't going now. Yes, you must take it. What you've told me has been more than the money's worth to me, and I feel I owe it to you, so say no more about it."

The woman's further protests were lost in the shrill sound of escaping steam as the engine came to a snorting standstill just beyond the little platform. With a quick movement the actress seized the girl in her arms and kissed her, and then stepped aboard the train.

The girl remained standing there, thoughtful, so long after it had gone that the chipmunk had begun to trot fearlessly back and forth over the ties again. Then, as she picked up the old valise and began to walk back towards the village that was hidden by the hills, the little fellow made a sudden dart and scurried to the top of the tallest tree.

The girl caught a fleeting glimpse of him and smiled, and then looked about at the leaves, flecked with sunshine, and backed by the everlasting hills, as though she saw them now with new eyes. And unconsciously she quickened her steps homeward.

Matthew White, Jr.

A BIT OF WEDDING CAKE.

"But what shall I do with it?" he asked helplessly.

She looked up at him and laughed as he stood dangling a square white box by its satin ribbon.

"There's a certain inanity in treasuring another fellow's wedding cake. Won't you take it—as a gift?"

"Thanks, no," she answered. "I have a sufficiency; besides, the charm is broken if you give it away."

"Charm?" he echoed. "What charm has an infinitesimal piece of cake that would not stay the appetite of a mosquito? Silly custom this, anyhow, of——"

"Do you mean to say," she interrupted solemnly, "that you have attained unto years of discretion, and have never tried the charm that lies in a bit of bride's cake?"

"Never!" he averred.

She looked so bewitching in her bridesmaid array that he would have sworn to any fact or fallacy whatsoever, could he thereby prolong this tête-à-tête. In seeking a spot where perchance that ubiquitous best man might be eluded, he had found this curtained corner of the porch.

"Then you must try it before you are a night older," she said, with a pretty air of

authority. "Cut a card into seven slips and give me a pencil, and I'll do the rest."

He obeyed with unwonted docility.

"This is merely a short and sure way to find out whom you are to marry," she resumed.

"I know whom I want to marry. I don't need a piece of cake and seven slips of paper to tell me that."

"Whom one wants to marry and whom one marries are not always the same individual!" she replied sententiously.

"Oh!" was his only audible remark.

"Now," she went on, "I shall write a name on each of these six pieces and leave one a blank—for bachelorhood, you know."

"Um!" he assented.

"Then you will place them under your pillow, with the wedding cake, and draw out one each morning; the last one——" with a pause of emphasis.

"I understand," he broke in. "The last shall be first. But I can't think of six names; one is so indelibly written on my heart that——"

"Oh, I can arrange that!" she interrupted blithely. "You know they must be written by some one else, any way—some disinterested person."

"Oh!"—very humbly.

But as he watched her brows wrinkle in arch perplexity, he concluded that it was not such a bad thing after all, this idea of tying up wedding cake in boxes, and he became convinced that weddings, on the whole, were not such a bore when he saw the ubiquitous best man peer into the half light of the veranda and retiré precipitately.

"There's one thing I forgot," she was saying: "each slip must be destroyed as it is drawn out, and only the last one read."

"Humph! Strict requirements, these! It would give a fellow some satisfaction perhaps to know whom he had escaped."

"Oh, but the charm won't work unless you do! Promise, now"—imperatively.

And he promised. Then—

"Oh, I say," he cried, interrupting the writing again. "You'll put your own name down, won't you?"

"Shall I?" she queried doubtfully.

"Well, rather!" And though the light was dim she saw something in his eyes that made her add hastily:

"Oh, very well, since it is by request."

* * * * *

On the eighth day thereafter she received the following telegram:

Your name seventh. Has charm worked?

And it was not till their honeymoon was at the zenith that she told him—confidentially—that each bit of cardboard had borne the same name, and there had been no blank.

Isabelle Jackson.

THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

A PERSONAL CHAT WITH OUR READERS BY MR. MUNSEY

NOTICE.—We have just bought "Godey's Magazine" and have merged it with THE PURITAN. We bought none of its debts—none of its obligations of any sort whatsoever. We shall, however, carry out its subscriptions with THE PURITAN. We do this as a matter of courtesy, and not because we are under any obligations to do so. "Godey's Magazine" was recently forced into bankruptcy, and we bought it in at sheriff's sale. We purposely make this very plain so that the facts may be understood by all to whom the publishers of "Godey's" were indebted.

ANOTHER NEW VOLUME.

WITH this issue MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE begins a new volume, and it is the volume with which our magazine year commences. The year that closed with the September number has been the most successful in the history of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE, and this, too, notwithstanding the disturbing influences of the war. It has had a steadier, firmer, stronger circulation than ever before. It has pushed out into new fields and has held fast to that which it had.

In the beginning of the summer, when the newspapers were running riot on extras and everybody hung breathless on the news of the minute, it was a pretty serious problem to know how to edit a magazine, especially a magazine like MUNSEY'S, with a circulation so big that copy had to be prepared nearly two months in advance of the date of issue. To hold to old lines and avoid war matter meant, as I saw it, a loss of perhaps a quarter of a million in circulation. On the other hand, to go into the war field and attempt to compete with the weeklies and dailies with their every minute extras was a staggering proposition. It was either war or no war; we chose war, and made war the feature of the magazine. Instead of the great big loss that threatened us, the summer has given us an average net circulation of easily fifty thousand over corresponding months of a year ago.

But MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE was not merely stronger in circulation, but in its advertising department as well. That the volume of advertising was curtailed by the war there can be no doubt whatever. Publications, generally, suffered very much. We suffered a good deal less, relatively, than the smaller periodicals. Notwithstanding the general stagnation in the advertising field during the war months, the year will make a much better average than any preceding twelve-month. Age strengthens a magazine alike in circulation and advertising. When a

magazine has been in a family four or five years it has become a part of the family life, and as such is more thoroughly read from cover to cover, both reading matter and advertising.

There has been no year in the life of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE that in general excellence, both in letterpress and illustrations, in quality and quantity, it has not surpassed the preceding year. The year inaugurated with the present issue will be no exception. Every reader of THE MUNSEY may expect a better magazine this year than he received last, and he will not be disappointed. Our theory has always been to give a bigger value for a given sum of money than the same money can buy anywhere else in the world. This theory will be very much in force during the coming year; we are prepared to enforce it as at no time in the past. Our mechanical equipment is the largest and the finest in the world. It positively defies competition on even ground. No publisher with antiquated machinery could today make a ten cent magazine as good and as big as MUNSEY'S, 160 reading pages, and circulate it through the wholesale trade and live. We not only manufacture closer, having the machinery that makes it possible, but we sell our magazine direct to the retailer. We are our own news company and pay tribute to no one.

"THE PURITAN" CHANGED TO MAGAZINE FORM.

WE have just changed THE PURITAN from quarto to magazine size. THE PURITAN is a year and three quarters old. A change of some sort was due. We like changes and always make them whenever we can see a chance to improve a thing. The following is from THE PURITAN itself. It states our reasons for the change:

Our policy has always been to give more for a dollar than a dollar can buy elsewhere—a bigger, better magazine. It is this policy that has given MUNSEY'S