

THE CORNER-CUPBOARD MAN

By Sydney Preston

ILLUSTRATIONS BY EDWIN B. CHILD

IT was part of Geoffrey Alison's pleasure-loving inconsequence to be content with the material comforts he enjoyed from day to day, and, somehow, his mind had never grasped the possibility that the time might come when he would be compelled to take thought for the morrow. But as he stood on the road opposite The Jephson House and gazed after the stage that carried the last remnant of summer people from Quinn's Landing, he realized with a rush of impotent indignation that he was stranded. His frown deepened as he saw the vehicle reach the bend of the road, then he caught his breath sharply as a tiny handkerchief fluttered for an instant before it vanished around the curve.

It was Kitty Burger's, he knew, in spite of her casual, indifferent good-by; but whether it meant the pity she might fling to a strayed dog, or a token of encouragement, he could not guess. It was two weeks since she had refused him, and though in that time, by no word or look, had she shown that he was regarded as anything more than a passing acquaintance, was it not possible—just barely possible, of course—that her indifference, like his, had been assumed, and that at the end her real self had got the upper hand?

Alison's eyes suddenly smarted; with an abrupt movement he pulled his straw hat forward so that the brim shadowed his face, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and strode, with bent head, along the road; while the landlord and his wife, lingering at their gate, followed his dejected figure

with speculative interest as he diverged into the leaf-strewn path that led to the lake among the trees.

"Looks kinder lonesome and down on his luck," remarked the man, as they turned toward the house; "but perhaps it'll cheer him up a bit to lie down there on the beach and listen to the little waves

come wish-wash among the gravel." He sighed sympathetically and stroked the straggling reddish side-whiskers that failed to hide the good-natured placidity of his countenance.

The woman had kept pace in short steps to his ambling gait, her round, plump figure briskly energetic in every movement, and a preoccupied expression accounting for her unusual silence. "Look here, Jephson!" she burst forth



Mr. Snowberry.

suddenly, with an effect of smouldering irritation, "I've no patience with such talk. It seems to me that a grown-up man ought to have something else to do than to lie round listenin' to waves at this time of the year, when other folks is up to their necks in work. That's the way with all of you men: the minute anything goes wrong, down you flop in the comfortablest place you can find to think about it. Suppose Mr. Alison is down on his luck; what's the use of him sprawlin' round here when he might be doin' something useful to mend things? Here it is the first of October, and after some of the boarders hangin' on for nearly a month later than last year, I'm to have him layin' round in hammocks and stretchin' and yawnin' and lookin' lonesome,

while other folks is scrabblin' and scratchin' to get the fall housecleanin' done before winter."

They had reached the veranda, and Jephson, with a fleeting regretful glance at the empty hammocks and chairs that swayed in the wind, sat down gingerly on the edge of the floor and heaved a prodigious sigh.

"For my part, Maria," he replied, shifting himself back a little as he saw her mechanically follow his example, "it seems to me that it'd be no more natural for some men that didn't need to work to go huntin' for it, than it'd be for rabbits to go huntin' for little boys with guns. There's enough poor critters scrabblin' for a livin', without a young man like Mr. Alison tryin' to take their jobs from them. If Providence had meant him to grub along like me, would his daddy have been let grow rich in the leather business?"

Mrs. Jephson eyed him keenly. "You didn't make that up out of your own head," she accused him; "you got it second-handed—didn't you now?"

Jephson chuckled, shifted himself toward the support of the post, and put his feet on the veranda steps; his wife's interest being aroused, he could count on a comfortable chat, instead of being hurried off to work.

"Well," he admitted, "I did hear Mr. Alison get off something like that one day last week, when I rowed him up the lake to the black bass fishin' ground. We had quite a chat that day, and he told me a few odds and ends that sort of relieved his mind. 'The fact is, Jephson,' he says to me, 'the old man hasn't used me right. I don't mind tellin' you,' says he, 'that if he spent a hundred dollars a day for the rest of his life, he'd have plenty over for a fine funeral; but he's that close he gredges me the allowance that's mine by right, bein' an only son. Actually, Jephson, he wants to make me go into the leather warehouse and learn the business, on a wage that'd scarcely pay for my neckties, instead of enjoyin' the income and privileges of a gentleman.'"

"And why should he get money that he's too lazy to earn—I'd like you to tell me that?" his wife broke in.

"And why, as he put it to me," retorted Jephson, "should he fill up the place that

many a poor devil would jump at to keep body and soul together and keep his family from want?"

"Tut!" ejaculated Mrs. Jephson, slightly staggered.

"It'd be different," went on Jephson triumphantly, "if he was like some. As he says to me, 'Jephson,' says he, raisin' his hand up solemn, 'if I wasted his substance on husks and swine, I wouldn't say a word; but considerin' I never harmed man nor woman in my life, I ain't tret right. All I asked,' says he, 'was two or three thousand a year to spend in the innocent diversions of a blameless life; and when I was refused my pride was touched, and I packed up my summer duds and——'"

"But he wasn't too proud to live all summer on the fat of the land with them millionaire Mingleys," she interjected. "It was all the same whose money paid for things, as long as there was French cooks and horses and yachts."

"Them Mingleys didn't use him right, neither," urged Jephson, on the defensive.

"Well," she commented judicially, "they had a right to go off of a sudden if they wanted to; and they wasn't bound to give him notice or take him with them. All the same, as far as I've heard, he was that good natured and obligin' and handy about doin' things, that perhaps he gave as much as he got, and I don't see no reason for all them people givin' him the go-by as if they was afraid of bein' sponged on."

Jephson's voice trembled with indignation: "And all the time, while there was picnics and boatin' and drivin' parties to get up, and tennis courts to lay out, and play-actin' goin' on, it was Mr. Alison this and Mr. Alison that, jest as sweet as pie the whole blame time!"

"He took his room here last Thursday, the day the Mingleys closed up, and didn't that pryin' little Mrs. Drinkwater that sings hymns all Sunday, make an excuse to come into my kitchen when dinner was on, to whisper confidential that I ought to get the money in advance. 'Mrs. Drinkwater,' says I, 'I've no doubt it's for my good, as you say, but I couldn't bring myself to do it.' 'Why not?' says she. 'Well,' says I, 'self-respect is the first law of my nature, and I ain't got none to spare; in the second place,' says I, 'I don't want to be took in, and I've noticed that in this

world it's the suspicious folks that gets left; in the third place,' says I—and mebbe I wouldn't have said it but for bein' het up with brownin' gravy—'Jephson'll tell you that I'd sooner board ninety-nine sinners that'd keep out of my kitchen than one saint that didn't.'"

"It wasn't me that got it that time," grinned Jephson.

"I won't say I wasn't a bit hasty; but I can't stand havin' even a man round when dinner's bein' dished, and I do hate to have my peace of mind disturbed premature. Mr. Alison may turn out poor pay, but I don't want to know any sooner than I have to, no more than I'd want to be told that a burglar was goin' to break into the house. Besides, I don't deny that, in spite of not doin' the things people thinks he ought to do—well, I'm sorry for the young man; and I couldn't be sorry for anything that happened to young Mr. Snowberry, for instance, that used to set up prim and proper on the veranda, gossipin' with the old maids and married women when the others was playin' tennis. I declare, there's many a time when I've seen him settin' there with that long upper lip pulled down tight and the lower one bulgin', that I've tried to think up some way of lettin' a flat-iron drop plumb on his big toe. But if I had the chance, I wouldn't do it, I know—I couldn't be that intimate with him!"

"It beats all how a woman don't like a man to be too perfect," laughed Jephson. "Seems almost as if she couldn't get along without havin' a hand in the trainin' of him. Now it's different with a man; the perfecter a woman is——"

"Mathew Jephson," cried his wife, rising with a sudden access of energy, "I don't mind settin' down to have a chat once in a while, so long as you talk sensible; but once you begin moralizin', I'd sooner get at something useful than set still and listen. Now, instead of studyin' over the difference between men and women, which you can't better, you might set a while longer by yourself and wonder if them potatoes will be dug before frost."

Alison, after a prolonged meditation by the lake, rose at last with an air of desperate resolution, pausing a moment as he turned toward the path for a final sweeping glance at the shimmering water, from the

cluster of shuttered cottages and locked boat-houses near at hand, to the dominating towers and turrets of the Mingley's, at the far end of the lake. With moody intentness he pictured the slowly changing landscape as the days grew shorter and the nights long and frosty, the green of the grass turning to a faded brown, and the trees showing gaunt and naked against gray skies, the rippling water hardening to crystal and whirling clouds of snow turning the scene into a wintry waste that would make one resigned to even the dull cheer of the baseburner in the bare living-room of The Jephson House. It was this prospect he faced when he strode along the road and found the landlord in the potato field.

"Jephson," he announced abruptly, "I'm strapped."

Jephson glanced up, plunged his fork into the ground as a prop and leaned on it as he thoughtfully surveyed the speaker, then grinned amiably. "You don't look it," he commented.

"Fact," Alison insisted; "I haven't a dollar to my name."

Jephson's mouth puckered with concern, then he chuckled. "Sounds bad," said he, "but I can go you one worse. I'm in for makin' a kitchen cupboard for the missis."

Alison laughed. "So you call that worse?" he asked.

"Well, I should say so," returned Jephson fervidly, "for it's out of my line. But women, I've noticed, look on places to stow things, as they look on hats and bonnets; they've got to have 'em, and the more they get the more they want—and by Ginger! they know what to do with 'em, too, every time!—like they know the front of a new hat from the back. And the things a man jest naturally leaves layin' round where they'll be handy to find, women jam into cupboards."

"All the same," Alison argued, "you're going to be fed and made comfortable while you're making it—but that doesn't help me. I'm clean strapped, I tell you, and the governor declines to shell out. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

"I ain't goin' to do nothin', for it ain't none of my business."

"But it is. You see, I'm going to stay on here and make a break to find out if it's such a fine thing for a man to work for his bread and butter as some people say."

Jephson's incredulous gaze travelled over the young man's athletic figure, from tennis shoes to boating hat. "Cricky!" he ejaculated.

"Yes," continued Alison, "I've got to do something, and it has just struck me you might be willing to let me work out my board. Don't you want me to dig those potatoes, for example?"

"Jeerusalem, no!" Jephson shook his head vigorously. "No, no, Mr. Alison—you jest lay round and take things easy for awhile: time enough to lend a hand when something extra turns up, for handlin' potatoes ain't no job for the likes of you. To tell the honest truth, it'd give me the creeps to see you workin' with roots or things that don't come natural to you. If it was forkin' hay, I'd say pile in, and be thankful; but potato diggin'—no sir-ee! But if you like to lay round, as I said, when any extra job turns up that needs brains, I'll ask you to lend a hand. It's the extra jobs that knock a man out, like that there cupboard. Cricky, Tommy! what's chasin' you?"

A small boy, panting and agitated, was running toward them. "Dad's kicked!" he shrieked—"the gray mare done it—fetched him on the leg. He's swearin' to beat—the band!" he added breathlessly.

"Then it ain't broke?"

"No, it ain't; but he had to stand on t'other one to lam the gray mare—says you got to get someone to drive the stage."

"There—I knowed it!" complained Jephson; "them careless fellows like Jerry Wedge is bound to make trouble for other people. Now, who in thunder can I get to drive the afternoon stage, with the mail-bag due at Longbury for the 5.30 train?"

Through Alison's brain flashed a vision of his father, the opulent leather merchant, learning that his son had become a country stage-driver in the effort to earn an honest livelihood. "Hitch up, and I'll do it," he volunteered.

Jephson stared, then laughed. "Guess you don't want to drive through Longbury in them duds?" he said.

"They're all I've got," returned Alison; "and if I don't mind, other people needn't worry."

Thus it happened that the Quinn's Landing stage, a rather dilapidated vehicle, drawn by a team of horses that had jogged

their daily course over the same route until life became void of hope or fear, jiggeted noisily down the business street of Longbury in charge of a young man who would have attracted less attention on the box-seat of a coach. But Alison sat on the driver's perch with an air of jaunty unconcern, like the skipper of a trim yacht who unexpectedly finds himself steering an unwieldy barge, apparently oblivious to the curious glances that followed his progress. October was rather late for tennis flannels and straw hats, he admitted, and a warm suit would not be out of place in such cool weather; but what did mere outward apparel matter to a man deserted by his friends and driven to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow? People might stare if they chose: potato-digging was out of his line, but stage-driving wasn't.

As he drew up at the shop where his two women passengers wanted to get off, a small crowd gathered and looked on with amused interest as he helped them to alight, an animated buzz of comment following when he lifted his hat and climbed to the seat once more. In spite of his resolution, Alison's equanimity was ruffled; he drove to the station in a hostile frame of mind, mentally anathematizing the people who stared at him. "Confounded idiots!" he ejaculated, as he flung the mail-bag on the platform and jumped after it. He came down with a resounding thump, conscious before he raised his eyes that someone half screened behind a pile of trunks suddenly stood up with a startled exclamation.

"I beg your—" he began, then stared in mute bewilderment; for the face was Kitty Burger's, and in her wondering eyes he read a look of frank pleasure that made the blood rush to his face.

"Miss—Burger," he stammered, with a lump in his throat: not until that moment had he quite realized his loneliness.

Kitty laughed, a happy, half-hysterical laugh. "Oh, I'm so glad to see you!" she cried. "It seems like a month since this morning, for I've been here alone for hours."

"Why, I thought you were going on the morning train?"

"I meant to," she replied, with a smile, "but Wedge had to stop twice to tie up the harness, and when we got to Longbury Aunt Emily was in a panic about missing

the train; then, just as those old horses were making up time on Main Street, my hat blew off and was crushed under a passing wagon. Well, I couldn't go hatless, and Aunt Emily was fussing so, that I made them drive on to the station while I went to a milliner's on the chance of getting through in time; and of course I was too late. But how—where did you drop from?" She looked around in puzzled inquiry.

Alison's joy turned to embarrassment. It was one thing to drive a stage among strangers whose opinion you ignored; it was another to be discovered in a menial occupation by Kitty Burger.

"The fact is," he began, averting his eyes, "I—I came in *that* thing!" He made a gesture of repulsion toward the dilapidated vehicle and blinking horses.

"Then you're going on this train, too?" she asked cheerfully.

Alison straightened himself; the flush of mortification was in his face, but he looked at her squarely. "No," he returned, "I'm driving the stage. Wedge got kicked by the gray, so I'm taking his place."

"Why, Mr. Alison, how good of you!" her eyes sparkled with interest and approval.

Alison hesitated. "You don't understand," he explained. "I'm not doing it for Wedge, but for myself: a dollar and a half a day, and incidentals. But I never dreamed of meeting anyone who—who would care what I did."

"Oh, Mr. Alison, do you really mean you've begun to work for your living?"

There was an incredulous note in her tone that cut Alison to the quick. "There's no use denying it," he admitted desperately. "The governor has gone back on me—offered me a beggarly five dollars a week. I'm clean strapped, so I jumped at the first thing that turned up, after declining his offer. Besides, I thought if he heard that I——"

"I'm so glad!" she interrupted, with a long breath of satisfaction.

"You're *glad*!" echoed Alison—"glad that I'm strapped—that I've come down to stage-driving to earn my bread and butter?"

A dubious look clouded her face. "I couldn't regret anything that—that spurred you to work," she said earnestly. "Isn't even stage-driving better than idleness?"

Alison stood gazing at her in stupefied amazement.

"Isn't it a privilege to earn one's living, instead of something to be ashamed of?" she demanded, with heightened color, and something like scorn flashing in her eyes.

Still Alison gazed in dumb admiration; then he drew a long breath, passed one hand across his eyes as if dazzled, and sat down beside her.

"I never thought of such a thing," he said helplessly, after a pause. "You—you think so?" he asked.

"Oh, I know it!" she cried. "That's why I couldn't bear to see you frittering away your life, when you might be doing something to justify your existence. I didn't mean to tell you"—her voice became a little tremulous—"but there—I have!"

Alison's heart leaped with the unconscious wistfulness in her glowing eyes; his face lit up with the reverent exaltation of the neophyte to whom hidden mysteries are revealed; at that instant he realized that somewhere beyond lay a higher plane that he must reach.

"I understand!" he exclaimed. "Why it's—it's like a revelation—the dignity of labor and all that sort of thing. I never knew the meaning of it before, but now—why, it's as clear as day!" And he looked with such fervid adoration into the eyes that had taught him to see, that Kitty became suddenly intent upon tracing a random pattern on the platform with her parasol. "I've been a dolt!" he ejaculated, "but now I feel as if I could move a mountain in a wheelbarrow, just for the pure joy of doing it."

Kitty broke into a happy, light-hearted laugh. "Don't you think you'd better begin with something more practical?" she asked, with a glance at his light apparel. "The weather is beginning to get chilly," she added, drawing her cape closer with a little shiver.

Alison smiled ruefully. "I've been holding off with the expectation that the governor would come to terms, and it wasn't till this morning I accepted the fact that I would have to wear these duds until I earn some money. But when I made up my mind I would go to work and dig ditches or break stones, I suddenly realized that even these humble occupations must be

permanently filled by elderly persons with grizzled chins, clay pipes, and one or more green patches about the eyes."

"But you'll find something!" insisted Kitty. "I know you will. And you must take the first thing you can find, instead of waiting for something better—that's the way to get on!"

"I'll do anything!" asserted Alison, inspired with ardent confidence, his eyes kindling with enthusiasm. "Tell me," he burst forth impetuously, "was it because I was that—that other sort of creature you wouldn't—give me any hope?"

Kitty's cheeks burned crimson, her eyes sought the distant horizon down miles of straight track. "I hope I don't seem the sort of girl who could care—much—for an idler," she said softly.

"But now," he urged, his face radiant with hope,—"now that I'm changed, and all that's in the past—don't you think—couldn't you—"

Kitty raised her clear eyes to his, eyes that shone with earnestness yet quivered with laughter. "I think," she said, "that next summer would be a better time to— to think of such things. Don't you see that it's only a few minutes since you— began to change?"

"It seems like years," cried Alison, crestfallen. Then hope returned: "I'll wait," he went on buoyantly, "till your faith is justified."

The distant rumble of the train crossing a bridge reached them. Kitty remained silent, a soft ebb and flow of color in her cheeks.

Alison sighed. "This morning," he said, "I felt like a desert island, until I saw the flutter of your handkerchief."

"I couldn't help it," she said; "you looked so forlorn." The train thundered nearer. She gave him her hand. "Till next summer," she said, her eyes shining,—"good-by."

II

"WELL, I do declare!—don't that jest beat the Dutch!—and do you mean to say, Mrs. Jephson, that the young feller in the white flannels made that out of his own head?"

Mrs. Wedge, who had run over just for a minute to say that her husband would be ready to drive the stage the next day, sank

into a chair and clasped her hands in ecstasy.

"Certainly I do, Mrs. Wedge; and he put it together jest in no time, you may say." The speaker visibly swelled with pride as she noted her neighbor's admiring survey.

"Well, I wouldn't never have thought he could make as much as a pig trough, supposin' he tried. Of course, he drove the stage for a few days; but there ain't no real work about that. How ever did you get him at it?"

"Now to tell the honest truth, Mrs. Wedge, I didn't!" Mrs. Jephson drew a chair close to her visitor, and beamed in pleased anticipation of the effect of her disclosure. "The fact is," she went on, "he got at it himself, and he was that keen for the job that he made me think of a thrashin'-mill engine with a full head of steam. It was the day after the gray mare kicked Jerry, that he walks down to breakfast when we was settin' at the table at seven o'clock, instead of comin' down at ten or eleven as usual. 'For the land's sake, Mr. Alison,' says I, 'are you sick?' 'No, Mrs. Jephson,' he says, 'I ain't. In fact, I'm feelin' particlerly well,' says he. And really, Mrs. Wedge, he was that full of sperrits I begun to think there was something wrong; but after breakfast it wasn't five minutes till Jephson come in from the woodshed slappin' his leg and laughin'. 'Maria,' says he, 'I ain't goin' to make your cupboard. Don't look so fierce,' he says, 'for it's took off my hands. Mr. Alison 'll bust if I don't let him do it.' Well, I was that took aback I didn't make no objection, and I knew he couldn't be a poorer hand than Jephson, who'd be more likely to bust doin' a job than not doin' it. So presently along comes Mr. Alison, and first thing he asks me, jokin' like, if I know there's two sides of a cupboard in that there corner. 'Where?' says I. 'Well,' he says, 'if you say the word, I'll put three-sided shelves in there from the floor to the ceilin', and then all that's to be done is to put doors on the front, and you have a corner cupboard. The fact is,' says he, 'it don't take much lumber, and there's none too much on hand, and I know jest how to do it, for I made a locker in the Mingley's boat-house like that.'"

"That was real cute of him now," put

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in Mrs. Wedge. "And I guess you didn't raise no objection!"

"Of course," Mrs. Jephson went on, restraining the too obvious exultation that crept into her tone, "of course it was a corner cupboard I wanted all the time, but I knew Jephson never could put together anything but a plain square one, and them Longbury carpenters charge ten prices for doin' things the way you don't want 'em done. Look inside, Mrs. Wedge."

"I declare to goodness"—Mrs. Wedge's voice came forth in muffled tones from the inner recesses—"if you ain't got things stowed jest as if they was cut to fit!"

"Certainly," the possessor assented, breathing hard in the effort to appear perfectly calm; "but it was the shelves that was made to fit the things that goes on them, though I wouldn't have thought of such a thing if it hadn't been for Mr. Alison. 'Mrs. Jephson,' says he to me, 'what's the biggest article you want to keep in this cupboard?' 'Well,' says I, 'the biggest is that there firkin of sugar. For the life of me,' I says, 'I can't keep Jephson from settin' on it to take off his boots.' 'Then,' says he, chucklin', 'I'll put it on the bottom and fix the lowest shelf so's nothin' taller than a potato bug can set on it. Now,' says he, 'let me see the next biggest thing.' 'Well,' I says, 'if that there big brass preservin' kettle could be got in, it'd be a mighty comfort to have it away from the flies.' 'Jest so,' says he; 'then I'll set this next shelf up to clear it, and the others to suit what you want to keep on 'em; for waste room,' says he, 'is worse than no room.'"

"I've got to have one!" cried Mrs. Wedge, in an excited tremulous falsetto, "I'll have one in my kitchen, if it takes all my butter-and-egg money from now till Christmas. Why, it don't take no room, you may say, and look what you got in it! I declare if this kitchen don't look bigger than it did before!"

"Of course it does—as Mr. Alison says to me, 'Mrs. Jephson,' says he, 'you've a wonderful head for arrangin' things. A man wouldn't never have thought of puttin' all them other pots inside the brass kettle, or made them jelly moulds look so tasty on the top. As for me, I begin to feel,' says he, jokin' like, 'that I'm about as useful as the man who plants a tree, or the one that makes two blades of grass grow where one

grew before. What do you think about it, Mrs. Jephson?" he says."

"Any booby can plant a tree,' says I; 'and as for the two blades of grass, I never seen that trick done; but it ain't a circumstance, I'm sure,' I says, 'to makin' one corner cupboard grow where there wasn't none before. There's only one thing, to my mind, to beat that,' says I, lookin' mighty knowin'. 'What is it?' says he. 'Two of 'em,' says I."

Mrs. Wedge gasped. "You're never goin' to have two," she cried, her eyes dilating. "Maria Jephson, you *ain't*!"

"I am," nodded Mrs. Jephson, in shrill triumph. "I'm goin' to have another with glass in the doors, in the dinin'-room, for the blue-and-white tea-set."

Mrs. Wedge flopped back in her chair and eyed her neighbor's beaming countenance searchingly, her voice dropping to a pitch of solemn adjuration. "Well then," she said, decisively, "you're goin' to get him to make one for me."

Mrs. Jephson's frank complacency changed to a neutral smile. "Oh, I don't know as Mr. Alison would care to work for anyone else," she replied guardedly.

"Maria Jephson"—Mrs. Wedge's tone became a trifle strident—"you're goin' to get him to do mine. Of course, I know it ain't the same as if he was a common carpenter; but *you* can get him to do it, I know you can," she insinuated pleadingly.

"I'm willin' to ask him about it, of course," relented Mrs. Jephson, "but you know how it is, Mrs. Wedge—he's a gentleman, is Mr. Alison, and I'm jest expectin' that some of these days a letter will come from his pa with a thousand dollars in it; then off he'll go."

"Then you'll hurry him up. Tell him I'm your particler friend, and that I may die sudden, and—oh, my, but that's a nice wash-basin stand you got over there!"

"That's something I made myself," said Mrs. Jephson proudly; "and it's like them can-openers that's also a glass-cutter and a putty knife, for it ain't only a basin-stand. Lift up the valance, Mrs. Wedge."

"Sakes alive—his boots!"

"Yes, them's his Sunday ones and carpet slippers in the top part; his long boots goes below. You see it's jest two soap boxes nailed together, the lowest one on end and the other sideways."

"My, ain't that cute!—but how ever do you get him to put 'em there?"

"Oh, that ain't hard. 'Jephson,' says I, the day I finished it, when he set down to take 'em off, 'the barn's the place for your boots.' 'Jee-ruslem!' says he, 'what do you mean?' 'I mean,' says I, 'that I ain't goin' to have no more dirty boots layin' round this kitchen. You can take 'em off to the barn, or else,' says I, 'you've got to take the trouble to put 'em in this boot cupboard. Now, which are you goin' to do?' I asks."

"But don't he forget?"

"No; he pretended he did, two nights hand-runnin', but he won't try that again. The first time I didn't take no notice, for I suspected he was playin' off to see what I'd do, but the next night I jest set 'em outside before I went to bed. Well, along about midnight the rain begun to pour, and when I heard it I thought of them boots set well under the drip, and I begun to snicker; and the harder the rain come down the harder I shook, till Jephson woke up and I could sort of feel the hair beginnin' to rise on his head; and that sent me off into a whoop so's I couldn't stop. At that Jephson lept out of bed with a sort of groan like a scared rabbit, and the first thing I knew he was standin' over me with a candle, and then I could do nothin' but roll and screech, he did look so ridiculous. 'Heaven help us, Maria!' he says, 'what ails you?' 'Your—boots,' says I, with another screech, and at that he begun to tremble, and I could see from the way he eyed the foot of the bed that he thought I thought I had 'em on. 'What about—my boots?' says he at last, holdin' on tight to the foot-board as if he was preparin' for the worst. 'They ain't—in the cupboard,' I says; 'I'm afeard they'll—get wet!' 'Tush!' says he, soothin' like, the roof's tight—go to sleep, Maria.' 'They haven't got no roof,' I shrieks, holdin' my sides. Then off I went again at the thought of how funny they'd look full all the way up the legs and leanin' over like tipsy leather buckets."

"I'll bet he swore in the mornin'," laughed Mrs. Wedge.

"Lor' no! Jephson's a church member, and I ain't heard a strong word out of him for two years back, come next month, when we put up the base-burner in the set-

tin'-room. That time says I to him, 'Jephson, if I ever hear such language from you again I'll not give you so much as a look, but the next time the minister comes and the whole family of us is waitin' for him to put up the petition, I'll ask him plump and plain to plead special for a church member and the father of a family that's addicted to swearin'. Of course,' I says, 'he won't know who's meant, nor them two innocent children neither.'"

"My sakes!—what *did* he say to that?"

"He jest shook his head mournful and looked at me; then says he, 'Woo-man, woo-man!'"

Mrs. Wedge broke into a shrill laugh. "It beats all," she cackled, "the difference in men! If I said a thing like that to Jerry he'd jest raise the roof with his language." She tossed her head, like a mettlesome steed proud of its rider. "Of course," she added condolingly, "it must be fine to have your man mind what you say."

"Mind what I say, indeed!" flashed Mrs. Jephson. "I can tell you Jephson jest twists me round his little finger. But then there's some men that can take a hint that certain things ain't respectful to women, and Jephson's one of them, I'm glad to say."

Mrs. Wedge colored, glanced swiftly toward the cupboard, then smiled amiably. "Oh, well," she returned, "men's as different as women, and that's all there is about it. There'd be no use in me worryin' the life out of Jerry about things that come natural to him. 'For better or for worse,' says I when I married him, and as long as he ain't no worse, I don't see as I've any call to try to better him. I've often thought that, with Jerry, it's like puttin' up fruit: mebbe his feelin's wouldn't be as clear and sweet down below if 'twasn't for the scum that comes to the top. Well, I must be goin', Mrs. Jephson, and you'll be sure to speak to that young man for me? You could have knocked Jerry over with a milk-weed pod when he heard about him drivin' the stage; says he wouldn't have been more surprised to see a frog that was blinkin' on a lily-pad in the sun get down and begin to turn a barrel churn. My! I hope that thousand dollars won't come till he makes my cupboard."

III

"WELL, he's gone!" sighed Jephson. He shaded his eyes to catch a final view of the receding wagon as it neared the turn of the road, then suddenly gesticulated wildly, with a sweeping wave of his arm. "Look, Maria," he shouted, "he's took off his hat!"

In an instant Mrs. Jephson was beside him, frantically flapping her apron over her head as a parting salute to Alison, who had pulled up his horses before finally disappearing around the curve.

"He's gone!" she echoed, furtively wiping one cheek with the corner of her apron,—"and if he was my own son I couldn't feel no worse." She turned with a sigh, and followed her husband in silence up the path to the house, and though it was nearly mid-day and the spring work in full swing, she made no protest when he sat down on the veranda steps and leaned idly against the post.

"I'd jest like to let Mrs. Drinkwater know," she resumed, sitting down beside him, "that I never had a more honorabler boarder in the house than Mr. Alison; but I don't suppose after what I said to her last fall, she'll come back this summer to give me the chance."

"I never seen a man so particler about keepin' square," Jephson assented. "Why, the ground was hard froze before he left off wearin' them white flannel suits, jest because he wouldn't keep back the board money and buy himself something warm. 'No, Jephson, I won't,' he says to me. 'I'll wear silk socks and a straw hat all winter, even if they ain't quite in fashion, unless I earn money enough to buy cheaper raiment.'"

"And then," mused Mrs. Jephson, "after me expectin' to see him lay round in hammocks, he flings off his coat and rolls up his sleeves and builds that there cupboard."

"It was a corker the way he piled in," ruminated Jephson; "it certainly was a corker! You'd most think he'd got wound up to go, like a machine, and jest couldn't stop, only for the high sperrits of him. There was one day I went into the woodshed when he was whistlin' and singin' knee-deep in shavin's, and he jest flung up his arms and shouted, 'Jephson, the joy of

doin'!—there ain't nothin' like it!' 'The which?' I says, took aback, and eyein' him close. 'The joy of doin',' says he—'of feelin' that you're makin' use of man's privilege to work.' 'Um,' I says, 'never heard of it! I have heard,' says I, 'of the joy of *not* doin', and I know considerable about the pain of *undoin'*, but Jeerusalem! I can't see no privilege in bein' poor enough to have to grub for a livin'. But I'm blamed if he didn't make out he'd sooner earn two dollars a day than have twenty give to him.'"

"Here comes Jerry Wedge," interrupted his wife.

The stage stopped at the gate, and a short, thick-set man with a broad smile on his weather-beaten face ambled up the path toward them.

"I jest dropped off to hear about your corner-cupboard man," he announced. "I met him down the road a bit with a spankin' team and a bran-new wagon. 'So-long, Jerry,' he sings out. 'I'm off—be kind to the gray mare!' Now where's he off to?"

"Set right down and we'll tell you about it," invited Jephson.

"I've got a powerful lot of work waitin' for me," demurred Jerry.

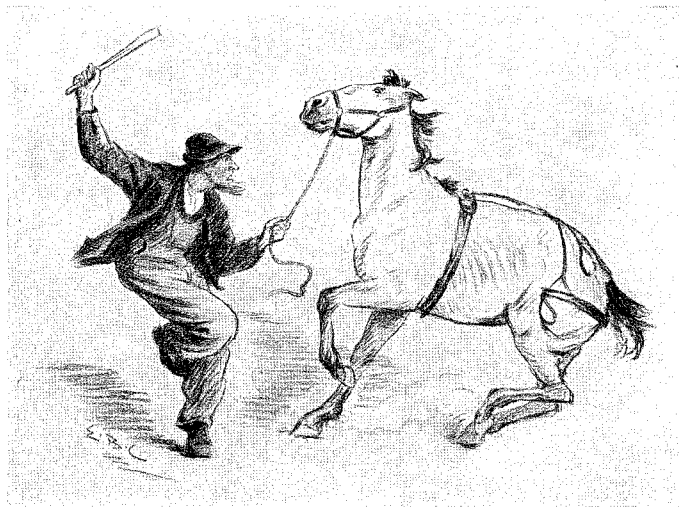
"Set right down then," seconded Mrs. Jephson. "I'm beginnin' to believe there's something in what Jephson says: that rest before labor is the only sure way of gettin' it."

"I guess that's the way the corner-cupboard man worked it out," chuckled Jerry, as he settled himself with a sigh of content. "By Jinks! he did rest before labor, for sure; but then he made things hum when he got to work. I think I'd set right here for ten years if I could earn a team and wagon like that in a winter."

"And now," said Mrs. Jephson, with maternal pride, "he's drivin' along the high road to fortune and perhaps to fame, as he says. Well, I'm goin' to have a look at the dinner while Jephson tells you about it."

"For a man that'd sooner earn two dollars than have twenty give to him, he's got a wonderful head for business," began Jephson. "You mind, Jerry, when he put up one of them cupboards in your wife's kitchen?"

"I mind it twenty times a day," returned Jerry, with emphasis. "Before that



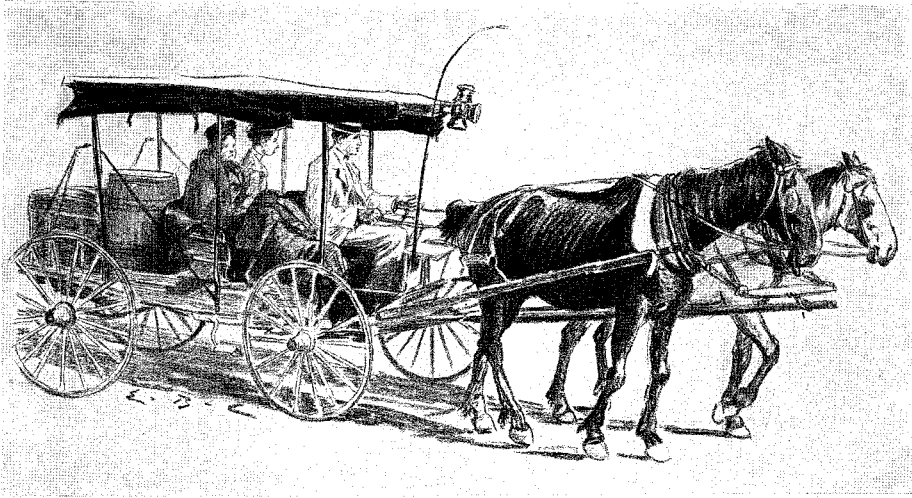
"He had to stand on t'other one to lam the gray mare."—Page 735.

Eliza had sense enough to leave things where a man would fall over them when they were wanted; but now"—he shook his head gloomily.

"I know," nodded Jephson, with a sympathetic smile; "but there's no use sayin' a word. Well, after that it was no time till people come round to get him to make more, and pretty soon he got the makin' of 'em down to a fine point so that he could almost cut one out with his eyes shut; then next thing he figured out how to handle twice as many and double his profits. It come to him all of a sudden one day when I was settin' on a trestle in the woodshed. 'Jephson,' says he, sort of solemn and low, 'it's lightin'!' And with that he clapped his hand to his head and turned a trifle pale; his eyes got kind of glassy and he stared at the shavin's on the floor. 'Where?' I asks, jumpin' up in a hurry and stampin' on them promiscuous, for I thought he'd tramped on a match. 'Hush—set down—don't move!' says he, in a kind of whisper; then he shuts his eyes, and his mouth tightens as if he was grippin' himself inside, and jest when I was ready to yell he opens them wide and says as cheerful as a cricket, 'It's lit—I've caught it this time!' 'What's lit—where have you got it?' I asks, gapin' round. 'It's like a hummin' bird,' he goes on; 'it's been dartin' about for weeks in my mind, and now it's lit—it's a idea,' he says. 'Jee-ruslem!'

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says I, 'do you know what I begun to think it was?' 'What?' says he. 'A bee,' I says. 'Bee or bird,' he laughs, hoistin' himself up on the work-bench, 'I want to talk to you about it.' 'Go ahead,' I tells him, shiftin' back comfortable. 'Well,' he goes on, 'it's nothin' more or less than a plan to add to the comfort and convenience of female humanity throughout the civilized world.' 'Ye-es,' I puts in; 'and what about male humanity?' 'It's this way, Jephson,' he answers, sort of hesitat-in' and thoughtful: 'on the surface it may add to the inconvenience of male humanity, but it's bound to add to his comfort by makin' his wife happier.' 'Ye-es,' says I, beginnin' to see the drift. 'Besides,' he goes on, 'don't women take up burdens cheerful that would make you or me think of cross-beams and ropes in barns?' 'You bet,' says I. 'Then it comes to this,' says he; 'who's most deservin' of consideration—men or women?' 'Look here, Mr. Alison,' says I, 'a man that's got five corner cupboards in his house and hangs up even his trousers in one of 'em at night, and takes his hat out of another in the mornin', and that without sayin' nothing aloud, don't take no interest in the comfort and convenience of mankind in general. Go ahead with the idea,' says I; 'and if it's to use up all the corners in creation for cupboards, I'll give you my blessing.' 'The fact is,' says he,



A rather dilapidated vehicle, drawn by a team of horses.—Page 735.

‘it’s jest come to me how I can use up most of ‘em.’ ‘If you can do it,’ says I, ‘you’ll be a billionaire.’ ‘That,’ says he, with a wave of his hand, ‘is an evil I’ll try to avoid.’”

“By Jinks!” burst in Jerry, “he didn’t mean it?”

“I couldn’t say,” replied Jephson dubiously; “but it’s my belief that we’ll live to see him richer than the Mingleys. ‘You’ll notice, Jephson,’ he goes on, ‘that there ain’t many houses round here but what are supplied with one corner cupboard, and some of ‘em two.’”

“You bet there ain’t!” interpolated Jerry. “Eliza’s beginnin’ to set her lines for another.”

“‘And we learn from that,’ says he, ‘that what women sees other women have, that they want; and what they want they get.’”

“No thanks to their husbands!” cried Mrs. Jephson, as she appeared at the corner of the veranda.

“‘Then,’ says he, ‘from my experience in putting up cupboards, I’ve come to the conclusion that though different women have different temperaments, their natures is so much alike that every one of ‘em will take to a corner cupboard at the first go-off the way a baby takes to a doll.’”

“Jephson,” his wife accused him, “you’re makin’ that up.”

“I ain’t; and he says, says he, ‘There’s still hope for the human race in the future,

for every woman’ll be able to keep her man tidy, provided’”—he paused impressively, exchanging a glance of enjoyment with Jerry—“‘provided she’s supplied with one or more of The Jephson Adjustable Corner Cupboards!’”

“Wha-at?” shrieked Mrs. Jephson.

“Jest what I said,” chuckled Jephson; “but there ain’t no mistake—he’s christened them after us—he told me this mornin’. He’s invented a way of havin’ them made, Jerry, so’s the parts fit together like the leaves of a extension table, and any handy woman, or even a unhandy man, as he says, can slam up a cupboard in any corner of the house; then they can take it down and slam it up in another whenever they like.”

“Thunder!” ejaculated Jerry.

“And he’s took out a patent, and got two hundred made at the Longbury sash factory, and he’s goin’ to load up that wagon and sell them all along the road from Longbury to that town—I forget the name of it—where there’s a factory that turns out foldin’-chairs and tables, and ironin’-boards, and such things by the million. It’s a hundred miles from here, and he reckons that if he can sell two cupboards to a mile, the way is open to goin’ into the business wholesale.”

“Then he’d get about a thousand made?” asked Jerry.

“Liker a hundred thousand,” responded

Jephson. "This Mr. Bambridge that owns the big factory told him that if he could prove his cupboard was a good seller, he'd either buy out his interest or go shares. 'Sell two hundred in this State in a year,' says he to Mr. Alison, 'and we'll come to terms.' And that young man has started out to sell 'em in a month."

"And he'll do it," commented Mrs. Jephson, with conviction. "Come in and have a bite of dinner, Jerry."

"N-no—no thank you," returned Jerry abstractedly, as he rose. He started down the path, then turned and dug a hole in the gravel with the toe of his boot, and began hesitatingly: "Never could make out why he took such a shine to my gray mare. Wonder if he'd trade his team and wagon for her when he sells that lot of cupboards?"

"You can't never count on what a feller like that won't do," replied Jephson, with a grin.

IV

THERE was a whir of wheels and a rapid beat of hoofs on the driveway; a fleeting glimpse through the avenue of pines of a dapper team of bay horses, the flashing red of a brightly decorated democrat wagon, with a young man on the driver's seat who matched the spick-and-span completeness of the outfit. Mrs. Bambridge peered curiously through the latticed screen of her veranda as the wagon passed to the rear of the house, but the motion was too rapid for her to make out the gilt lettering on the box, so she settled herself back in her chair and awaited Jane's report. Things so



"Sakes alive—his boots!"—Page 738.

seldom happened in the country that, on the whole, she preferred interested speculation to dull certainty, and she had reached an age when a comfortable seat was more attractive than unnecessary motion, so she was in no haste to satisfy her curiosity. He might be merely a tea-man, or an agent with baking-powder samples, or a man selling trees—but again, he mightn't!—and occasionally really interesting people came around in the country to sell useful articles that you would never hear of in any other way. If he were someone to see her husband, who had not returned from his daily trip to the city, of course Jane would consult her; if he were anyone else above the status of a rag-and-bottle man, Jane would report. In the meantime, with Dora off driving with her friend Kitty Burger, and the younger children at school, Mrs. Bambridge would have welcomed even the advent of an engaging tramp, not too dirty, with a capacity for moving tales and wholesome victuals. So she waited and wondered, and just when she had decided he must be a neighboring farmer—an amateur, probably, being well dressed—who had gone to the barn for some of the seed potatoes that Mr. Bambridge raised at a cost of two dollars a bag and sold for fifty cents, Jane appeared.

"Please ma'am," she announced, in an undertone that meant inward excitement, "'tis a corner-cupboard man."

Mrs. Bambridge's portly figure suddenly straightened; she moved to the edge of the chair and stared at the woman. "A *what?*" she demanded breathlessly.

There was a faint gleam of relish in Jane's eyes at the effect of her announcement. "A corner-cupboard man," she repeated, slowly and distinctly.

"Why, I never heard of such a thing!" cried Mrs. Bambridge. "Are you *sure?*"

"Quite sure, ma'am," affirmed Jane stiffly. "'Tis what he says, and what's in gold letters on his wagon."

Mrs. Bambridge rose with bustling alacrity. "A corner-cupboard man!" she ejaculated under her breath, as she followed Jane out to the yard; then her eyes fell in delighted confirmation on the gilt lettering, and she turned inquiringly to the young man as he took off his hat.

"I am ready to put up your corner cupboard, madam," he announced, with a cer-

tain courtly deference, "if you will kindly let me know which——"

"My corner cupboard!" ejaculated Mrs. Bambridge. "How did you know I wanted one?—oh, I see!—you met my husband, Mr. Bambridge, and he told you to call?"

The young man smiled, with a negative shake of the head; then his face lit up with astonishment.

"Mr. Bambridge!" he exclaimed. "Surely not the—the president of The Bambridge Manufacturing Company?"

"Yes," she answered.

An odd look flashed over his face, then he spoke in a matter-of-fact tone. "No, he didn't send me; in fact, I didn't know he lived here. I took it for granted that you wanted a cupboard, because every woman does. If your kitchen is well supplied, there may be a useless corner in the pantry or back hall, or you may need a place to keep odd dishes, or a linen or extra clothes closet. Here is a model of the cupboard when put together; the shelves can be arranged to suit any purpose, the centre ones being omitted when used for a wardrobe, leaving a place for bonnet boxes below and clothes hooks above."

"I see!" cried Mrs. Bambridge; the light of possession was in her eyes and her voice trembled with anticipation. "And you can put up a cupboard like that in any room?"

"In any corner of any room where there is a clear space of three feet from the angle on each side; and when the cupboard is built you get rid of a dust-gathering corner and gain a place to put all the odds and ends that make it difficult to keep a room tidy. If you would like one put up in your kitchen, for example, I——"

"O-oh, *ma'am!*" An ecstatic cry burst from Jane, who was standing behind Mrs. Bambridge. "The corner back of the door, ma'am," she pleaded in a tremulous undertone.

The two women exchanged a glance of complete sympathy and understanding; for that instant they were not mistress and maid.

"Wait!" cried Mrs. Bambridge. "The—the price?" she asked, with a weak attempt at caution.

"Five dollars with plain doors, and——"

"Put it up at once," she decided eagerly.



"It come to him all of a sudden one day."—Page 741.

"And do you think you could finish before five, when Mr. Bambridge comes home?"

He looked at his watch, his eyes twinkling. "That gives me a margin," he replied. "It is now a few minutes after two, and I need but half an hour at the most."

"Do you mean to say you can build a cupboard in half an hour?"

"Not build, merely put it up," he responded. "You see, the parts are all fitted, the hinges and fastenings on the doors, and it is only a matter of putting them together."

He carried the material into the kitchen, and the two women looked on as with dexterous rapidity he fitted the parts together. In the animated colloquy over the arrangement of the shelves with regard to the articles to be placed on them, Mrs.

Bambridge and her maid became as flushed and excited as they had ever been over mud pies, and when Alison added the final shelf and slipped the pins into the door hinges, they beamed at each other in silent satisfaction.

"What does number 199 mean?" asked Mrs. Bambridge, examining the inside of one door.

"It means that the next one will be number two hundred," replied Alison, "and the last one I have."

Mrs. Bambridge hesitated but for a moment. "You may put it up in the back hall," she decided. "I hope it will hold *all* of Mr. Bambridge's boots," she added thoughtfully.

"Umph!" commented Mr. Bambridge, in his deep, bass voice, after a close examina-

tion of the kitchen cupboard. He stroked his iron-gray beard with a slow, measured movement, his face impenetrably wooden, by which his wife knew that he was thinking hard. Suddenly he turned to her:

"Youngish fellow—light moustache and hair—voice rubbed down for oil finish?"

"How ever did you guess how he looked?" cried Mrs. Bambridge. "He had the most gentlemanly manner and nicest voice, and——"

"Yes, yes," nodded her husband. "Came after two, and slammed those cupboards up before three, you say? Then he's been gone two hours and thirty-five minutes."

"N-no, not quite. In fact, I made him wait for a cup of afternoon tea with me, and—we had quite a chat. It must have been after four when he left."

A brief, preoccupied smile flickered under the man's short beard. "Four-fifteen to five-thirty—then he'll be at Pentonville for supper, if he went north. Here, Jane, run out and tell Peter to put Flyer in the dog-cart—ready in ten minutes. Come into the sitting-room, Mary; I want to talk to you."

And for ten minutes Mrs. Bambridge found herself answering more apparently irrelevant questions than she had ever heard in the same space of time before.

"Then," he concluded, "although I told Jones when he made the plan of this house to jam cupboards in everywhere for you, you think there are not enough?"

"Certainly," she replied, a little nettled and bewildered. "There are not enough of the right kind in the right place. If architects were women instead of men, they'd have some proper idea of how many cupboards were needed, and where they should be. Why didn't Jones think of the corners? I told you when this house was built that I wanted to live like the plain people we are, but that considering our means, the house should have all the conveniences that money could buy; and now because I choose to spend a few dollars on corner cupboards, I'm cross-questioned until my head is in a whirl. I tell you that if he had had ten with him, I would have bought every one."

Mr. Bambridge burst into a hoarse guffaw. "It's all right, Mary," he assured her. "You may have fifty if you want them. Gad! that young fellow had sand to sell the last two here! I'm going to settle

the thing right up, Mary. Just think how they'll work up in the contract ads. in the big magazines: 'What is a corner without a cupboard?' 'You have two sides—get the third.' 'Buy one for your wife—she can put it up.' Look here, Mary; have dinner at seven-thirty. I'm going to bring your corner-cupboard man back with me, if I have to lift him into the cart by the neck. You can put him up over Sunday, can't you?"

"Good gracious!—*William!*"

"What are you afraid of—think he'll eat with his knife? Did he pour his tea into the saucer, or leave the spoon in the cup?"

"N-no; but, William, he's an agent. What would Kitty Burger think! You know I wouldn't mind if we were alone."

"Kitty Burger's got more downright common sense than any girl I know. Did he tell you his name?"

"The corner-cupboard man," said Mrs. Bambridge faintly.

"Bear up, Mary!" laughed her husband. "His name is Alison. Old Geoffrey and I had lunch together yesterday, and between us we made out that this must be his son. They had a flare-up last summer because he wanted to loaf. Old man told me the whole story, and he's tickled to death over the young fellow going to work, but determined to let him hoe his own row. Well, I must go; back at seven-thirty."

V

THE peaceful, drowsy stillness of Sunday afternoon pervaded the Bambridge household when Jane, arrayed in an immaculate gingham that harmonized with the budding freshness of the early spring, stepped into the latticed servants' porch that adjoined the kitchen and sat down with a newspaper in her lap. But it was not till footsteps crunched on the gravel walk at the rear that her eyes sought the printed page, though an instant later, when Peter appeared, the sombre respectability of his best blacks relieved by a brilliant red and green scarf, she seemed absorbed in reading, to the exclusion of such an insignificant object as Peter.

The latter looked hesitatingly at the unoccupied half of the bench on which she sat, then subsided into a chair on the opposite side and stared gloomily at Jane, whose firmly set mouth perceptibly tight-



"How ever did you guess how he looked?"—Page 746.

ened. There was a strained silence, broken at last by the ostentatious turning of the paper, during which Jane was compelled to take a full breath and momentarily relax the rigidity of her features.

"'Twas the devil himself," burst forth Peter, "that put the word inconvenience into my mouth. Sure——"

The words froze on his lips under Jane's icy stare. "'Twould be a terrible inconvenience to a man,'" she quoted. "Them was your very words, and——"

"And with that," broke in Peter, "you up and you says the cupboard would be no inconvenience to a man that'd stay out of the kitchen; and then you slammed the door in my face before——"

"I did," interrupted Jane, with a vicious nod.

"——before I could say 'to a man that didn't know nateness was the chiefest of woman's many vartues.'"

Jane eyed him suspiciously.

"'Tis the gospel truth," affirmed Peter. "Sure I was that overpowered by wonder at the way you fitted everything in but a few trifles like the stove and the table, that the words got stuck in my throat."

"Well, well," smiled Jane, with a coquetish toss of her head, "why couldn't you say so before?"

Peter left his chair and sat down beside her, his face radiant, then turned in a listening attitude toward the garden, nodding knowingly to Jane. "They're comin'," he announced in a mysterious undertone.

Jane peered through the lattice work at two figures slowly approaching down the



"I mane," he answered, drawing her closer, "that in my ar-rms it is *harvest!*"
—Page 749.

arbored walk. "Miss Burger and the corner-cupboard man!" she ejaculated.

"The same," nodded Peter, "and 'tis no more than I looked for."

"What ever do you mean?" cried Jane, peering with breathless intentness.

"I mane what's as plain to your eyes as to mine," chuckled Peter.

Jane's wide-open eyes sparkled with delighted questioning expectation.

"I'd have tould you before," said Peter in a hoarse whisper, moving close to her, "but for the misunderstandin' betwixt us. After sarvice this mornin' Miss Dolly come out of the church and tells me she's goin' to wait for singin' practice, and I'm to drive the two of them home and come back for her. 'And mind, Peter,' says she,

lookin' me unusual hard in the eye, 'there's plinty of time, and be sure to drive slow. 'Tis warm for the horses,' says she, 'and you mustn't forget to *drive slow.*' 'That I will, ma'am,' says I. And it wasn't till we got half-way home I could see a grain of sense in my instructions; but all of a sudden I was distracted by hearin' a dead silence in the carry-all, after them two had been chattin' most affable. 'Mother of heaven!' thinks I to myself, 'have they fell out of the carry-all, or is it out with each other? And jest then a quare feelin' run up the small of my back and I had a prisintiment somethin' was comin'. 'Hould on to yourself, Peter,' says I, 'and don't for the life of you waggle your ears or make a sudden move to show you're unusual sharp in the hearin'.'"

"You never listened!" cried Jane reprovingly, an eager sparkle in her eyes.

"I was distressed through not bein' able to kape from hearin'," explained Peter; "but 'twouldn't be manners to clap my hands to my ears, and me sittin' upstiff and straight in the front of them!"

"Tut! you didn't hear nothin'."

"I heard a silence, I tell you, and then someone says as low and tunder as a courtin' dove, 'Kit-ty'——"

"And is that all? Why, that's nothin'! What are you takin' my hand for, Peter?"

"I'm showin' you how 'twas said," returned Peter tremulously. "You're Miss Burger, I'm the corner-cupboard man, and that chair is me in the driver's seat. Well, just when he spoke her name a meracle happened."

"A meracle!"

"No less: for at the word two eyes came in the back of my head, and while my front ones looked straight at the horses' ears my back ones could see him takin' hould of one hand, like this; then she reddened and looked down, like you, when he says, 'Kit-ty, is it'—Well, you'd scarcely belave 'twas a remark about the weather."

"The weather!—Leave go of my hand, Peter."

"Whisht! The sayson, I meant. 'Kit-ty,' says he, and he squeezed her hand like this, 'is it next summer yet?'"

"And this Easter Sunday! You're foolin' me, Peter."

"Then says she, soft and low, 'I think it—is early for—summer.' And then with his voice tremblin', he says, 'But in my hear-rt,' says he——"

"Take your arm——"

"There now, I'm showin' you how 'twas said; then says she, 'You—you mustn't.'"

"Peter, you—what do you mean!"

"I mane," he answered, drawing her closer, "that in my ar-rms it is *harvest!*"

"Peter, how many cupboards will there be in the kitchen?"

"Say the word and you'll have wan in each corner," declared Peter, with fervor.

"Four!" cried Jane, with a gasp of delight.

"And wan in the middle," added Peter, in a burst of tender self-abnegation—"that's five!"

ONE DAY

By Martha Gilbert Dickinson Bianchi

HE taught her a whole world of needs

In one short day;

As one man to one woman may—

A need of daring and of deeds,

A need of crowns to lay beneath

His hero feet!

A need of tender fragrance sweet,

And fame to offer as a wreath;

Of joy all overpowering,—

Of pain, to prove

Enduring masteries of love.

A need of higher notes to sing,

A need of heaven and of truth;

Strong hands to guide,

And braver footsteps by her side

Across the day—aye and forsooth

A need of covert for her weary wings—

The need one man unto one woman brings.