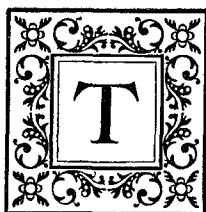


Dusting

BY JOHN McINTYRE

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HE long curtains were drawn back to let the light into the parlor, and the windows were open a little way. Mrs. Solz was dusting. She had a girl who did the lodgers' rooms and things like that, but she always attended to the front room herself. For that had to look like something when new people came; the house had to seem as if it was well kept.

She was doing the mantel; she'd always liked that mantel; it was of black, shining stone, with some fine scrolled lines all through it filled with gilt. Well-to-do people had built the house, and they'd had good taste. Mrs. Solz liked things that had dignity. On the mantel was a glass globe, covering a stuffed canary; that was Freddie! He sat there on the little twig just like he used to do when she was a girl and they lived in Sanders Street. He had a gilt cage then, and they'd hung it in the window and he'd sing beautiful when the sun came in. Except that his feathers weren't so good, he looked just the same as he did then; and if she didn't know his eyes were glass, she'd say they were looking right at her the way they used to do. Her mother loved Freddie; it's wonderful the way you get to care for things! She'd sit and talk to him so, you'd think he was a person; she'd feed him bits of things and he'd hold his head sidewise and chirp. And she used to talk German to him sometimes, and, honest to God, you'd think he understood it.

They always hung his cage in the front window; it was awful nice for him there; he liked it and would hop around and drink his water and pick at his seed. But Mr. Ott, who lived across the street, would blow the trombone on Sunday

morning. He was practising; his wife said it was the only time he had. If it was summer and the windows were open, Freddie got awful worked up. He'd flap his wings and carry on. Sometimes they had to take him out into the kitchen, just to get his mind off it.

A man outside was calling for old bottles and metals; he had a pleading note in his voice that always seemed pitiful to Mrs. Solz; but she hoped he wouldn't stop and poke among the rubbish-cans at the curb, because that made a dust, and it came in the windows. She looked out to make sure, but he passed on, limping and desolate, without disturbing anything. The shabby trees were beginning to bud in the square; the sun was warm, and the groups of greasy, wan-looking people were talking on the benches. Men were digging in the flower-beds, getting the ground ready.

She put the little globe, with the canary inside, in its place on the mantel. Her father had never cared for Freddie; not from the first time it'd been brought into the house. He'd never speak to it except times when he was drunk, and then he'd stand by the cage and cry. Her father had been a peculiar man. He was a cracker baker, but he'd always wanted to be a salesman. He'd been the kind of man that always wanted to go places. He loved it. Days when he wasn't working he'd go down to the station and stand looking at the big trains that were ready to start West. He liked to see the porters carrying bags, and the trucks with the trunks on them; and he liked to stand near where the man punched the tickets and hear what people'd say. Those were the days he'd get drunk. He'd always come home and cry. He had to stay in a basement baking crackers when he ought to be sitting at a window in a Pullman car looking at towns he'd often

heard of, but never been in. That's when he'd talk to Freddie. Canaries came from mountain places, and he'd talk about that. A couple of times he'd tried to get the cage door open to let Freddie fly away. But her mother wouldn't let him.

II

MRS. SOLZ had kept this house for a long time; it was handy to the burlesque theatres, and people who had no objections to sharing the bath with a few others were comfortable there. It was a big house; it had high ceilings and wide stairs with carved rails; the floors were wonderful. But there was an old-fashioned chandelier in the parlor. It had gas-burners and glass pendants and round, frosted globes. Mrs. Solz had never liked it. It hung down from the centre of the ceiling, and was always dusty and hard to clean. And the gas leaked out in little places and smelled so, and people coming to rent rooms noticed it. They liked electric lights, and when they saw the house wasn't improved that way, they often lost interest. They didn't even want to see the rooms.

Mrs. Solz stood on a chair and worked at the chandelier. She hadn't ever cared for gas, even when she was a girl going to school. But her mother wouldn't let her say anything against it. Her mother had

been raised in the country. It must have been a cold, lonely place, with nobody for miles around; and they didn't have anything but candles, or a little tin oil-lamp, and their rooms were dark, and they

couldn't bear to sit up in them; so they'd all go to bed early, and not have any chance to talk or sew, or do anything they wanted to. So, when she came to the city, she thought gas was wonderful. When she got to live in a house with lots of light in it, she was that pleased she didn't know what to do. She'd light all the jets in the rooms and halls and then she'd walk through the whole place. She said it was like being rich, and it made her mind peaceful. At night she'd wear all her rings and sit under the chandelier in the parlor and sew. The light made the gold shine, and the settings were beautiful. She'd stitch and stitch and keep on watching her hands. It was

lovely to see her. Nobody ever got as much pleasure out of anything as she did out of that.

And when she died they put her coffin under the chandelier. Right straight under it, where the light would fall on her. The undertaker said it wasn't the right place, and that it was awkward for people who came in to see her as she lay there. But father wouldn't listen to him. He said that was the place she'd liked, and



Canaries came from mountain places, and he'd talk about that.

that was the place she was going to be. The flowers looked grand all around the casket, and she had a smile on her face.

III

MRS. SOLZ always dreaded the big arm-chair when she was dusting. It was heavy, and the carved places held the dust and were hard to get into. It tried a body's patience. But it had been in her family for years, and she kept it for that. Besides, it did set the place off. It was the only piece in the room that had what you'd call a dignified look. If anybody came in to see about renting a room and turned up their nose at things, and you began to lose confidence, that chair always made you feel better. You could look at it or sit down in it and talk right back to them. It was a splendid chair.

It had once belonged to a minister, and her father had bought it and fixed it up. The minister used to sit in it and write about God, and wonder how he could get people into his church. And it was the chair she used to stand on when she was a little girl and wanted to see things out of the window; her mother used to smack her for that—it made the upholstery dirty.

One of the reasons she kept the chair was because it was the one Cassy used to sit in after her trouble. Cassy was her sister. She was four years older than Mrs. Solz and two years older than her brother Albert. People had always said you could go a long way before you came



She'd just sit in the chair at the window and look out and think.—Page 547.

across a nicer girl than Cassy. She was refined. She'd gone to grammar-school and she was good-looking. When she went out on a Sunday, or to a party, or anything, you'd notice people turning to see her. They'd whisper to each other and turn right around. Cassy always made her own clothes; even from the time she was little. She was the cleverest thing you ever saw, and quick! You could hardly keep track of her hands. That was how she came to get work with the dressmakers. And right away with the high-priced down-town ones! She had lovely taste, too. They got so in a little while they'd call her in when they

were fitting a gown. And the rich women got to know her. Honest to God, you never heard of such money as she made. They'd send her to New York to buy goods, and in another year they were going to send her to Europe. But it didn't spoil her. She was awful easy to get along with and ready with her money; and she was a great one for going to church regular, with a prayer-book in her hand; and she'd always know the minister's wife, and sometimes she'd have tea at their house, and they thought the world of her. She worked for three or four dressmakers; every time she left a place it was for higher pay. And it was one of their husbands that was the cause of her trouble.

It was an awful shock to her mother, and her father used to curse terrible; and everybody in the neighborhood talked and said things they shouldn't have said. Uncle Victor wanted the case taken into court; he said Cassy ought to get damages. But she wouldn't let it be done. After the child died, she came home again, but she was awful changed. You'd scarcely ever hear her speak a word. She didn't seem to be fit for anything at all. She'd just sit in the chair at the window and look out and think.

IV

MRS. SOLZ rubbed the gilt frame of an oval mirror. That had belonged to Albert. He'd had it in his barber-shop. It had been a nice shop; it was on the avenue, and six men worked there, all in white coats. The place was as shiny and handsome as you'd want to see. Albert always worked at the first chair near the window; people'd look in as they went by and nod to him. He was awful well liked. And he was nice-looking and stylish. He had his clothes made by a tailor; he never cared for ready-made things; his shoes and hats and shirts were always the best you could get. And he liked a cane. Albert's hair was naturally curly and dark, and the way he had it combed and brushed would just make you crazy about him. And he had a nice social position. The people he associated with all had money. And they spent it, too. Some of his lady friends were won-

derful! And all of them were high up. The father of one of them had a cab-stand at a railroad-station; another one was head waiter in a big place. Albert went into partnership once with a man who had slot-machines and who was a brother-in-law to a lady he knew, and the man was a scamp and done Albert out of a lot of money. It just went to show how you can meet the wrong kind even among people like that.

Albert liked life! He just loved to go around places; maybe because he looked so well and people made so much of him.



He was a great one for horse-racing.—Page 548.

And he was a great one for horse-racing. In the season of the year when that was going on, he'd start off every afternoon with a light coat over his arm, and with cigars, and his cane. And he was terrible smart. I've heard people say he had the

The kind of people he got in with were no good, and one time he was arrested and got five years. And when he got out, he went away. The last she'd heard of him he was in Chicago, working in a hotel kitchen. It was an awful shame; she'd always thought a lot of Albert, and he'd been so nice-looking!



Underneath the black on his face you could see he wasn't nice-looking any more.—Page 549.

very best judgment of any one they knew; he could always tell what horse was going to win. But Albert was naturally kind. He always liked to do what people asked, and if you were a friend of his he trusted you. And that's how his bad luck started. They sold out his shop for almost nothing. It was scandalous! Some of the most expensive things went for hardly anything. After that he must have got desperate.

V

THERE was a sea-shell on a rack in a corner; across its pink lip was lettered "Summer Greetings" in black. Aunt Fern had sent it to them a long time ago; the summer she'd had the cottage at the shore. Aunt Fern was a cousin to Mrs. Solz's father. Her people had been building-wreckers; they had great yards filled with second-hand doors and windows and timbers and iron girders and bricks, and God knows what money they had; it must have been an awful lot. Aunt Fern had a nice education, and sometimes she gave teas. She knew lots of people who were refined and well-to-do, and she had a big house, with a cook and two maids, and a man who came sometimes to see to the rubbish. She married Uncle Victor when she was thirty-eight; he was twenty-six. They never had any children. Every once in a while they'd go to Europe on a steamer; they'd travel in Germany and would send letters with foreign stamps on them, and would tell all about the things they saw. It was awful interesting. Aunt Fern could write a nice letter, and Uncle Victor would always put something funny on the last page. He was a great one for jokes. Sometimes when you'd visit them, he'd get you started laughing and you just couldn't stop. Once or twice when Mrs. Solz was a girl she'd gone to their place at the sea-shore; Aunt Fern liked to have the children come one at a time so's not to get the house upset. The sea-shell had come from there. Or maybe it was from another place they'd had at another time; Mrs. Solz wasn't sure. But, anyway, she remembered listening at the shell and hearing the sound of the waves awful plain; and they sounded like the ones at the place she'd been.

Then one time they found out Uncle Victor had another wife, and only about

six blocks away from where he and Aunt Fern lived. He was taken sick, and that's how it was found out. The other wife came to see him and brought her three children. Aunt Fern left him right away. She didn't wait a minute. Afterward she said maybe she wouldn't have done it if the other woman hadn't had the children. Only for that she might have forgiven him. Uncle Victor didn't get well. The other wife used to sit in the room with him and tell him how scandalous he'd acted, and the three children'd cry. Aunt Fern said most likely that's what done it. For Uncle Victor could never stand any one around him who was downhearted.

VI

MRS. SOLZ took a fur robe from the sofa and shook it out at the window. It was an old robe; the hair was coming out of it, but she wouldn't think of throwing it away. It had once belonged to Emery Schaffer. Emery had been a great friend of hers; he'd always been very stylish, and had a lovely voice. His father'd kept a pawn-office, and had a lot of sporting trade. Emery had been one of the very first to have an automobile; that was when they were built up on high wheels and you couldn't go very far in them because there weren't many places you could get gas. Emery's father had wanted him to be a dentist, and spent a lot of money on him; but Emery was soft-hearted, and when people screamed, and their mouths were all bloody, he'd get white, and somebody else'd have to finish the work. After that they got him in a drug-store; but he didn't do so well at that, either. But he was a great one for singing; there wasn't a song came out he didn't know. His father wanted to put him back of the counter in the pawn-shop, but his mother wouldn't let him. She wanted Emery to do something genteel. If he could only be some kind of a professor, or something, in a college; even if he could get to be a minister, that would do. But Emery was awful easy and nice; he just laughed and sang and didn't care much about anything. And at last he'd gone away with a minstrel company. He used to write for a while, and then she didn't hear anything of him for a long

time. One winter the troupe he was with came to town; that was after she was married to Solz. She'd gone to see the performance. His voice was as lovely as



The print of Solz was faded. . . . She hated it. . . .
She hated him.—Page 550.

ever; but underneath the black on his face you could see he wasn't nice-looking any more. And he'd got fat.

VII

MRS. SOLZ shook the curtains so the dust wouldn't get in the room. The

street was run-down looking; but it was nice to be facing the square. When the trees were all green in the summer and the fountain was playing, you'd not want anything better. She liked to sit of an evening and look out; it rested her and made her feel better.

She dusted a small framed photograph that hung on the wall between the two windows. This was Solz. He'd been dead ten years. Sometimes when she was feeling discouraged, she couldn't look at his picture at all; she hated the sight of it. She didn't like to get thinking about him, for, you might say, he'd ruined her life. No matter what she wanted to do he'd be against it. He'd sit and shake his head. Maybe diabetes made people that way. He was white like wax, and any day he got a red paper it was terrible; she could hardly stand him.

She'd been ambitious; she wanted to get along; she'd always been that way. She'd tried to branch out, but she never could. Somebody always held her back. Before she was married it was her father, or her mother; afterward it was Solz. She'd been married to him six years. He'd a paper-bag business when she first knew him, but he sold it out because his health wasn't good. He got three thousand dollars for it. She saw right away what could be done with that much money, and so she married him. But it wasn't any use. You couldn't make him see anything. Honest to God! he was that narrow-minded she used to stand and look at him!

She didn't want to see the three thousand dollars lie in the bank. She wanted to use it; she wanted to make some more with it. She wanted to start a place. She didn't like to see it go, a penny at a time, and nothing to be got out of it. Invested in the right way three thousand dollars would have been a good start. She could have done a lot with it. But, you couldn't reason with Solz! He was selfish and didn't care about nobody but himself. When she talked about things, he wouldn't listen; he'd just look dumb. Even now, sometimes, when she wasn't

doing anything else, she'd sit and think about the little place she'd had if he'd only been any kind of a person at all. It would have been just as refined as it could be. She'd explained that to Solz, carefully, and she'd told him he couldn't put his money into anything that'd pay him better. It would have been on a quiet street; she'd had a light in the window with a pink shade, and behind nice white curtains. And the reception-room would have been a place any gentleman'd been proud to be seen in. She'd have no rough class of people. She hated that kind.

It seemed to her it was always the people who don't care who get the chance to do anything. One time a friend of hers had a telephone switchboard in a hotel, and one of their big customers set her up in business. Her place was wonderful! That girl had everything money could buy. But she didn't have any talent. It was just terrible! that lovely place and her not knowing how to run it. And she never saved a cent. Afterward, she had a fight with her friend, and he got acquainted with some one else. The luck some people have! and they throw it away like dirt. If Mrs. Solz'd ever got a chance one-quarter as good as that, she'd have something to show for it. If things had turned out right, she'd had lace on the vestibule door. And she'd had a balustrade going up the stairs; that always gave a place a tone; and she'd had pictures, too, and a good rug in the hall.

She looked around. That would have to do. You could rub and dust your life away on the stuff in that parlor and never make it any better. She'd get the girl in with the sweeper, and that would finish it. The print of Solz, between the windows, was faded; he had small, dull eyes, and his mouth was shut tightly. She hated it! It made him look just as he'd looked on the days he'd got a red paper. And as she went out of the room she told herself she hated *him*. He'd always been stubborn and hard to deal with. She hated him now more than ever.



Monsieur

"Monsieur."

Living Among the Modern Primitives

BY HELEN ALTON SAWYER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR AND JERRY FARNSWORTH



FROM the many confidently hopeful ones who go to Europe to produce there in the arts, very few bring anything home more concrete than new impressions, stimulation, and a genial widening of the point of view.

And why not? Paris is the darling centre of that world, where the cup of idleness is filled to the brim, and the nice art of conversation flourishes under café

awnings. A stranger might pause near the Café du Dôme to consider what foreign race, so equipped to be interesting, sat here and breathed the soft afternoon air, until he realized that English was spoken at every table on the sidewalk.

Paris is all absorbing and forever interesting, and her life a charming lure, but though she is difficult to resist, one can ask oneself whether Paris is France, and how much true flavor of a foreign country one can absorb, when the medium of speech is largely English, and the daily contact, however delightful, is with Amer-