

## 'Twas All on Account of the Coachman

The Result of Coincidence.

By Maude E. Cougar

Of course, it was all John's fault. Ma said so and so did Mrs. Stuyvesant-Smyth, and of course they ought to have known if anybody ought. And, besides, if John hadn't left the carriage-house door unlocked Betty and I would never once have thought of going in and if he had put his old shears away where they belonged, something else might not have happened. But, as it was, that something did happen and Mrs. Stuyvesant-Smyth went away in a high old temper and ma got mad as a hornet and discharged John on the spot. But Betty was scared to death and if it hadn't been for me she would have up and told the whole business and spoiled all the fun—it was fun to see Mrs. Stuyvesant-Smyth's nose get redder and redder as she got madder and madder and to see ma taking the head off of everybody who came around. That's the reason Betty and me sneaked in the back way and hid behind the parlor curtains and stayed there for hours and hours.

We never did like that Stuyvesant-Smyth woman, 'cause she was always talking how good her little boy was and how "dreadfully noisy" Betty and I were. That made us tired; and then, she always brought an ugly little pup all covered over with hair about a foot long, and made Betty and me walk up and down the sidewalk with it, holding it by a chain; or made us go around on tip-toes and talk in whispers if Tres Petite was asleep. "Thes Petite"—that's what she called it—a mighty outlandish sort of name, I think.

Well, that day when John left the carriage-house door unlocked, Betty and me thought we'd just go in a little bit and look around; and when we got inside, there was ma's brougham standing there, wide open and being aired. Betty and me got in. It was lots of fun, at first, pretending we were on Fifth avenue, or having a runaway and smashing into people. But we got tired of that and begun to hunt around. There was a nice big hole underneath the back seat and we were just looking into it and thinking what a lark it would be to crawl in there, when, all of a sudden, we heard someone coming and in we went before you could think. Betty was afraid but I told her to be quiet and I would protect her if need be.

It was John coming to get the brougham for ma, but we just stayed in the hole as quiet as mice, although Betty wanted to get out more than once.

John drove around to the front door and who should we hear, in a little bit, but Mrs. Stuyvesant-Smyth talking to ma. Then they got into the carriage. "Shucks," I whispered to Betty. "That woman again."

"Let's get out," she whispered back, while I felt her hands moving about, trying to find a way.

"Not much. I'm not going to miss the fun." So we stayed.

Pretty soon I heard Tres Petite sniffing around outside.

"That little cur, do you hear her?" I asked Betty.

"Yes, nasty little thing," she answered. Then I heard her give a gasp. "Hush," I murmured. "What's the matter? What you got?"

"O—I don't know—yes—it's shears! My, how it scared me—they were so cold." Betty always was a afraid-cat.

"Shears?" I whispered. Sure enough, I could feel them.

Just then the carriage stopped and I heard ma say: "John, you keep Tres Petite here in the carriage and see that she doesn't get out. We will be back soon." And then they went away.

Well, of course, I never intended doing it at all, and Betty kind of hesitated, but I peeked and John wasn't looking, so I reached out and grabbed hold of that hair.

"I don't care," I said to Betty. "We'll have our revenge. You hold the little beast."

We stuck all the hair in a corner under the carriage-seat and when ma and Mrs. Stuyvesant-Smyth came back I expect Tres Petite did look rather queer. And then that Smyth woman went off, saying she'd never show her face inside our house again, and ma was just boiling mad. I don't see why;

I'm sure I hope she doesn't, then Betty and me won't have to look after her old dog and walk on tip-toes any more. The only thing I'm sorry about is that John had to get out, but then, you see, it was all his fault.

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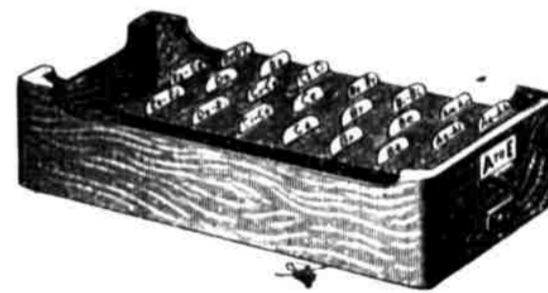
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