

## THE MAJOR.

KATHARINE M. MELICK.  
(For The Courier.)

When March winds curdle the kindly air, the Major limps painfully home, and buries himself in his green "smoker," with red satin facings to match the prevailing tints in the library. He stretches his tingling foot all the length of the Davenport, and immerses himself in a Poultry Journal, which contains his advertisement of Belgian Hares. That same festive breeze which is threading his joints, tosses a tuft of grey fur round and round the driveway, reminding him fitfully of his Sunday stew. When the pain loosens a little, he dozes, and all the china shepherdesses on the high white mantel, tremble at his breath.

It is then that you will see a very different Major, if you come to help him pass his prison hours.

"Sober, perfectly sober, thank you," drope from his great grey mustache, in the corners of which lurk no smell of peppermint, or cubeb berries, or any other strange odors redolent of a village possessed of six drug stores, and an Adams Express Company office.

"No, I have never saw King Edward the seventh, Defender of the Faith. I have saw the Prince o' Wales, and the Queen, at Shrewsbury. I saw them as every body did, when they drove out to be seen. I wasn't in with the nobility."

"Yes, that's true, I might 'ave been. I might 'ave been independently rich. I lay 'ere and think of it, sometimes, when things go wrong at the store, and I wonder what'd 'appen, in case this 'ere should go sky-larkin' to my 'art."

"But,—" the Major emits a long breath, and his American h's,—"I wouldn't have been the heir o' Rixholm Manor, an' done as the heirs does in the old country,—not for no heritage. They aint men—not half a man—most o' them, that is to say. Now there was the Seacrests, Essex county, nice pleasant ladies to ride to the hounds; Lady Mary always got the brush; never knew her to fail, an' her brothers was han'some an' not always knowin' it. But you take the majority of 'em,—whether it's the care they get, bein' responsible for so much propperty, or whether it's the care that's been taken not to let the blood get mixed,—they aint half so intelligent as their hounds is, an' that's a fact. Can't even take a walk without havin' a servant along, to tell 'em where to walk."

"I was presented to one of 'em oncet. Right in the middle of a game of cricket, it was, an' I was at the bat. Them was the times when the Bridgewater Nine played ball, an' I always could take a leg ball. I'd made a record smash, an' a flunkey come up, an' told me His Highness, Earl o' Dent would speak to me. I went over, an' His Highness said he was happy to meet me. I told him he had all the happiness, for the game was waitin' an' you should 'ave seen that flunkey's eyes stick out. The Earl had intended to do me a favor by askin' me to stop playin' cricket to look at 'im, but I'd rather look at a ball any time."

"When the game was over, the Lord o' Westhaven's butler came up, an' give me the keys o' the house. After that, I could go where I pleased, an' have what I wanted, an' once, I wanted too much."

"It was the day the young Lord o' Westhaven come of age. When an' heir is born, in the old country, there is twenty-one barrels of beer put down, an' every year it is opened, and enough poured in to keep the barrels full. Well, when the lord comes of age, the twenty-one barrels is rolled out on the green, an' is on tap all day. You never saw anything like it, here. It is simply munificent. But there was three of we

fellowe, wasn't satisfied. We went to the butler, an' told him we wanted some of the oldest whiskey, just pure yee, kept longer than any of us was years old. He tried to argue us out of it. 'Why, I simply can't give it to you, lads,' says he, 'It will simply flatten you out.' But we showed him the keys, and we kept at him, till a last he brought us a pitcher. The other fellows took two or three swallows first, an' I saw it was a flattener, an' no dispute. But I fetched her off, an' things began to see-saw. 'Boys,' says I, 'we've got to get out of here.' But we got no further than the first shrubbery by the walk. There we laid behind some box, all the rest o' that day. But there was so many more, no one paid no attention.

"Why, I've seen the vicar so thick-tongued he couldn't manage the service, an' had to be helped down from the stand, an' back to the manse. The people would go home, an' never think any thing particular of it."

"Maybe you never knew I was a choir boy, them days. I was. White surplice an' all. I can lay back and hear the responses, yet, by times. Queer, isn't it? But when a man loses the soprano out o' his voice he don't necessarily forget how the music sounded."

"You have never saw a church like that one in this country. Facin' the east, they're all built that way, with slabs and inscriptions all in the aisle, shape of a cross, you know, with seats in the transeps for strangers, an' all the congregation in the nave, nobility in front, an' so on, 'cordin to rank. All of 'em walkin' in over tomb stones, an' sittin' there readin' epitaphs older'n Christopher Columbus, makes it kind o' different, you know."

"All the same, I've never been sorry I left 'em. I landed in Casa county, Ohio, just thirty-nine years ago, next August, with nothin' but the suit o' clothes I had on, an' minus nine dollars. Just nine dollars less'n nothin'. I worked eighteen months for a man in Ohio, at five dollars a month, an' I might 'ave been a lord with a flunkey to protect me, every time I took a walk. But I aint sorry. I'm sorry I wasn't a better manager. I've thrown away two fortunes. But I got 'em first, without sayin' thank you to any lordship, which is more entertainin' than sittin' there, like that old uncle of mine, tryin' to figure up how to spend the interest on his money."

"Yes, I'm better. Glad you came. Come again. I'd rather see you now than have you wait for my funeral. You might, accidentally be disappointed."

## LOVE AND DUTY.

It's been the darndest slowest afternoon  
I've seen for more'n a month. It aint be-  
cause  
I've worked so awful hard. I aint plowed  
half  
What any other fellow'd done, I s'pose,  
The team's all right; the ground's a-work-  
in' fine,  
The field's a-needin' plowin', too. You'd  
think  
I'd keep 'em goin' lively, but, by jing,  
I jest can't do it. When I turn around  
Down at the other end, there, next the  
house,  
Or stop a bit to clean the shovels off,  
Jest like as not I'll fool around and take  
Three times as long's I really ought to do.  
A fellow shouldn't act jest this a-way  
An' waste the whole endurin' afternoon,  
An' keep a lookin' all the time to where,  
Down to the house across the pasture lot,  
She's visitin' our folks.

—Schuyler W. Miller, in  
"A Gallery of Farmer Girls."

"I hear that you are to be married soon," said Mrs. Lakeshore to Mrs. Dearborn.

"At Easter," was the reply. "I always get married at Easter."

Such is the force of habit in Chicago.  
—Town Topics.

## BRIEF CHAPTERS.

BY FLORA BULLOCK.  
For The Courier

On the day when, as tradition has it, it is especially appropriate to plant potatoes, Aunt Sylvia looked out on a scene of blustering gales and swirls of rain chasing flurries of snow down from a very dreary sky.

"Mercy me!" she exclaimed, with a note of complaint in her voice. "A person'd think it'd stop. I'm tired of all this winter in a bunch just when it's time to plant things. It'll wet up the ground, though, and maybe it'll be spring after Easter."

Uncle was constitutionally opposed to several common vices; he never expressed surprise at the weather, and only once in his life had he ever complained about it—and that is another chapter. I always looked up to him as a superior being, when, during the terrific summer days, he would come in and lie down on the floor with a book under his head and a fan in his hand, merely admitting in response to our feminine chorus of wails, that it was pretty hot. He never relieved his feelings—or excited them—by declaring the weather "beastly," "awful," or "horrid." So on this very disagreeable morning, he pattered out and brought in the paper soaking from its morning bath, and, after glancing at the headlines, dried it on the oven door as calmly as if that were his usual custom.

"It looks as though we couldn't do any planting for a week," complained Aunt Sylvia, as they sat at the small table with its clean, red table-cloth and plain dishes. "I had onions up last year at this time. Here it's Good Friday and not a sprig up in that garden."

"Where's that Easter bunnet of yours coming in,—I guess that's what's worryin' you, aint it?" said Uncle.

"An Easter bunnet! As if I'd ever had one for ten years! Why, I've been wearing that same identical bunnet, flowers and trimmings and strings for five summers, ever since Enny's wedding, not a scrap of new trimming on it, and you—I was going to say you know it, but like's not you never thought about it. It don't look so well on me now, my hair's all white. But you needn't crack your Easter bunnet joke on me. Fact is you've had you a nice five dollar hat since I have."

"Oh, you needn't ruffle up your feathers so. That's just what I was thinking. It just struck me that you need an Easter bunnet, ought to have one, must and shall have one. That's what I was thinking."

"But I'm not going trotting down town in all this mud for any fine fixings. Like's not it'll rain and I'd get it spoilt. You remember that pretty blue and white hat you got me the year we was married? Didn't I look like a souled hen that night?"

"Why, as I recollect it, Ma, I thought you looked real pretty," said Uncle. "Shoo!" said Aunt Sylvia, and drove him from the kitchen to the sitting room and his paper. Then she bustled around at her work. The smile and faint tinge of a blush on her soft cheek seemed to show that the garden plot lying in wait for its work was not so much a burden on her mind now.

After he had sufficiently digested his breakfast and the morning paper, Uncle came out and began to look around in the closets and kitchen stairways.

"What is it?" Aunt Sylvia said, as she lifted her hands from the pan of dough she was working.

"Where's the umbrella?"

"The umbrella! Why, you're not going to town?"

She knew if he said so, though, that was just what he would do. So she washed her hands hastily and hunted up the big, rusty, black umbrella, and

his articles, laid away for three weeks under the delusion that spring had come. She helped him on with his coat and made him wear the muffler she got him for Christmas. She even suggested ear muffs and mittens. Whereat Uncle gave one of his fine, expressive grunts. "Not today, I guess."

After he was gone she talked to herself, a bad, but companionable habit.

"I wonder if he did mean anything about that bunnet. It would be kind o' nice to have one, and it wouldn't cost much. I could use some of that black silk and maybe the jet on it. That old one does look kind o' dingy. Funny Pa ever said anything about it. I'd wear it Easter, too, if I had it, for Mrs. McEsery says she's going to wear hers, and,—"

So she went on with her tiresome round of dally duties, this time lightened by the little excitement. A new bonnet for Easter would be quite a sensational event in the life of this quiet old lady.

She told Uncle how she had planned about it, and showed him the silk pieces and the jet, but he seemed to take no interest whatever, and she felt a little hurt. So it came as a surprise after all when Uncle came home Saturday morning at ten o'clock—she ran to the door wondering what could have happened to bring him home at that time of day—carrying a green band box.

"I thought you might as well have a spick and span new one, Ma. The woman was for decorating it up with some yaller flowers, sunflowers or something like them. I guess she took me for a farmer. But I told her them wasn't my style, I wanted something pretty."

And it was a tasty black bonnet with a bunch of violets on it. She tried it on after she had smoothed her hair.

"Why, that's just the thing," said Uncle. "You look as pretty as a peach in it."

Aunt Sylvia thought it looked very well, too, and she tried it on before the glass several times that afternoon. She put it away in the green box after supper, with pleasant anticipations such as even an old lady may rightfully cherish.

But, though the sun shone bright in the morning and the air was alive with bird songs, the green box was not opened and Aunt Sylvia went alone to church—for Uncle was not a church goer—with a face that bore a look of heart pain and sorrow under the old rusty bonnet.

## HER FAIRY FEET.

"Bring me a tiny mouse's skin,"  
The boisterous tanner cried;  
"It must be as a rose leaf thin  
And scarce three fingers wide."

He seized the fragile tiny bit  
Within his brawny hand  
And cast it in the seething pit;  
And so the skin was tanned.

Then came a cobbler to his side  
With tools the cobblers use,  
And deft they wrought that mouse's hide  
Into a pair of shoes.

"Tell me," I asked, "O cobbler, tell,  
For whom these morceaux be?"  
"A lover bade me build them well  
For his true love," quoth he.

"Where dwells this maid with fairy feet?"  
In wonderment I cried;  
The old man shifted in his seat—  
"Chicago," he replied.

—Eugene Field.

## APRIL

Robins call robins in tops of trees;  
Doves follow doves, with scarlet feet;  
Frollicking babies, sweeter than these,  
Crowd green corners where highways meet.

But April sobs when these are so glad,  
April weeps while these are so gay,—  
Weeps like a tired child, who had  
Playing with flowers, lost its way.

—H. H.