

STRIKING A MATCH.

"Well, Miss Hildeburn, I must say I'm real sorry you and Mr. Sangster have fallen out like that."

"Oh, Mrs. Collins, indeed you are mistaken. There has been no falling out between Mr. Sangster and myself. Indeed, I am not on sufficiently sociable terms with any of your gentlemen boarders to have a quarrel."

Saying which Miss Hildeburn, a slight, delicate-featured girl of 18, walked out of the room with even more than her wonted dignity of manner and carriage.

"Nevertheless, notwithstanding," pursued Mrs. Collins, resuming her ironing, "I do believe there's been a misunderstanding between those two; and a real pity it is, for he did admire her amazingly. He couldn't conceal it. Only they seldom know what is good for 'em, and she's a lettin' her pride stand in the way of her happiness now."

"Pride, indeed!" sneered Miss Jane Humphries, Mrs. Collins' niece and assistant, a tall, red-haired, stylishly dressed dame of five-and-thirty. "I'd like to know what right a girl who earns her livin' by givin' music lessons at 50 cents an hour has to be proud; and as for Mr. Sangster, I don't believe he ever had a serious thought about her."

"La, Jane, I don't know where your eyes kin be, if you didn't see how fairly wrapped up in her he was about two weeks ago. He's a splendid young man, anyhow, and I'll see if I can't mend matters between 'em. You'd better be mindin' your own business, I think, Aunt Martha," said Miss Jane, with a spiteful laugh.

"Never your mind, Jane," persisted the warm-hearted Mrs. Collins; "I'll manage it some way. You say she's afraid of ghosts, poor lamb!"

The following evening the kind-hearted landlady tapped at the door of the scantily furnished fourth-story room occupied by Lucy Hildeburn, and from which now proceeded a melancholy strain.

"Studying your piano at nights again?" queried Mrs. Collins reproachfully, when the young girl opened the door.

"I am very busy just now, and must put all the time I can into study."

"Well, but you mustn't forget what the doctor told you about overworking your brain," said Mrs. Collins.

"However," she added, "I won't detain you longer'n I ken help. I'm come to ask a favor. I'm goin' to the theater this evening. So is Jane. So's everybody in the house, I believe; and the girl has gone to bed with a toothache. So I'm goin' to ask you to give an eye to the furnace. I've just put on fresh coal and opened the lower doors; but will you please go down at 8 o'clock and close the doors?"

"Certainly," assented Lucy, upon which Mrs. Collins produced a lantern, saying:

"Just take this down with you. The cellar's all dark, you know."

Lucy took the lantern, closed the room door and returned to her piano, while Mrs. Collins walked away, chuckling to herself.

"That lantern'll go out just five minutes after she sets it down, and she'll find herself all in the dark. And she's afraid of ghosts, poor lamb! But what if somebody who ain't a ghost should happen to be goin' down there about the same time, and be obliged to strike a match to calm her fears?"

And even while indulging in this pleasing reflection, Mrs. Collins tapped at a door on the second floor. Her summons was responded to by a pleasant-looking young man, who just now, however, wore a very dejected countenance.

"La! Mr. Sangster, I didn't expect to find you at home this evening."

"I didn't feel like going out to-night," replied the young man in a weary tone.

"Well, since you are going to be at home," said Mrs. Collins, "would you be so kind as to look after the furnace? I've left the lower doors open but I'll be very much obliged if you go down at about 8 o'clock and close 'em. And you needn't take a light. There'll be one down there."

Mr. Sangster readily promised to comply with the request, and Mrs. Collins went away, hoping for what she considered "the right results."

Meanwhile, poor Lucy Hildeburn, sitting at her piano, continued to draw forth such melancholy strains that the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"I must go away from here," she said, half aloud, "I can't bear it much longer, indeed I can't, seeing him day after day, loving him as I do, and knowing that matters can never be adjusted between us. He is as proud as I—but, oh dear! what am I thinking of? It wants just two minutes to 8. I must go down and close the furnace doors."

Thereupon she lighted the lantern and proceeded down stairs.

Ugh! What a chill draught was blowing in through one of the gratings!

And there were strange noises all around.

Lucy's heart thumped so violently she was tempted to turn and run up stairs again.

But, goodness! The furnace was dreadfully, dangerously hot.

Lucy summoned up all her resolutions, and, stooping down, closed the doors.

They swung to with a bang, and when she essayed to open them

again she found the effort beyond her strength.

What was to be done in the case of the fire needing more draught. She might, after a while, find it necessary to put on more coal, and that it would be well to put on more draught.

But while she was debating with herself a more serious mishap occurred, for the candle inside the lantern suddenly achieved the most inexplicable somersault and she was left in utter darkness.

Moreover, to complicate the miseries of her situation, she now heard stealthy footsteps descending the cellar stairs.

Poor Lucy stood quite still, while her hands clasped together over her heart.

This was a burglar, undoubtedly. He had seen all the male inmates of the house going out and the lights lowered, and had thus chosen his opportunity to come in and conceal himself in the cellar.

The first idea that suggested itself to her was to creep under the steps and remain there until Mrs. Collins returned.

Ere she had time to do this, however, a man's form became visible in the dim, semi-twilight that was shed from the kitchen door above.

Lucy, with a desperate instinct of self-preservation, put up both hands, exclaiming:

"Have pity on me! Oh, have pity and spare my life!"

Upon this the burglar drew back, very much surprised.

"Miss Hildeburn!" he exclaimed, as he struck a match. "What are you doing here, and how can I serve you?"

Now poor Lucy, completely unnerved and dreadfully ashamed of herself, sat down on a reserved and rustic seat and burst into a fit of weeping.

Then Mr. Sangster knelt down beside her, and a confused interchange of explanations of various kinds ensued.

The result was that at the expiration of a half-hour Mr. Sangster took Lucy in his arms and kissing the tear-stained face, murmured:

"God bless you for this promise, my own darling!"

When Mrs. Collins came home two hours later the house was very quiet, the furnace in good order, and neither Mr. Sangster nor Miss Hildeburn visible. But the following day Lucy confided to her a secret, and Mr. Sangster absented himself mysteriously for about three weeks. After that, Miss Hildeburn also disappeared.

"Gone to visit her aunt at Swathmore," Mrs. Collins explained to the other boarders.

But a fortnight later the carrier brought some wedding cards to the house.

"It was all brought about through the furnace," said Mrs. Collins, with a gleeful chuckle.

But Miss Jane was infinitely disgusted.

The Humbug of Free Ships.

The Providence Journal contributes its quota of misinformation to a debate that has been going on for several years, and which never fails to bring out a liberal supply of ineptitudes:

"A few years ago and the United States was the most formidable rival that Great Britain had for the commerce of the world, and now the American flag is practically banished from the high seas. What did it? An absurd law prohibiting the purchase of ships in a free market."

And mighty lucky it is for American capitalists that they are no longer owners and navigators of ships on the high seas. For many years, under high-pressure competition, British, German, and Scandinavian, and with the pauper wages of those countries, the business has been carried on at a constant loss. Except the Cunard Company, which paid one small dividend in 1887, none of the great English lines of steamers has paid a dividend for years, and none is likely to pay a dividend.

By heavy subsidies the Government of Germany, like that of France, maintains these lines with a view to ultimate military purposes; and it is impossible that outside ship owners should compete with them. If our navigation laws were altered so that we could buy in what the Journal calls a free market all the ships we could undertake to run, we should only lose money by the operation. In fact if ships were given us, we could not run them at a profit, unless the coast of repairs and the rates of wages for sailors, stokers and laborers were brought down with us to the lowest limit of England, Germany or Sweden.

We are a great deal better off for being out of that business than we would be if we were in it. Meanwhile, thanks to our wise old laws, our American coasting trade is fairly profitable and bigger than ever before. No English need apply.—N. Y. Sun.

Little Things Will Tell.

We went to spend a day in the country, and had a fine treat of fried chicken for dinner. Then we took a walk with children, who led the way to the chicken coop.

"All our best chickens are dead," said one of the children, sadly.

"Why, what killed them?"

"Papa did; but they are going to die anyway, 'cause they had the pip."

"What became of them?" (This with a heavy heart and squeamish stomach.)

"We fried 'em for dinner," answered the child, sorrowfully.

The National Pie Eaters.

We have been called a nation of pie eaters. From the humblest American citizen to the President of the United States pie occupies a prominent place in the household larder.

Who invented pie is not yet known, nor exactly how the name originated. It is generally supposed that the word pie has its origin with the printers, but just how is lost in obscurity.

Talking about the consumption of pies, a good many of them are consumed at the capitol by our able lawmakers.

Just off from the rotunda is a lunch stand presided over by a soldier's widow. She is familiarly known as Jennie. Jennie is well known by all the members and Senators, and every day the stroll from their seats in the halls of legislation and visit the little stand to satisfy the inner man.

On the stand, displayed in a tempting manner will be found a variety of cakes, apples, peaches, bananas, sandwiches—beef and tongue—milk and pie.

The last named article has a strong hold on the appetite of the solons, and they'll eat pie in preference to anything else.

The Critic reporter stopped at the stand the other day to partake of a little repast, when his attention was attracted by the usual large number of Congressmen who rely on Jennie to prepare them a small lunch.

As a rule the members go to the House restaurant when hungry, but it frequently happens that they cannot spare the time, so they run over to Jennie's lunch counter.

"Jennie," asked the reporter, "what kind of pie do the members eat?"

"What kind of pie? Why, anything, so it's pie. These are grand pies; they never give you dyspepsia, nor the like. But don't you ask me any more questions, because I won't answer them; you reporters are so inquisitive, always finding out things."

"Does Congressman Vance eat pie?"

"Yes, nearly all the members eat pie. If they don't eat pie they eat something else."

While the reporter was asking questions Hon. Amos J. Cummings came along and said: "What kind of pie do you eat, Jennie?"

"Apple, plum, pineapple, blackberry, cocanut, peach and custard. I keep custard pie for Mr. Vance."

"Well, give me a slice of peach and a glass of milk."

Mr. Cummings took the pie in his right hand and gracefully put it out of sight. He doesn't lose much time in masticating a slice of pie.

M. O'Donnell of Michigan does not stick to one kind of pie; he changes off. One day he'll prefer apple, the next cocanut or blackberry, and so on. He eats his pie with a fork.

Very seldom does the Hon. Joe Cannon eat pie, but occasionally he stops by for a piece of apple pie.

Mr. Buchanan of New Jersey is one of the House pie eaters. He generally lanches on the grape pie. When the crust is rather firm he cuts the pie into little squares and washes them down with a swallow of milk.

Mr. Fitch and Amos Cummings are very fond of the German dish Zwiawil Kuchen, and Jennie keeps it for their special benefit.

Chairman Mills of the Ways and Means Committee now and then patronizes Jennie to the extent of a half of a lemon pie. He uses a fork with his pie.

Mr. Guenther, Vice-President of the P. F. O. N. Organization, is another one passionately fond of pie. He eats his pie about two o'clock in the day.

"Give me some pie milk," he'll say. "I don't care, so it's pie."

Mr. Boothman of Ohio, like all the Western members, is fond of the seductive pastry. He frequently gets on the outside of two slices of pineapple pie.

Mr. Funston of Kansas, who represents an agricultural constituency, like blackberry pie and Jennie always has a slice put by for him.

Mr. Burrows of Michigan eats his pie as he would a piece of cake.

Judge Barnes of Georgia is also a slave to pie.

Tim Campbell eats his pie with a knife. He is very partial to mince pie when in season.

Sunset Cox says a man's digestive organs are out of repair when he can't enjoy pie.

Mr. Baker of New York always uses a spoon when he tackles a slice of custard pie.

The New England members as a rule will eat no other kind of pie than apple.

Big Tom Reed usually eats pie in the House restaurant.

New varieties of pie are constantly making their appearance. The other day Major McClumny of North Carolina wanted some orange pie, while Major Martin inquired for grape.

"Charlie" Mason of Illinois is known in the House as the great Chicago pie eater. He eats nothing but cocanut pie, and generally he consumes a half-one for lunch. He says that any man who doesn't like pie is worse than a liar.

Epoch: Old Lady (to grocer's boy)

—Your store, boy, seems to be very full of flies. Boy—Yes'm; I guess it's that lot of fly paper the boss jest bought that draws 'em in here. Do you want some of it?

The Idea: Mrs. Lovetalk—So Mr. Gray tipples on the sly? Poor Mrs. Gray! Well, well, every family has a skeleton in the closet. The Doctor's Son (in for the evening)—We haven't. My papa keeps his in the office down town.

UNDER CHURCH EAVES

Harris Holbrook, college graduate of a week, prospecting around in harum-scarum fashion to work off some exuberant sense of freedom, did not count upon an adventure when he ascended the roof of the old brown church where the workmen were chipping and hammering and jabbering. He had climbed up for a view of the buildings of the city, and "the glory of them."

A Dog's Sense.

From the Boston Record.

A young girl was crossing the Public Garden the other morning upon the main path which crosses the bridge. She was accompanied by a magnificent mastiff, who strode along beside her in the most companionable sort of way, looking up into her face occasionally as if to remark casually that it was a very fine morning, or to ask if there was anything he could do for her.

Navy Mobilization.

From all I can see the Admiralty are about to perpetrate a practical joke of unprecedented dimensions in this much-advertised "mobilization of the navy." According to the official theory, as I understand it, the object of the proceedings is to show the public and the world exactly what we can do in a real emergency. All in a moment the message is to be flashed forth from Whitehall that war has been unexpectedly declared against us and that the enemy's fleet is already at sea. Within such and such a time every man Jack is to be embarked and every ship is to take its place either on the coast or in line of battle. It sounds very pretty. When you come to look at the facts it is nothing short of sublime. For about three months past this impromptu effect has been in active preparation. Whitehall has been edgewise. Simply because after all this time not the word is given weeks ago? when the word is given. And why has water's edge and told what to do has been brought down to the mission, every available blue jacket that will float has been put into commission straining every nerve, every shiping its brains, the dockyards have and all these efforts, were not ready. When we are, and not till then, the obliging enemy will declare war. The button will be pressed in Whitehall, the fleets of Britain will go forth and sweep the foam from the seas, and the First Lord will turn round and say to the dumfounded panic monger: "Observe. There is no deception. This is what we can do at twenty-four hours' notice! As a joke it is not bad, though a little out of place.—London Truth.

Dog Farming in China.

The rearing of dogs for their skins is pursued in China just as sheep farming is in Australia. There are thousands of small dog and goat farms scattered over the northern districts of Manchuria and Mongolia. Nature has provided a magnificent protection to withstand the cold of these northern latitudes, where the thermometer (Fahrenheit) goes down to twenty-five degrees below zero—that is, fifty-seven degrees of frost, and it is doubtful if the dogskins of any other part of the world are to be compared with those from Manchuria or Mongolia, either in size, length of hair or quality. The fur is at its best during the winter, and the dog is killed before the thaw sets in, which is effected not by the knife, which might injure the fur, but by strangulation. Last year the value of the skins fell off, owing to the stocks of previous years being undelivered. It is difficult to understand how the farmers can rear the animals for the price they obtain for the hides. To provide a well-made dogskin rug at least eight animals must be slaughtered, which, at three tails per rug of eighty inches by sixty-eight inches, would allow not quite fifty-five cents per dog, including the sewing, chocking, etc., for the skins must fairly match in color. The flesh, however, is no doubt used for human food, and the market value thereof enters largely into the farmer's profit and loss account. When a girl is married she receives, perhaps, six dogs as her dowry.—Pall Mall Gazette.

Western Freedom.

The editor of a Western paper has this to say: "The dead-geranium, leaf-eared spooler, whom fate has willed shall wither and blight the weekly Dreadful around the corner, refers to the editor of this flourishing and influential journal as a pinfeather journalist and a can't-get-there-dude. He also goes on to say that as a newspaper freak we are probably the finest specimen of the kind ever captured alive. Brethren of the press, this is all wrong. Let us be courteous to one another. In this work-a-day world of ours there is no influence so soothing and refining as that courtesy. The soft, low-spoken word, the gentle smile, the kindly reference—who has not felt their balm, been helped over some rough place in life's pathway by their beneficial effect? Brethren of the press, again we say let us be courteous to one another, and let the microbe pull his number five hat deep down over his eyes and ponder upon these words. Selah!—Tid-Bits.