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ALL THE PHONES





Through the Pantry Window

By Claudine Sisson

On a certain chill October afternoon, which was brightened only by a flare of crimson leaves on all the maples and the ever-present tangles of aster and golden rod along the bushy banks, Elsle turned her horse in at a rickety picket gate and dismounted before the porch of a tiny, shabby, neglected house.

Tears came to Elsie's eyes, as she thought of the dead woman who had animated it with her kindly presence. She felt that she would like to go in and look about and try in imagination to refurnish the abandoned rooms and to people them with the gentle figures. that had once frequented them.

The thin old horse, a freekled gray from the livery stable in town, was pulling at the reins in an effort to get his nose to the grass. Elsie sought for some place to make him secure and remembered the little barn. If the door was not nailed up she could put him in there.

The door was not nailed up. It slid open easily and she led the horse in and tied him to the stall which had held only cobwebs and hay and dust for a long time. A little had re-

ili



Elsis Turned Her Horse in at a Rick ety Gate.

mained in one corner. She carried it to the horse, who received it as eagerly as if it had been the freshest of fodder. Then she went to the house.

It was locked securely. She went bout trying the shutters. At last she

flower; her lips smiled a new little smile of understanding of men's ways and of God's. Above the hushed sound of tears rose a dignified voice; "I am the resurrection and the life." How vividly she remembered it all! She had sat here and he had sat there with aunt Hope between. And though they both looked at aunt Hope tearfully they would not look at each other. How pale he had been! And, perhaps, she, too, had been just as pale under her veil. Well, it was over. Of what use was it to regret?

Yet Elsie knew how anxiously aunt

quarrel

again.

Hope had longed for them to be friends again, how strongly she had advised their making up their feolish "You are both young and high tempered," she had pleaded again and "but there'll come a time when you'll be old and remorseful unless you make up now. Why, you are made for each other, Elsie, You'll never be happy with anyone else, nor will David. He's a splendid young fellow. Don't I know? Wasn't I with his mother the night he was born.

and haven't I watched him grow up from baby to man? And haven't I watched you grow up, too? And I love you both. I've tried to have you care for each other because I felt that was as it should be. And now you've let that little trollop of a Doris Kennedy come between you! Oh, I know what folks say about me-that I am a meddling of matchmaker-

"Peacemaker, aunt Hope," Elsie had aughed, tremulously

"Well, then, peacemaker, I hope I Riessed-you know what the Bible says. But I ain't sure of that unless you'll let me make peace between you and David!"

"Some day," Elste had half promised. That was a year ago. Then they had met at aunt Hope's funeral and had not spoken. Afterward David had gone back to the city to his work and Elsie had gone hers in the little country town. As far as she knew now, her romance was ended. There was no aunt Hope to advise and gently smooth away the difficul-But, oh, the sweetness and the bitterness of it lingered with her like mingled myrrh and honey. She had loved David-she loved him still-and must go on loving him as long as she lived. But she had the Bennett temper. He had it, too, far back somewhere, a couple of generations ago, a certain marriage had made them kin. She would not give up. Neither would And it was all because she had not liked his city cousin, Doris Kennedy, and he had! Perhaps down in her heart Elsie had been a bit jealous of the blonde young woman who looked as if she had been run in an exceedingly slender mold, and had never so much as bent her back since -an effect obtained, it was said, by means of an exacting dressmaker.

Elsie was far too natural to admire Doris' immobility, loads of false hair and layers of pink and white powder. And she had told David so in a none too pleasant way.

"But her heart is all right," he had argued, stoutly. "Doris is a good girl.



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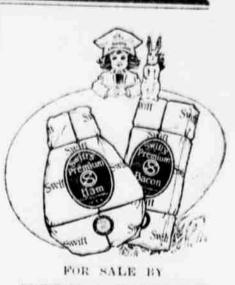
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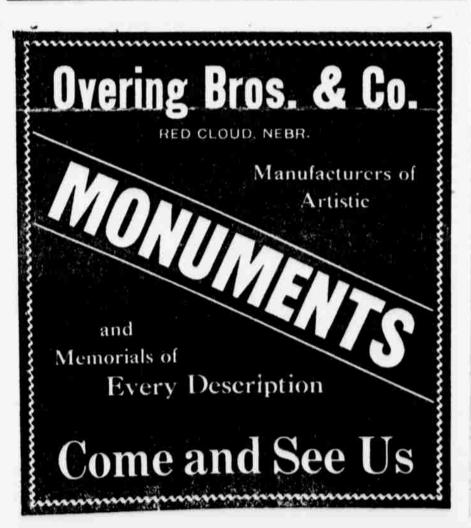
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found one partly off the hingesblown off by a high wind, no doubt, She swung it clear and put her hand to the window underneath. To her surprise, it raised as she pushed upon gun She seemed to hear a familiar It. voice saying in her ear:

"The ketch on that pantry window needs fixing bad, but I can't seem to do it. But, ia! what difference does it There ain't no burglar commake? ing in here for the little trash I've got. If one did come in he'd be glad enough to get out again, after I'd given it to him good and lively with that old pair of brass tongs I keep

handy for the purpose." Aunt Hope's dear voice! Aunt

Hope's own remembered words! And this was the pantry window. Elsie looked in. The tiny place was neat. the cupboard doors shut; an old iron spider hung against the wall. It looked perfectly natural and right, quite as if aunt Hope had just stepped out. Clarissa Mains, the beiress, had left some things as they should be.

The window sill was only knee high from the ground, and Elsie climbed over it easily. She let down the window behind her. The floor gave back an empty sound beneath her feet as she walked across it to the kitchen. The kitchen, too, was quite unchanged. There stood the old-fashioned stove from which she had eaten so many of aunt Hope's good dinners. In the dining room the chairs and the table still stood in their places upon the painted floor. But the dishes were gone from the shelves where aunt Hope had kept

them. Clarissa Mains had appreclated the fact that such old blue ware was valuable After the dining room came the

parlor, the room that in aunt Hope's lifetime Elsie had always loved best. It was a good sized room in the front of the house. She lifted a window and turned the slats of the closed shutters. The yellow afternoon light came in across the bare floor. innumerable motes danced in its rays. Upon the walls a few old pictures still hung, and the wall paper showed fresh spaces upon its faded surface where others had been.

Elsie sat down upon one of the appealing chairs and clasped her hands in their riding gauntlets about her knee. There was a chill of firelessness and stale air in the room, but she did not feel it. She was thinking of the last time she had been in this room. There had been flowers in the room and many people. In the midst lay aunt Hope, always hitherto so graclous and genial, so guick to respond to the love of her friends and neighbors. Her hands were crossed upon a

The trouble is, you are envious of her, that's all.' "Envious!" cried Elsie, scarlet

with rage. So the quarrel had be-As she sat there now in the empty room Elsie owned to herself sadly that

she had been unreasonable. After all, Doris was David's own cousin and older than he. There had been no reason in the world for her being jealous -as she had been; yes, she had to admit that now

"If only I had listened to aunt Hope. If only I had let her make peace as she wished-

A crash at the back of the house startled her. A window had fallen! She sprang to her feet. Steps were coming toward her through the house -heavy steps-a man's. Now they were in the kitchen-now the dining room. She plunged toward the door that opened into the little front entry. It was locked. She tugged at it frantically. Heaven! To be shut in this house with a tramp. Still tugging, with futile desperation, at the unyielding door she looked back over her shoulder just as the invader appeared

in the parlor door-a tall young fellow in a respectable ulster, who looked almost as white and shaken as she knew she was.

"Elsie!" he exclaimed. "Great Scott!

"David!" she gasped. And half fell against the supporting door. They stared at each other, the color slowly coming back to their faces.

"Did you get in at the pantry window, too?" Elsie asked, when she could.

He nodded.

"I remembered that aunt Hope was always going to have it fixed and never did. What are you doing here, Elsie?" He came close to her. "What are you?"

"I came because I had to. I felt as if I was being called."

"David! That's just the way I 6012

Their eyes sought each other's, we struck, wondering. Then their hands met.

"Forgive me, Elsie. I was wrong," he faltered

"Forgive me, David, I was wrong, 00

They clung together.

"I didn't care for Doris. But she was my cousin-

"I know. I know." She was in his arms now. And he had kissed her.

"David," Elsie said, from his shoulder, solemnly, "do you suppose-that she, aunt Hope, drew us here today?" His eyes had the look of one who

has been very near the holy things. "Who knows?" he answered, very low. "Blessed are the peacemakers!"

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