

A SONG FROM THE SUDS.

Queen of my tub, I merrily sing,
While the white foam rises high,
And sturdily wash and rinse and wring,
And fasten the clothes to dry,
And then out in the fresh air they swing
Under the sunny sky.

I wish we could wash from our hearts and our souls
The stains of the week away,
And let pure water and air by their magic
make
Ourselves as pure as they,
Then on the earth there would be, indeed,
A glorious washing-day!

Along the path of a useful life
Will heart's ease ever bloom;
The busy mind has no time to think
Of sorrow, or care, or gloom;
And anxious thoughts may be swept away
As we busily wield a broom.

I am glad a task to me is given,
To labor at day by day;
For it brings me health and strength and hope,
And I cheerfully learn to say,
"Head, you may think, heart, you may feel;
But, hand, you shall work away!"
Louisa M. Alcott (at fifteen).

HOW THE PLAN WORKED.

"Your white roses are just coming into bud, Lally," said Archie Cone, as he came in from the garden. "Blossom Hedge is at its prettiest now."

The coffee exhaled a fragrant odor, the fresh baked biscuits were of the most delicate brown, and the chickens broiled to a turn, but Mrs. Cone's face wore a most tragic expression, as she sat with an open letter in her hand.

"Aldrich," said she, hysterically, "what am I to do? Here's your Aunt Effingham coming here next week, with her six children and the nurse! They've had the measles, it seems, and the doctor has prescribed country air, so they've decided to inflict a four weeks' visitation upon me!"

"Oh," said Aldrich, guiltily, "I forgot to tell you. Haidee Clair wants to come here this summer. She requires perfect quiet to finish her new novel, and says she retains such a delightful impression of Blossom Hedge from her last Summer's visit."

"Oh does she indeed?" said Mrs. Cone, dashing the cream and sugar recklessly into the seagreen china cups. "And we must remember that your cousin Falkland has kindly volunteered to send Andromeda here for the Summer, so that she may forget that love affair of hers with Jack Jocelyn."

"I'm afraid we haven't room for 'em all," said Mr. Cone, reflectively.

"Oh, yes, you have," said Lally, with tears and laughter struggling in her voice. "They'll sleep on the hall hat rack, on the garret floor or the cellar shelves, sooner than forego the opportunity of getting good country board for nothing! And I shall do as I did last year—get along without a new winter suit, and do my own winter housework, because the housekeeping bills were so heavy during the Summer. All our relations are very particular, you know, about their eating and drinking, and we had to get new hair mattresses for the Johnson-Smythes, and re-carpet Haidee's room because she perfectly abhorred the old pattern."

"It's outrageous!" said Cone, carving the chickens. "But I don't know how we are to help ourselves without being dreadfully rude."

"Tell them plainly that they cannot come."

"Our relations, Lally?" remonstrated Cone.

"It's an imposition," said Lally.

"It's only for a little while, my love. Let 'em come."

"It will be for all Summer, Aldrich."

"No, it won't. I'll see to that."

"What do you mean?"

"I've got a plan in my head, my love."

"A plan."

"Yes. You'll see. Only don't ask any questions."

"But Aldrich," pleaded the young housekeeper, with every hospitable impulse rising in her heart, "you mustn't treat 'em rudely."

"I'll be as pleasant as Punch to 'em, my love, see if I'm not."

"Aldrich, what are you going to do?"

"Don't I tell you, Lally, that it's a profound secret?"

"But you'll tell me?"

"I'll tell nobody."

And to this platform Mr. Cone steadfastly adhered, in spite of Lally's protestations and entreaties.

The authors arrived, with several huge trunks, a typewriter and a hammock.

Miss Andromeda Falkland came by the next train, "like Niobe, all tears," and Mrs. Effingham, her nurse and her six noisy, troublesome young convalescents brought up the rear.

"Ten people! said Mrs. Cone to that trustworthy and reliable confidant, herself. "Oh dear! oh dear! I might as well have taken a situation for general housework in a summer boarding-house."

"I don't see," said Mrs. Pepper, the minister's wife, "what that young Cone is thinking of to allow his wife to be so overridden with relations. The weather is very hot, and she is far from strong. And I am told they sleep themselves on a sofa bedstead in the parlor, to make room for that swarm of parasites."

"My dear," said the good parson, "are you not expressing yourself rather strongly?"

"I'm only speaking the truth," said Mrs. Pepper.

But it soon transpired that Mrs. Cone's visitors, like Barnum's happy family, could not agree.

Miss Haidee Clare could not write without the accompaniment of perfect silence. The little Effinghams could not divert themselves without the hoots and shrieks peculiar to their tender years, and both Mrs. Cone and Mrs. Effingham took exception to the mournful banjo notes on which Andromeda Falkland was wont of an evening to bewail her blighted love.

"They are quarreling like cats and dogs," sighed Lally to her husband. "Let 'em quarrel," said Aldrich.

"What larks, ma!" said Erskine Effingham one afternoon as he returned from a successful raid upon the hen's nest in the barn. "We've got to take our hammocks and croquet out of the Maple lot."

"What for?" petulently inquired his mother.

"Cousin Aldrich has sold it."

"Sold it? How very inconsiderate of him!" said Mrs. Effingham. "Sold it to whom?"

"To the cemetery people."

"What!"

"The cemetery people," enunciated Master Erskine. "The railroad's a-goin' right through the old graveyard, and they've got to have a new place. I heard Cousin Aldrich tell the carpenter to bring that load of fence post right off, and I heard him say, too, that it didn't matter so much, because there had already been two or three interments there."

"Interments!" grasped Mrs. Effingham, "under our very windows? Goodness gracious me! I never heard of such a thing!"

"If you please, ma'ma," said Delia, the nurse, "that accounts for it."

"Accounts for what?"

"The ghost, mum, all in white!" uttered Delia, with chattering teeth. "I seen it last night, mum, as the church clock struck twelve; an' I seen it the night before. An' I don't wonder, ma'am, the poor dead bodies bein' dug up and scattered around this way. And if you please, ma'am, you'll suit yourself at once, for not another week will Delia O'Rourke live next door to a churchyard."

"Ma, ma," whispered Florence Effingham, who had eagerly devoured every word of the discussion, "I'm afraid of ghosts. Delia says ghosts come after little girls if they don't—"

"Will you hush?" said Mrs. Effingham, clasping her hands in despair. "Aldrich, what is this? Have you sold the Maple lot?"

"Sold it? Why shouldn't I?" said Mr. Cone, who just then came in with a string of speckled brook trout. "They offered me a capital price, and I'm not a rich man."

"But to a cemetery!"

"I don't know a quieter neighbor than a cemetery," said Aldrich.

"And I'm told," said Mrs. Effingham, with a shudder, "that some interments have already taken place!"

"I didn't suppose you'd mind it, Aunt Effingham," said the young host.

"Mind it! Why, it's a semi-barbarous proceeding!" cried the lady. "Do we live in a civilized country, or do we not?"

"Ma!" screeched Rudolph Effingham, the second son, jerking at the maternal skirts, "here's a load of lumber at the bars, a real big load. Do you suppose that's to make the coffins out of?"

Just then Miss Clare stalked, a la Lady Macbeth, upon the scene.

"I attach no importance to vulgar superstition," said she, glaring at Mrs. Effingham, with whom she was no longer on speaking terms. "Of the dead I entertain no fear. But the living are quite a different thing. And I certainly saw a man, Cousin Aldrich, prowling about these premises last night, with a dark lantern."

"The ghost!" squeaked Delia. "I seen him, too! I did, with these eyes, the blissed saints betune me and all harm! Oh! oh! oh!"

"Peace, foolish woman!" said Haidee. "This was no shade! It was a burly thief, intent no doubt on mischief. I saw him try to open the back parlor shutter, and then Neighbor Foxley's wagon drove by, and he disappeared as if by magic. And I want you to understand, Lally," to Mrs. Cone, "that I can't stand the nervous shock of this sort of thing. My profession requires that I should be surrounded by peaceful calm. I leave here to-morrow."

"An' I'll go wid yez," said Delia. "I can't sleep nights in a place where burglars is climbin' up the trellis work, and poor ghosts come stalkin' around when the church clock strikes midnight, and a whole wagon load more comin', tomorry or next day, from the cemetery! Och, home! the like of it niver was heard before!"

"Ma, ma! can't we go, too? We're afraid to stay at Blossom Hedge any longer!" pleaded the little Effinghams in chorus.

"And so there was a general exodus. "Aldrich, is this true?" said Mrs. Cone, when the last express load of trunks had disappeared around the curve of the road.

"Is what true?" You're not afraid of ghosts, are you, Lally?"

"No; but—"

"Don't fret, my dear," said Cone, composedly. "The cemetery has purchased a lot, but it happens to be Maple Hill, four miles to the east of us. I'm not to blame, am I, for Erskine Effingham's blunder?"

"But the load of lumber?"

"I've sold the place to Dr. Bassett and he's going to build a gem of a Queen Ann cottage. I can't imagine any pleasanter neighbors than the Bassetts will be, can you?"

"Y-yes," said bewildered Lally; "but the interments that had

already taken place there? You said yourself—"

"My dearest girl, don't you remember that we buried Minnie, your pet spaniel, under the sweet-brier bush there? and the two canaries, last fall?"

"Oh, Aldrich, aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"Who—? Not in the least."

"But the ghosts, Aldrich? the burglars?"

"Here comes Andromeda, said Mr. Cone, with a sudden assumption of more than judicial gravity. "Come here, you false damsel, and own up at once what I've already been sharp enough to discover for myself."

"Oh, Cousin Aldrich," stammered poor Andromeda, blushing celestial rosy red, and trying vainly to hide her face behind the blue-ribboned banjo in her hand.

"I am neither Delia O'Rourke, nor the Effingham children, nor yet Haidee Clare," mercilessly went on Aldrich. "And I shrewdly suspect that the ghost was Jack Jocelyn in a white tennis suit, haunting the green field beneath his sweetheart's windows, and the burglar no other than Jack Jocelyn in black, climbing up the trellis after a letter which he well knew where to find."

Andromeda blushed redder than ever.

"Now, I'll have no more of this," said Aldrich, with mock sternness. "Confess, young woman, at once, that you and your love affair are at the bottom of all this mystification. Jack Jocelyn has owned up."

"Oh, Aldrich!" sobbed Andromeda. "And will you, too, turn against me?"

"Not a bit of it," said Aldrich Cone, cheerfully. "Don't fret, little one, Jack has just told me that he has been appointed to a thousand-dollar berth in the general post-office, and I've written to your mother that things are all right. He's a jolly good fellow, and it isn't necessary to play ghost out in the cold any longer."

Andromeda threw herself, weeping with joy, into Lally Cone's arms, and the two women rejoiced together.

Aldrich smiled.

"My plan hasn't worked so badly," said he.—Saturday Night.

Bravely Done.

Quite recently, on a Belgian railway, a period of extreme cold so affected a switch-bar that when the switchman attempted to move it it broke in two. The accident prevented the switching apparatus from working.

Two passenger trains were approaching and the switchman saw instantly that if the switch was not turned a dreadful collision would be the result.

There was but one thing for him to do. He must push the movable rail into place with his hands. This involved getting between the two tracks upon which the trains must pass. He decided what to do without hesitating a second.

Throwing himself flat on the ground between the two tracks the switchman moved the rail to its place with his hands and then drew them back just in time to escape the wheels of the locomotive.

He had a narrow escape, too, from being thrown upon the other track by the rush of air caused by the rapidly moving train.

He escaped, however, and the passengers whose lives his bravery and presence of mind had saved did not even know that they had been in danger.—Youth's Companion.

Politeness in New York.

I heard the other day of a delightful old country parson who came to New York as the guest of a son who is successful in business here. The old gentleman did not go about alone after the first time, because he said it wrung his heartstrings to hear the tales of woe the beggars poured into his ears. He could no more wave a beggar aside than you or I could strike a child, and yet he only grieved at the pain their stories gave him, and at his inability to solace them with all his money. When the rampant newsboys tugged at his sleeves and yelled, "Here yer evening paper!" he bent over with studied politeness and said in his gentle voice: "I've got one already, thank you, Johnny." How the little ruffians stared at that!—Julian Ralph in Chatter.

Superstition of the Wedding Ring.

"Many married women," says one writer, "are so rigid, not to say superstitious, in their notions concerning the wedding ring that neither when they wash their hands nor at any other time will they take their ring off their finger." I believe, however, that it is considered to obviate all ill luck or bad omen if the ring be taken off by the one who put it on. Many a time I have seen a married woman hold out her hand to her husband for him to remove the wedding ring, when for any reason she wished it off for a moment.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Forgot the Dog.

A Nebraska man who founded a town wanted the postoffice named "Myself Wife-Mary-Kitty-and-John," but the postoffice department found that he owned a dog and hadn't included him in the name, and therefore justly refused to be a party to any such chicanery.—Detroit Free Press.

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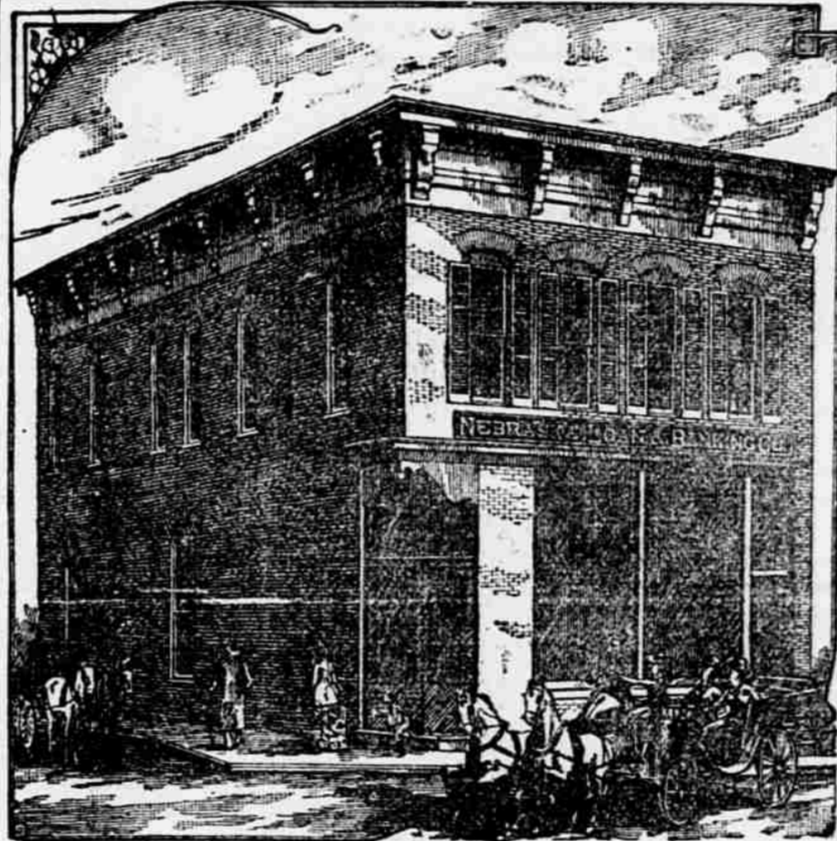
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