

AN EASTER BONNET.

Aunt Rhoda Hemenway was about to be married. Having never listened in her young days to a syllable on love and matrimony, now, at the age of fifty-five, she suddenly astonished all her relatives by bidding them to her marriage with Duke Potter, a shrewd, well-to-do farmer, who had lived a neighbor to her all his life. "With all her property and her set, particular ways, it can't be possible!" we each and all exclaimed in different keys, dropping our letters of invitation.

I had a special call to present myself a few days before the marriage feast, being considered in the family a favorite of Aunt Rhoda's.

Now to Cousin John. He was Bathsheba's son, Aunt Rhoda's favorite sister, who married early and went away from the homestead with her husband to settle in what was then the "far West," now a flourishing town in Illinois. I had always heard of him since I could remember, but had never seen him. That there was a person whom I could dislike more thoroughly than this same John I had never believed. Nevertheless it was a fact, for we had met, he arriving at the Hemenway homestead the day before the wedding.

Aunt Rhoda was to perpetrate matrimony on Easter Eve. She had allowed me that day to do little services for her, thus showing her favor, so at about seven o'clock we were none of us astonished to hear her say:

"Run, Hitty, and get my bonnet from the spare room cupboard. It's about time to put it on. Try it on; it's good luck."

Quick as thought I drew out the wedding bonnet, and threw it over my brown braids. It was a heavy affair of gray shirred silk, without the scrap of a bow to enliven it, and only one dull, stiff feather, looking for all the world like Aunt Rhoda herself, set straight in the centre. And as I pulled it into place with the eager fingers of eighteen on a naughty prank, the old thing settled dismally from its own weight over my light crimps. I laughed aloud, it was so indicrously the opposite of a festival bonnet, just as a voice struck my ear.

"Very appropriate. Don't, pray, remove it." I turned to see Cousin John in the doorway.

"Much obliged for your opinion, which was unasked," I managed to say coolly, dashing aside the headgear, where, I did not stop to see, and turning to him. He bowed with that supercilious smile of his, and took himself off. Bursting with indignation, I set about picking up the bonnet. I could not find it. Not with dropping to my hands and knees to search that ingrain carpet could that headgear be brought to light. It was only when a direful smell of something burning struck my olfactories that it flashed upon me where it was. I flew back to the heavy, claw-footed dressing-table that stood "on a bias" in the corner of the room. How I moved it I never could tell. At last the bonnet was in my hand, the half-feather that remained still burning smartly. At sight of it I gave a cry before I could control myself. That I had broken up the marriage I had not a doubt. I knew my aunt well enough to believe her willing to give up her greatest treasure rather than to break one of the proprieties of life. And to be married without a bonnet was, in her eyes, a custom only fit for silly little things not yet escaped from their teens. And there those wedding candles blinked and flared merrily, as if glad they had done it.

To reach the village milliner, Miss Slack, was my only hope. I knew where her little shop was, having been dispatched there the day previous for some extra lutestring ribbon to tie up the pieces of cake. No time to lose. Steps sound along the entry. Even now I may be late!

"Something's burning!" exclaimed a voice, just as I escaped, wedding bonnet in hand, through an opposite door and down a dark and little used passage.

The passage led to the back yard I knew, and out on the flat stone that served as a step. I only stopped to gather up my long, pretty nun's veiling train. It seemed hours before I could place my hand on the brass knocker adorning Miss Slack's little shop. At last it clanged so sharply as to bring almost immediately a frowsy little girl, who retreated behind a tall pewter candlestick with terror in every feature.

"I want to see Miss Slack at once!" I cried, pushing the child aside to hurry into the little entry and shake off the damp snow.

"You can't; she's gone," said the girl, staring at me and the bonnet.

"Gone? Where?"

"To the wedding," said the girl. "She went early so as to see the folks come in, and get a good seat."

I sank down on the lowest stair, bonnet and all, but immediately jumped up again.

"See here, little girl," I cried, "I want a gray feather to put on this bonnet. Something has happened to it—"

"I know. It's got burnt. I smell it," the girl said from behind her candle.

Well, get another one for me as quick as you can, and don't stand there talking," I cried impatiently. "It's gray—dark gray. Hurry up—you must know where she keeps them."

"She haint got any—not that shade," said the girl, examining the feather. "Hers are all black and white, beside she's got a green one, yes, and a yellow, but she haint got a gray one."

"Take me to her box of feathers and I will look for myself,' I cried, turning to the shop door. "I'll pay her to-morrow. I'm Hitty Farrar, Miss Hemenway's niece. It's all right. Now open this door."

I laid my hand on the knob as I spoke.

"I can't. It's locked and she's got the key. She always does when she goes out—afraid somebody'll get in."

Every particle of blood seemed to desert me at this juncture, and for a moment I felt as if sinking to the cellar. The first thing that brought me to my senses was hearing the girl say:

"Aint you going? I want to lock the door." And I found myself out in the road.

A dark object stood encircled in mist. It was a carriage. A man sprang out. It was my cousin John.

"Come in Hitty, get into my chase." he said.

"Not for a thousand worlds!" I cried, striking out for home and wrapping my soggy dress around the poor bonnet.

"You silly child!" exclaimed my cousin.

Without further preamble he took me in his arms, hurried me out to the carriage and put me therein, the wedding bonnet, in the meantime slipping to the ground.

"We're almost home; I want to say one thing to you—"

"Well?"

"I want to say—"

"Well, if you are going to scold me, pray wait," I cried. "I shall have enough of that soon."

"I wasn't going to scold you," said Cousin John, "I was only going to say, supposing you and I have a wedding of our own. Then we can look after your bonnet."

"What do you mean?" And then I laughed.

"I mean," he said, with extra dignity, "that I ask you to marry me. Will you?"

"Goodness—no!" I cried, and, reaching the hitching post by Aunt Rhoda's door, I sprang out before he could remonstrate.

The next moment I was before the bride and groom. The buzz of conversation stopped instantly. It was as still as death throughout the room.

"Menitable," said Mrs. Luke Potter, in harsh tones, "you thought best to take my wedding night to play pranks with what was given to you in trust. Now I take the time to say before every one present that you shall never touch a penny of mine. You may march out of this house as soon as you find it convenient. That's all; now go."

"Instead of going we have a word to say," declared Cousin John, at his tallest, and drawing the roomful within his glance, "and will use no hesitancy in airing it now. We are betrothed, Aunt Rhoda," he announced, turning his handsome head toward Mrs. Potter, "and, begging your pardon, don't in the least care for your old money. Now, then, all come on with your congratulations."

I felt a warning pinch on my cold fingers to hold in check the astonishment in my eyes at hearing a betrothal announced that had never taken place. And then such a wealth of peace and strength came into my heart, that I was happy just to be near him. I was in a world of love and protection, and I forgot to shiver with the cold, while I smiled and blushed in the right places as the relatives trooped around us with their astonished congratulations. Uncle Abiel came as soon as he could extricate himself from his corner.

"Well, young man," he said, excitedly, "you've done well in a short time, too, eh?"

"That's so," said Cousin John, giving the brown hand a hearty shake. (He told me afterward he was aching to wring his neck.) "But long enough to know my own mind."

The first moment I could I drew Cousin John out into a corner of the old hall, at least three yards away from any sharp ear.

"Oh, how could you!" I cried. "We've never been engaged. I told you 'No.'"

"Can't help it; your eyes said 'Yes.' There's no stopping it now, Hitty. We'll have a wedding bonnet of our own."

Seeds Sprouted After 150 Years.

In 1850 Robert Brown sowed, from curiosity, some seeds from the collection of Sir Hans Sloane, where they had remained for more than 150 years. He succeeded in making several germinate, in particular one of Nelumbium speciosum (a water lily), of which the plant has been preserved in the British Museum.

In time of war France reckons on putting out 370 men to every 1000.

AN EASTER SYMPHONY OF SONG.

On Easter Morn.

The spring serene in sparkling sheen
The flower-clad earth arrays;
Heaven's portal bright its radiant light
In fuller flood displays.

The fiery sun in loftier noon
O'er heaven's high orbit shines,
As o'er the tide of waters wide
He rises and declines.
—Venantius Fortunatus.

Easter Lilies.

The lily of the Easter morn has blown
In radiant beauty from the blackened sod,
As when a soul is born unto its God
From our life's darkness, that it may atone
For errors which His mercy will condone:
He doth in sorrow raise the chastening rod.
May not man seek the path our Saviour trod
To find in blossom by the great white throne
The lilies of forgiveness and of peace
Vouchsafed by Him to all the human race?
Bloom, lilies, bloom! ne'er may your mission cease;
Bloom, lilies, bloom! with vestal charm and grace;
Bid poor humanity its hope increase
As from the lily smiles an angel's face!
—Boston Transcript.

Easter Lilies.

O, lilies, pure and splendid!
O, lilies, holy and white!
I greet with a Christian's greeting
Your lessons of love and light.

You bring to my mind a picture
Of One who was spotless, too,
Who took from His world-read lesson
A sermon of faith from you.

O, lilies, joyous and stately!
With never a thought of pride,
What treasures of trust and sweetness,
Come with you at Easter Tide!

What zest for a holy living!
What hope in a Christian's death!
What gentleness, charity, beauty,
You teach with each fragrant breath!

Do you know that the dear Lord Jesus
Rose in His kingly might?
That the world is His royal capture,
And Heaven His throne of Light?

Glad may ye be, and singing,
Like me, to the Christ above,
For blessings on those who give you,
As tokens of Easter love!
—Mary A. Denison, in Youth's Companion.

The Spell of Easter.

All the avenue aglow,
Chimes in every steeple,
Pretty girls in swarms to show
Bonnets to the people;
Bells above and bells below,
Music in their voices,
This is Easter morn, and so
All the earth rejoices!

Once again Hypatia's dress
Shows a bit of color,
And a careless, golden tress
Makes the sunshine duller;
Forty days her loveliness
Has been half-way hidden;
When I begged a smile to bless
Me—it was forbidden.

Now, the Lenten season done,
End the days of sadness;
Comes Hypatia with her fun
Touching all with gladness—
Papa's purse she does not shun—
Take my word upon it—
Presto!—see the dollars run!
That's Hypatia's bonnet!
—Felix Carmen, in Life.



Easter Hams.

Probably nowhere except in Saint Marys County, Maryland, is a "stuffed Easter ham" known and appreciated. There it is always to be found in the best houses at the end of the Lenten season. When the hams are cured in the early winter, a very large one is carefully selected from the rest and special attention paid to the bagging. This is then marked and set aside. When desired to grace the Easter table, this prize ham is cut out of the bag, washed carefully, put into cold water, and allowed to gently simmer until it is about half done. It is well to set the ham-boiler on the back of the kitchen stove, and there is no better rule than the old one of seeing that the "kettle only smiles on one side of its mouth."

When taken out, the ham is set aside until it is cool, and then skinned. The stuffing is prepared by taking a "good parcel" of cabbage sprouts, a handful of parsley, a small piece of stale bread and chopping them all together with plenty of black pepper. Deep gashes are then made in the ham with a sharp knife, about an inch apart, from the hock down the whole length of the ham, and these gashes are tightly stuffed to the very bone with the greens. A wooden skewer is the best aid here. After that the ham is baked until done—an hour or so will probably be enough. In preparing for baking it is well to sprinkle the ham with a layer of sugar and a layer of corn meal, and it is wise also to put about a half-pint of water into the drip-pan, which should be set in a close oven. There should be no basting, as the rising steam makes tenderness enough. When brought upon the table, all decorated with parsley and round splotches of black pepper, and the hospitable host—the host is always hospitable in Saint Marys—passes his sharp knife into the ham, and its thin pink slices fall on the dish all veined with green hues, it is as pretty as a picture.—Harper's Bazar

When to Buy Shoes.

The time to buy shoes is in the latter part of the day, when the feet are at their maximum size. Activity and standing tend to enlarge the feet. If people would remember this rule, there would not be so many complaints of shoes, when worn, being too tight, which, when fitted, appeared to be comfortable.

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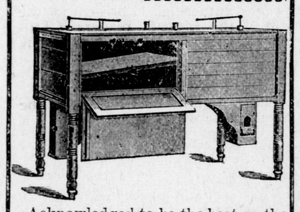
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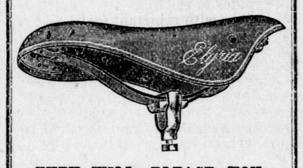
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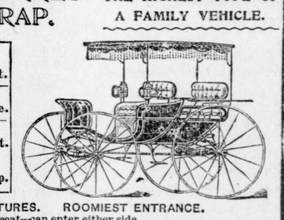
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