Our New Year's Dinner!

(*Continued from second page.*)

though it had been clutched by some one's hand; and his face was as much disfigured by bruises, scratches, blood and the purple puffiness, that follows a fight as was my poor husband's, while a brown wig pushed to the back of his bald pate. Meanwhile, ma had turned upon him with spirit.

"Aged female, indeed!" she cried. "Reverence my gray hairs, I want to know! I could wear a brown wig myself if I wanted to, I suppose! And how dare you rush in here and accuse my son of ill-using me, when he's the best of sons and— Oh, good gracious!"

She paused suddenly, with her mouth wide open, and said no more, while the old gentleman, waving his right hand toward her, while with his left hand he settled his wig, ejaculated, "Amanda Jane, is it thus we meet again?" and she, finding her tongue, cried out, "It is Benjamin Franklin Scurry!"

"Your uncle," I said aside to Ben.

"And the fellow I ran into first and pounded afterwards," replied my spouse in the same tone. "Here's a pretty kettle of fish!"

On the instant I had a bright idea, and catching up a towel that I had brought into the room, flung it over Ben's face.

"Don't take it off while he stays," I whispered. Uncle Scurry had by this time dragged ma to her feet and seated her on the sofa, where he now sat beside her.

"I certainly was an officious idiot," I heard him say, "but I thought *I* had come upon one of those scenes of terror we country folks read of in the New York newspapers."

"But can you forgive me for my dreadful speeches, Benjamin Franklin?" ma replied. "Indeed I deserved them, Amanda Jane," said the old gentleman, in a tender tone. "But I have been through so much since I alighted at the depot! Turning the corner not many blocks away, in the best of health and spirits, I was run into by a reckless wretch of a wheelman. We both rolled into the gutter together, and he attacked me so furiously that I was obliged to defend myself. In fact, I think he is sorry he ran into me by this time; I polished him in fine style."

"Dear uncle!" I said with out-stretched hand and as beaming a smile as I could command on short notice. "May I call you so? I am Ben's wife. We can truly sympathize with you; my poor husband has just met with an accident of the same sort, and his eyes are so much injured that I have been obliged to cover them, as you see."

"Goodness me!" cried Uncle Scurry; "these wheelmen should all be arrested! Shake hands, my suffering nephew. Dear—dear! where are the New York police? And now, if I may repair myself a little before dinner, for which I have an appetite, dear niece, I shall be more presentable."

"And I promise you a good dinner, Benjamin Franklin," said ma.

"If you cooked it, it is sure to be," said he, gallantly, as he followed me to an appartment where all he needed could be found, and I left him to repair damages as best he might. Then I hastily changed my dress and hastened to offer my help to ma in dishing the dinner. Alas! as I approached the kitchen door an apalling shriek fell upon my ears, and ma's voice, at its highest compass, uttered the words: "Burned! Burned! Burned!"

The cry rang through the house. I knew very well what had happened, but Uncle Scurry and my unlucky husband, hearing the wail from afar, believed that one of us had set our clothing on fire, and flew to our assistance, uncle with a ewer of water, and Ben, his face uncovered, carrying a blanket in which he instantly enveloped ma, while Mr. Scurry emptied the ewer over me and the cat, which instantly flew upon the dresser shelves, mewing madly and oversetting most of the china.

"Who's on fire?" asked Ben, after these proofs of promptitude in times of emergency had been exhibited. I merely pointed to an array of dishes which poor ma had dragged out of the ovens and plate-warmers, as she had uttered the screams which had so alarmed us. Nothing remained of our splendid turkey, of the mince-pies over which we had enthused, of the vegetables, of anything, but hideous lumps of charcoal and indescribable, sticky masses, curling up on the centers of their platters. There was no longer any dinner to offer to Uncle Scurry.

"There is no use staring at it any longer," I said leading the way to the parlor. "We intended to give you a good dinner, Uncle Scurry; but I shall have to ask you to consider yourself an idol, and accept a burnt offering."

"I don't see how you can laugh," said ma; its all too dreadful; but, Benjamin Franklin, after all you have endured, you need some refreshment. At least, we have a slice of cake and a glass of fine old port to offer you."

"Yes, get the port, ma, said Ben, from behind the towel, with which I had again veiled him; "I know that it is good."

Then, with her usual promptitude and dispatch, ma placed the cake-basket on the table and filled the glasses, handing one with her own hand to Uncle Scurry, who whispered, "Oh, Amanda Jane!" as he accepted it.

"Many happy returns of the day!" he said, as he lifted it to his lips. The next instant he uttered a howl of agony, dashed down the glass and began to rush wildly about the room, shouting, "Help! a doctor! an antidote! I'm poisoned! I'm dying! help!"

"Good gracious! cried ma, wringing her hands; "what have I done now?"

"Ma," I said solemnly, "it is a dreadful thing to tell you, but what you have done is to fill the glasses from the decanter full of eradicator, instead of that which holds the port wine, and uncle has swallowed some of it." And I hastened to mix some mustered and water, while Ben ran pell-mell for the doctor, even forgetting his hat. Meanwhile Uncle Scurry stretched himself upon the floor, while ma held his head on her knee.

"Adieu, Amanda Jane," he said. "To die thus repays me for all. Poison from your hands is sweeter than nectar from another's. Tell your boy that I recognize him as the wheelman who ran into me, but I forgive him for your sake. Bless you all. Farewell!"

"Oh, don't die now, Benjamin Franklin!" moaned ma.

"He's not going to," said the doctor, whom Ben dragged in at that moment, and who felt Mr. Scurry's pulse and smelt of the bottle at the same time. "Very nasty, but not poison. Gave him an emetic? All right—about to act, I see. Good day," and he ran back to his dinner.

Five minutes later Mr. Scurry promised to live for our sakes; and at eleven o'clock that evening we all sat down together to a cold collation, sent from the nearest restaurant, and ate with an appetite, drinking Happy New Year's to each other, in the right port wine this time, just as the midnight chime from a neighboring church rang out upon the frosty air. And we knew as well at that moment that ma and Mr. Scurry would make a match of it, as we did on the day the pastor of the very church whose clock we listened to stood before the pulpit and asked the question:

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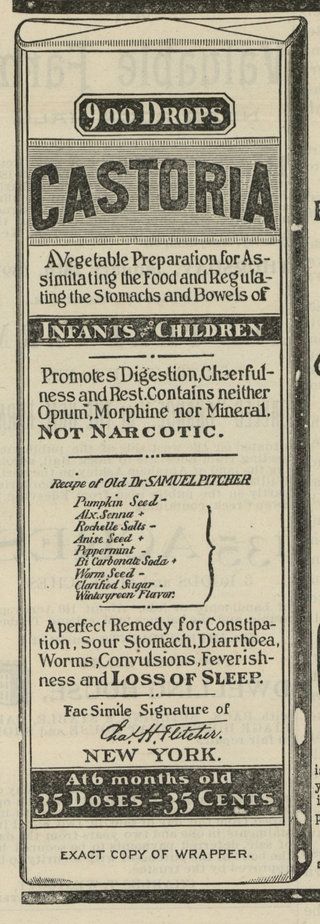

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