AT THE COLLEGE SETTLEMENT

By AMANDA MATHEWS

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A score of half tamed street urchins composing the Washington club stared critically at a slender, brown eyed young woman nervously twirling a tin plate.

"She's a new 'un an' dead easy," whispered President Tommy McGuffy to his next neighbor.

"Now, boys," said the lady timidly. "I will call a number, and that boy must try to catch the platter before it falls. Thirteen!"

"That's me!" howled the boys as one man and fell upon the plate in a struggling, yelling heap. One after another extricated himself from the bottom of the pile with a burning personal grievance against some one on top. The mass dissolved into half a dozen fights while the remaining members danced about scattering shrill advice and encouragement. The girl looked on helplessly, her feeble remonstrances completely drowned in the tumult.

"Boys!" sounded a clarion masculine voice from the doorway.

The fighters fell apart shamefacedly at the sight of Mr. McKenna, in whom every boy of the neighborhood recognized both friend and master.

"You know better than to abuse the hospitality of the house in this disgraceful fashion. Out you go. But first, Tommy, as president, must beg this young lady's pardon on behalf of the club."

"Dunno w'at she calls herself," Tommy objected sullenly.

"Miss Van Buren," replied the girl, with a glance of intense gratitude at her rescuer.

"Miss Van Buren, me and the kids didn't mean no harm. We was just enjoyin' ourselves, and I hope you'll excuse us."

"Certainly." And Miss Van Buren yielded her dainty fingers to twenty grimy paws in succession as the club filed out.

Thrice blessed is the knight whose lady encounters strange perils and has great need of him, for delivering her surpasses all other joys of men.

A week later Mr. McKenna noticed a smell of burning issuing from the cooking classroom. He entered, to find Miss Van Buren standing alone by the window crowding back tears of weariness and mortification while half a dozen girls were gathered about a forlorn, charred, soggy pudding.

HE HELPED HIMSELF TO A GENEROUS PORTION.

"The cooking teacher was sick," she explained, with scarlet cheeks, "and I sometimes make desserts at home. But it came out horrid, and the girls are making fun of me." She choked and turned away.

Mr. McKenna joined the group at the table.

"Look at it!" sniffed one.

"Took eight eggs, and them 4 cents apiece."

"If her husband don't take to drink my name ain't Molly."

"It's only a little burned," interposed Mr. McKenna. "Molly, bring me a dish and spoon."

He helped himself to a generous portion and gulped it down without a quiver.

"Most excellent," he said mendaciously. "I must get the recipe from Miss Van Buren for my mother. She entertains a count next week and wants to have something extra good."

"We'll take some," said the girls, much impressed by this unexpected verdict from a handsome young man.

"Oh, never mind. Girls don't like anything they ought to. Here's something that I don't doubt is more to your depraved taste." He tossed a box of chocolates into their midst and took advantage of the diversion to slip the pudding into a nearby cupboard and turn the key.

"The candy was for you," he said ruefully to Miss Van Buren, "but perhaps you will get more benefit from it this way."

"Thousands more. It was heroic of you to swallow that vile stuff. You'd better be thinking about an antidote," she said, the dimples appearing before the sensitive lips had ceased to quiver.

"I'm to help with the men's classes next week, and that won't be so bad. I just believe I can redeem myself."

"You are right," he retorted mournfully. "You are much more likely to make trouble for men than they for you."

For two weeks Miss Van Buren declared that she had found her place at last. For another week she avoided the subject. Finally one evening in the library she took her devoted champion into her confidence.

"You are always helping me out of scrapes, and this is the worst of all."

"What now?"

"Please turn down the gas and come to the window. Do you see that man?"

"The little dark fellow by the lamp post? Well, what of him?"

"He stands there hours and hours every night staring at my window—my room is just above. He is a Mexican, and I was teaching him English. That's the way they do in their own country—they call it 'playing the bear.' The cold wind must blow right through his thin clothes, and it's all so ridiculous, and I can't stand it any longer."

"Wait for me here."

She saw him join her "bear," and after a few minutes they walked away together.

"It's all right," he assured her later as they sat cozily before the library grate. "I went home with him and he showed me the picture of a pretty girl of his own race who is waiting and praying for him. He promised to write to her tonight and never even look sidewise at your balcony again."

"I don't know how to thank you for all your kindness. I am a dead failure at philanthropy and am going to take myself off your hands by returning home. My mother has sent for me because—well, because there is a friend coming from California who will want to see a good deal of me."

"Will you want to see a good deal of him?"

"My mother has selected him as a son-in-law exactly to her taste."

"But you? Do you love him?"

"No."

"Are you going to yield to your mother?"

"I might inquire in the language of Tommy McGuffy, 'W'at's that to you?'"

"It's everything to me. I love you, dear, and want you for my own self. I have adored you ever since the evening you conducted the Washington club."

The girl's eyes shone, but he had touched a sore point, and she would have been no woman if she had not punished him for it.

"Really, this is carrying things too far. You are so accustomed to assisting me in my difficulties that it has become automatic, and you are offering yourself as a victim so that I need not marry the Californian just as you swallowed that awful pudding. It is a noble sacrifice on your part, but I cannot permit it."

"You know you are talking nonsense," he cried passionately.

"Based on facts, however."

"It is I who am in worse trouble than any of yours, and yet you will not help me."

She looked down stubbornly for a minute, then lifted eyes full of fun and tenderness.

"I feel just like Tommy McGuffy when you tell him to be good. He knows he has to surrender, and so, I suppose, must I."

The Chinese Barber at Work.

Barbers are to be found everywhere in China. No one need be at a loss to have his head shaved in any city or village in the empire. Every day in the year there must be hundreds of acres of Chinese heads shaved, and tails combed out and dressed that, were they united, would produce an Atlantic cable of hair. It is customary for a Chinaman to have his head shaved and dressed by the barber two or three times a month. The paraphernalia of the street barber consists of a small cabinet, which serves as a seat for his customer and a receptacle for his instruments; a round, wooden case with metal basin for water, which is kept hot by a small charcoal furnace beneath; attached to this there is a pole to indicate his profession. When a customer places his head in the barber's hands he has it steamed and rubbed with a hot, damp cloth, then shaved; the face is then shaved, including nostrils and ears. The eyelids are then raised and the eyes cleaned, after which the ears are operated upon with small instruments, cunningly devised to remove all obstacles from this particular gateway of celestial knowledge. The spine is then punched and kneaded, to impress it with an acute sense of its functions, and the patient retires, having paid a trifling sum for the tonsorial operations.—Golden Penny.

A Queer Fly.

New Zealand boasts of a fly that feeds on spiders.

This fly is black and wasplike and, like the wasp, lives in a nest of clay built in a crevice, preferably in the upper folds of heavy window curtains. This is one of the great annoyances of the tidy housekeeper in New Zealand. Try as she will, it is almost impossible for her to keep these flies from setting up homes at the tops of her curtains.

These nests of clay are made up of a series of separate cells, usually from five to eight in number. When the nest is built the fly goes after spiders.

It has no trouble in conquering the spinners of silky webs. They succumb more easily than do the American flies which are so unfortunate as to get tangled in a spider's weaving.

The fly carries the spiders to its home and imprisons each one in a cell. Here the fly lays a single egg, and when the grub hatches out it eats the spider that has been provided for it. When its food is all gone the mother fly goes out and catches another spider, and she keeps this up until the young fly is old enough to catch spiders for itself.

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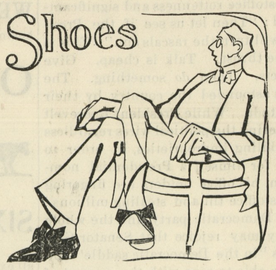

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