A PUMPKIN PIE SHORTAGE.

There is trouble in the country,
There is trouble in the town,
And 'tis just the sort of trouble
That won't at our bidding down,
For the grangers sadly tell us
That the pumpkin crop is shy,
And that means there'll be a shortage
In the toothsome pumpkin pie.

Many autumns has this viand
Been a feature of each feast,
Tickling palates of all eaters,
From the highest to the least.
It has held a place of honor
Next the famed Thanksgiving bird,
And on all occasions festal
Everywhere its praise was heard.

We began to think about it
Very early in the spring;
Oft we talked about the pleasure
That the autumn days would bring.
Many times our mouths have watered
As we conjured up the scene
Of our teeth so slowly closing
On the pumpkin pie between.

But, alas, for expectations
Of what autumn had in store,
And, alas, for plans of feasting
Based on pumpkin pie galore,
For the crop has badly fooled us,
And our sorrow is profound
As we face this pumpkin shortage,
Not enough to go around.

Of the cause there's no use talking;
That is neither here nor there;
We're confronted by conditions,
And for theories don't care
We are troubled by this shortage,
And we're thinking as we sigh,
Life is not so much worth living
When one can't get pumpkin pie.

—Pittsburg Chronicle-Telegraph.

MEETING OF THE EXTREMES.

Valerie had been amply prepared, amply warned by John's numerous girl cousins,—by Eleanor, particularly,—but when the dreaded moment arrived she was alarmed. In five minutes John would be gone, actually gone, for the entire day, and she would be all alone with John's mother—yes, actually with her mother-in-law!

She looked at John very soberly and let him take her hand under shelter of the table-cloth. John smiled fondly at her. They were having breakfast, they and John's mother, in their own home for the first time. They had been married exactly five weeks, and they had come home from their wedding trip on the previous evening. The home was new only to Valerie. It had been for many years the home of John and of John's widowed mother.

John had explained to Valerie that he might not leave his mother alone, and that she would be loath to relinquish her home, and almost unable to adapt herself to a totally new environment. Valerie was quickly sympathetic.

"She need not, John," she had said, reassuringly. "She is older than I and I don't want to spoil any of her life for her. Of course we will go and live with her. I shan't be a horrid, typical daughter-in-law! she had warmly concluded.

John did not know exactly what she meant by a typical daughter-in-law, but he assured her again and again that she could not possibly be anything horrid. Their discussions of the practical details of their future invariably ended in such personal irrelevancies.

Valerie certainly looked unlike anything horrid as she gravely returned John's smile. Her rose-colored muslin breakfast jacket, with its decoration of black velvet bows artistically sewed on at random, lighted charmingly her fresh young face, and harmonized prettily with the rose stuck also artistically at random in her curly brown hair.

John's mother, about whom there was nothing at random, glanced at Valerie occasionally with an inner disquiet almost equal to Valerie's alarm. In a moment John would be gone, actually gone, for the entire day, and she would be left all alone with John's wife—yes, actually with her daughter-in-law! She had also been amply prepared and amply warned, touching the inevitable emergency; but she also looked soberly at John.

He thought that his mother was thinking how beautiful it was to have Valerie permanently in the house; and again he smiled. His mother was gentle and tender beneath all precision and primness concerning which John's cousin Eleanor had solemnly warned Valerie,—Valerie, whose theories of order were undeveloped,—and she had assured John that his wife would be most welcome.

"I have no intention, my dear," John's mother had said, "of being a conventional mother-in-law—and it will be sweet to have a daughter."

She had the gentlest intentions; but as she looked at Valerie she recalled vividly all that her niece Eleanor, who had been in college with Valerie, had said regarding the girl's tendency to leave her hat on the piano, her umbrella on the library table, her overshoes on the stairs, or her book on the floor.

"Valerie is an angel," Eleanor had said, "but she thinks a house is made just to live in. She has such a picturesque, disorderly way of being orderly!"

John's mother had had occasion to appreciate the justice of Eleanor's criticism, for Valerie had visited her for a week before her marriage. John's mother had given the criticism not very much thought; but now Valerie was no longer a guest; she was a permanency!

The permanency was meditating upon the possibility of going with John, and spending the day at his office. The nearer he approached the end of his breakfast, the more clearly she remembered his cousin Eleanor's confidence concerning her mother-in-law; yes, she actually had come into possession of a mother-in-law! What should she do with her? Eleanor had said, impressively:

"My dear, John's mother is lovely, but she is the precisest person that ever existed. She has kept her silver teapot in the mathematically same spot for thirty-five years, she told me so herself! She has a place for every pin, and she keeps the pin exactly in it."

"Well," Valerie had said, "I don't care. She has a perfect right to keep her pins and her teapot where she likes. I don't care where things are kept."

"You certainly don't!" Eleanor had exclaimed. "That is the very point. You are a dear, but you never did have a real place for a thing; and if you had, you probably wouldn't keep the thing in it—all the time. Would you, Valerie?"

"No, I suppose not," Valerie had returned, "but you know I've visited John's mother. I shocked her a little, I'm afraid, but she was very kind."

"Wait until she is your mother-in-law," the well-meaning Eleanor had said.

Valerie had waited so happily, but now—she thought of the silver teapot. "Thirty five years! Thirty-five minutes would be nearer the time I'd have kept it in one place!" she reflected.

She looked at John's mother curiously, almost forgetting that she had stayed in the house for a week with her—and, presumably, with the silver teapot: she had not noticed exactly where John's mother kept it. Her mother in-law in turn looked at Valerie, almost forgetting, on her part, the visit during which Valerie had been so demure and sweet that her habit of dropping her small personal belongings about the house had been all forgiven Eleanor's words gained weight. Disorderly order might be picturesque, but it was contradictory, thought John's mother.

John serenely finished his breakfast and methodically folded his napkin. He wondered why his mother and his wife were so silent. He even asked them, but they smiled and did not tell him.

Valerie followed him into the hall, dropping her handkerchief, two hair pins and the rose from her hair on the way. She detained him as long as possible; then she went to the gate with him. At the gate she told him five times to come home early, very early. She lingered until he turned the corner; then, restraining a wild impulse to run after him, she slowly returned to the house.

"How absurd I am!" she told herself. "But I am so afraid John's mother won't really be fond of me. She thinks I'm frivolous, I know."

John's mother met her in the hall. She held Valerie's rose, her handkerchief and hair pins in her hand. She was a kind woman, but her life had followed for many years the selfsame pattern, and she had acquired a cool, fixed demeanor that might have made a less sensitive, impulsive daughter in-law than Valerie shrink. "I think you dropped these?" she said, and Valerie felt uncomfortable.

"Thank you," she answered. She tucked the rose and the hair pins in her hair, and pushed the handkerchief into her sleeve. Her face was so serious that John's mother was distressed.

"What shall I ever do with her?" she asked herself. "I had rather hoped she might love her, but she evidently thinks me foolishly particular." She turned to go into the dining-room, and Valerie followed her.

"Do let me help you!" said Valerie. "I don't know very much about housekeeping—but if you will tell me how, I'd love to help about everything." She was divided between a feeling that she really ought to help and the fear that John's mother might not desire her to help. She suddenly wondered if John's mother expected her to attend to all the household affairs. She decided to write and ask her own mother's opinion; but meanwhile she must carefully feel her way. "Eleanor says that you are a wonderful housekeeper," she said, lifting her face to John's mother eagerly.

John's mother smiled; she was a trifle vain because the silver teapot had never, except when in actual use, left its appointed place. Valerie was coming nearer. John's mother accepted her help.

Valerie did her best, but her heart sank. "How shall I ever endure it?" she wondered, when John's mother explained to her that the coffee urn also belonged in a different place, that the sugar bowl was not kept in the ice chest, and that soapy water made cut glass dull. They spent a sober, restrained morning. After luncheon Valerie, almost on the point of tears, took refuge in her room, "to write letters," and John's mother patiently did again the things that Valerie had assisted her in doing. "Can I really endure this—in my old age?" she asked herself.

Valerie found that her letters refused to be written. John would not be home for at least three hours! She cast about in her mind for some cheering occupation. John had mentioned that their wedding presents had arrived; that the boxes containing them were in the room at the end of the hall. She decided to ask John's mother to help her arrange them.

She went down stairs, her gloom somewhat lightened. It was so pleasant to remember that the wedding presents had no accustomed proper places! Valerie peeped into the dim parlor, with its chairs so precisely set in place, its books so fixedly arranged on the table, which was so geometrically placed in the center of the room. John's mother was not in the parlor, and Valerie wandered about the house looking for her.

"I shall be nice to her always, regardless—if I perish in the attempt!" she heroically resolved. Valerie's ideas of order were perhaps chaotic, but her sweetness of nature was as fixed as the place of her mother-in-law's silver teapot.

John's mother was sitting in the dining-room, hemming an apron. Her face looked tired and pale, and Valerie hesitated a little as she suggested the arranging of her wedding gifts. "You look a little tired," she said, gently. "Perhaps you'd rather not."

She was seized with an impulse to sit in her mother-in-law's lap and kiss her. Her own mother found such treatment refreshing when she was tired; but Valerie feared that a mother-in-law might not find it even proper.

Yet the mother-in-law, who had seen Valerie with her own mother, was wishing that the girl would sit in her lap and kiss her. She was coming a little nearer her daughter-in-law, and she reflected that Valerie might have committed a greater crime than the putting of the sugar bowl into the ice chest. John's mother was very gentle, and John's wife was very sweet natured. They were doing their best to surmount their unlikeness and Eleanor's warnings. It was not easy, but it was less difficult than they thought.

They unpacked the wedding gifts, and brought the majority of them down stairs. Valerie had expected to scatter them about the house. She had expected to display the cups, the little silver dishes and the pretty embroideries on an afternoon tea table; she had a college girl's fondness for a tea table. She mentioned tentatively her expectation, but her mother-in-law said:

"They will get so dusty, my dear. Wouldn't it be better to keep such beautiful things carefully in the china closet and silver drawers?" She made the suggestion kindly; she remembered that Valerie did not appreciate the degree of care needed by silver and glass and china; and Valerie's gifts were too fine, she thought, to be dulled and tarnished by dust.

The girl's disappointment was keen. The wedding gifts were such cherished possessions, she wanted them in a familiar confusion. She had determined, however, not to be a typical daughter-in-law and she smilingly allowed them to be arranged in orderly, straight lines, in places in which they would belong—perhaps for thirty-five years! The occupation lost its interest, but it helped the flight of time.

"John will soon be here," thought Valerie. "If it were not for John, I would go straight home—without waiting to dress. I simply don't know how to be orderly, and I'm really afraid John's mother will never get used to me."

In spite of this reflection, she thanked John's mother very charmingly, and went slowly away to dress for dinner. John's mother looked after her. The girl's step seemed listless; her face, even with its smile, had been too wistful to escape her notice. She remembered other things that Eleanor had said. Suddenly she remembered that Valerie was a girl—a little girl, she gently amended her remembrance.

"Valerie," she said, "come here, my dear child."

Valerie gazed at her in surprise. She went quickly to her side. John's mother took her hand and looked at its bright new wedding ring. She looked up at the girl's sweet face, at the disordered hair with its drooping rose. She remembered that she was older than Valerie's mother, and she smiled, partly at Valerie, and partly at the recent dismay caused by this tangle-haired, womanly little girl.

"My dear," she said very gently, "are you tired?"

Valerie quite forgot that this was her mother-in-law, who was precise, who had kept her silver teapot in the same place for thirty-five years. She remembered that she was John's own mother, her own new mother. She sat on the arm of her chair and put her arms around her neck.

"No, I'm not tired; I'm only afraid I—I will be an awful trial to you. I've never kept anything in the same place for thirty-five years!"

It was a foolish little explanation, but it had a pleasant effect upon John's mother. She laughed and patted Valerie's rosy cheek. "I hadn't supposed so, my dear. I am a reasonable woman, and as you are only twenty—" She interrupted herself and said more seriously: "But my dear, you may keep your silver teapot in as many places as you like. You know this is your home now, too, and you must be happy in it. I don't know how girls are accustomed to keeping things. I was a girl so long ago—"

"If you will keep me in your heart, you may keep my teapot anywhere you like!" whispered Valerie, impulsively.

"So you may, my dear, if you will keep me in yours," replied John's mother. "You may move mine to some other place if you like."

Valerie slipped into her lap. "Now that you know just where to keep me for always, and I know where to keep you for always, I think we can easily arrange for the silver teapots—and such things," she said, with a contented laughed. And to the surprise of all the cousins,—and particularly Eleanor,—they did, with complete mutual satisfaction.

"Spell ferment and give its definition," requested the teacher. "Ferment, to work," responded a diminutive maid. "Now place it in a sentence, so that I may be sure you understand its meaning," said the teacher. "In the summer time I would rather play out-of-doors than ferment in the school house," returned the small scholar.

Miss Freeman—"Why, I thought you knew her. She lives in the same square with you."

Miss Hautton—"Perhaps; but she does not move in the same circle."