

AN IDEAL SERVANT.

John Midley was said to be a rising young lawyer. He married a handsome girl. He found her in the summer time, while he was fishing for trout in Wisconsin. The courtship was brief and, therefore, honeyed with sweetest romance.

"But will you love me always?" she asked, of course.

"Until the angels are all dead," he vowed.

"But you will be ashamed of me after a while. I am a plain country girl, and you are a city lawyer."

"That can make no difference, pet."

"But your family is distinguished, while my people are simple farmers."

"Why do you thus persist in arguing against yourself? You have grace and loveliness, and these are the approval stamps of nature's aristocracy."

"But your sister writes novels, and she will despise me. See is known to the high society that reads the magazines, and wouldn't even speak to me."

"Jenny, your sweet lips should never utter such foolish words. Remember that I am not to take you to live with my people, but that we shall set up a little house and keep it ourselves. My sister—and she is a dear girl, if I do say it myself—lives with my father away off in California. Come, pet, do not invite a worrying thought to be the guest of your gentle mind."

Well, they began housekeeping in a new flat on Prairie Avenue. Ah, and then arose the great bugbear of household government—the servant-girl question. Hilda came first. She handed in a list of privileges and then took charge of the place. John Midley had been accustomed to club life, and naturally rebelled against the "queenship" infringement of a servant; so Hilda had to go. John appealed to that cold nest of robbery, the "female" employment office. The mistress of the establishment received his dollar and—failed to send him a girl. Then he advertised, and the very first interview awakened by the advertisement was a postal card from the mistress of the cold nest of robbery. "I have a number of girls on hand," she said. John went to the office.

"Look here," said he, "if you've got a number of girls on hand, why don't you send me one?"

"A dollar, please," the mistress of the cold nest answered.

"What! I gave you a dollar the other day."

"Is that so? Well, as soon as I get a girl I will send her."

In the meantime, Jennie was wearing herself out with kitchen work. At evening, when John came home, she did not spring towards him like a delighted child. She would kiss him with languid affection, and then proceed to put the dishes on the table.

"Have you read the books I brought you, dear?"

"No; I have been too busy."

"By the way, do you want to go to the theatre to-night?"

"I am too tired."

Maud came after a while, and the tired little wife sat down to rest. What a comfort it was to lie in bed at morning with no bleak-eyed necessity of cooking breakfast staring her in the face. The rich red of love came back to her lips, and passion's bright fondness laughed in her dark eyes. Maud was a jewel. She should always have a home. Jenny gave her a dress and raised her wages, and then Maud left. She said that her sister, who had just married a man at the stock yards, didn't want her to work out. Maud was not accustomed to working out. It was only by accident that she had ever done any work at all.

The drudgery again fell upon the young wife. She did not complain, but she was really unable to do such toilsome labor.

"It makes me mad," she said one morning at breakfast, "to read of the oppression of the laboring classes. Why isn't something said about the hardship of wives? Those good-for-nothing servant-girls, I wish I could wring the neck of every one of them. Talk to me about oppression. The more you do for the wretched creatures the worse they are."

"We may get hold of a good one after a while, Jenny."

"Yes, and I may be so completely broken down after a while that I'll need one. If it were not for your love I couldn't—couldn't—"

"There now, dear, don't cry. I know how hard a time you have, but it will be all right after a while. I'm going to put an advertisement in the paper today and keep it standing until we get the very girl we want. Will put it in this afternoon. This is Thursday, and girls out of employment always buy Thursday afternoon's paper."

The next morning, just at breakfast time, a girl came. She was pleasant-looking, and, better still, was of strong mould.

"If I should give you employment, do you think that you could make up your mind to stay with me?" Jenny asked.

"I think so, ma'am."

"Sally, ma'am."

"Where did you work last?"

"On the North Side, ma'am."

"Why did you leave?"

"The people moved to the country, ma'am."

"Did your mistress give you a recommendation?"

"A character, do you mean, ma'am?"

"Yes."

"She did, ma'am, and here it is."

Mrs. Midley took the paper, read it, returned it to the girl, and said:

"Very good, and no doubt you deserve it. When can you go to work?"

"At once, ma'am."

The mornings were pleasant and the evenings delightful. It seemed to Jenny that she had been suddenly transferred to another life. Every household care had been entirely freed from labor. She read books and magazines; she again took up the study of music, and at evening, when John approached his home, the entrancing "pleasings" of a waltz floated out to greet him.

"I suppose you are still satisfied with Sally?" John remarked one night.

"Oh, I am more and more delighted with her."

"She undoubtedly does her work well, but she doesn't strike me as being very intelligent."

"She is intelligent enough to do her work, and that's all I care for. Get an intelligent girl and she wants to read all the time. That good-for-nothing Maud used

to snatch the evening paper as soon as it came, and didn't so much as think of giving me a chance to look at it. Just so long as Sally does her work well, she shall have a home under my roof, and a girl that doesn't attend to her business isn't worthy of a home at all."

"If this girl should, after a while, show the natural tendencies of the average servant, we will break up housekeeping and board until the breed improves. We cannot afford to give up our lives to a ceaseless worry. A bad servant puts indignation in her bread, and where indignation prevails there is no brightness."

"You are surely a philosopher, John, but don't you think there's a way to shape a servant to the proper form? I mean that by a certain treatment she may be brought to feel an interest in us. I don't mean that she should really be made one of the family, but I do think that some little attention ought to be paid her. I notice that you never speak to Sally, and I don't think that this is altogether right. Interest begets interest."

"That idea works well in theory, my dear, but in fact it works so ill that you might call it a complete failure. In Europe, servants are servants and not 'helps,' as we hypocritically term them. Take in a 'help' and she becomes an adviser, and, progressing in this, seeks to be a ruler. Let us know our place, and from us let Sally learn to know hers."

That was a practical suggestion; but the next morning, when the wife glanced through the partly opened door of her bedroom, she saw Sally putting the dishes on the breakfast table; she saw more than this—she saw John step up, place his hand on Sally's shoulder, and kiss her.

A few moments later John stepped to the door and said, "Come, dear, breakfast is ready."

"I don't want any breakfast," she sobbed.

"Why, what is the matter?" he asked, entering the room. He found her partly dressed, lying across the bed. "Are you ill?" he asked, bending over her.

"No, dear, what is the matter?"

"Nothing," she answered, with force and carelessness.

"Then why do you act this way? Come, let's eat breakfast. I'm in a hurry to get down to the office."

"I told you that I didn't want any breakfast," she coldly replied.

"Now, look here, Jenny, what have I done that you should treat me in this way?"

"Please go away and let me alone."

"Oh, come now, dear, don't act this way. We were getting along so well, and I had thought—"

"You hadn't thought anything about me."

"Yes, I think of you all the time. Come, let us go to breakfast."

"I won't."

"All right. If you are determined to be cross, have your own way; but I want to tell you it's a bad start. Good morning!"

Shortly after he left the house the wife went into the kitchen.

"Sally," she said.

"Yes, ma'am."

"I don't want you any longer."

"What! don't want me any longer? What have I done to displease you?"

"That has nothing to do with it. It is enough to know that I don't want you any longer."

"No, it isn't enough, ma'am. I have a contract for a month, and you can't break it. If you do, I'll have the Woman's Protective Society down on you, and then there will be a scandal."

"When will your month be up?"

"A week from tomorrow."

"Well, see that you get out promptly at that time."

"I will, ma'am."

John was worried all day. His business seemed to have gone wrong, and at noon, when he went out to luncheon, he found that his appetite had left him. "The philosopher who said that no man understands a woman was right," he mused. "I thought Jenny was the gentlest and most consistent creature in the world, but I was wrong. But perhaps she will be all right in the evening."

On his way home he bought a bunch of violets, her favorite flower. No "pleasings" of a waltz floated out to greet him, and Jenny did not welcome him at the door. She was sitting on a sofa looking far away through the window when he entered the sitting-room.

"Dear, I have brought you some violets."

"Thank you," she said, taking the flowers and carelessly tossing them on to a chair.

He sat down beside her. "Do you feel any better?" he asked.

"No."

"I am sorry."

"Indeed," she replied, looking up in surprise.

"Oh, now, here, what's the use of going on this way? I have been miserable all day over your treatment of me this morning, and I can't put up with such folly much longer. If I have displeased you in any way, why don't you tell me?"

"Displeased me?" she said, bitterly. "You must think I'm a fool."

"I used to think you were the most charming and sweetest creature in the world, but I must say that I am compelled to change my opinion."

"And what must I do?" she exclaimed.

"I thought you were true and noble, but—but—" she hid her face and sobbed.

"Jenny, Jenny, don't go on in this way. You'll drive me crazy. If I've done anything to offend you, tell me what it is. Don't go on this way. The servant might see you."

"Servant," she scornfully repeated. "I wish she was dead, and I, too, for that matter."

He got up and stood looking at her. "If you have arrived at that conclusion, this married life is pretty well up with us. I will not live with a woman who, through hatred of me, wishes herself dead. You may go home to-morrow."

"I will go where I please, sir, without any instructions from you."

"Ah; you'd better go tonight, then."

"Shut up, and don't talk to me."

Then he raved. "He had not expected to live to see the day when his wife—his wife whom he had worshipped—would tell him to shut up. If he were a weaker man he would go down to the lake and jump in, but, being strong, he would live a life of misery."

"I don't care what you do," she replied.

"Of course you don't, but I have more

heart than you. A man always has more heart than a woman has. Yes, I care what you do. I hope that when you go home you may resume your appearance of innocent and happy girlhood, and when the divorce has been granted, you may marry some whistling farmer's boy and again settle down to blissful wedded life. Select one of proper ignorance and necessary humility, and your pathway will be smooth; but if ever he should show any spirit of manhood, crush it as you have attempted to crush mine. There was a likelihood of my becoming a great man. Judge Brown said in public that I was the most promising young lawyer in the State; and I used to dream of the United States senate, and a life of usefulness to my country; but all that is gone now."

"And why is it all gone?" she asked, looking up with flashing eyes. "I will tell you. It is all gone because you have acted the brute; you pretended to love me, to be a true man, but I have discovered that you are a heartless wretch."

"What do you mean by having discovered that I am a heartless wretch? What have I done?"

"You insult me!" she cried. "Didn't I see you kiss that servant-girl?"

He staggered back and then laughed. "Come here," he called to Sally, who had just appeared at the door. He took the girl by the hand, and leading her forward, said, "Jenny, this is my sister. She wanted to write a realistic servant-girl story, and—"

"Oh, John!"

"There, now, don't cry. I did not put the advertisement in the paper," he went on, holding his wife in his arms. "He sent for my sister, who had just arrived, and who declared she must enter my house as a servant."

"Dinner is ready," said "Sally," laughing.—*Tit Bits.*

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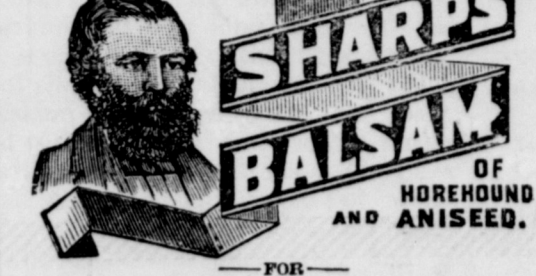
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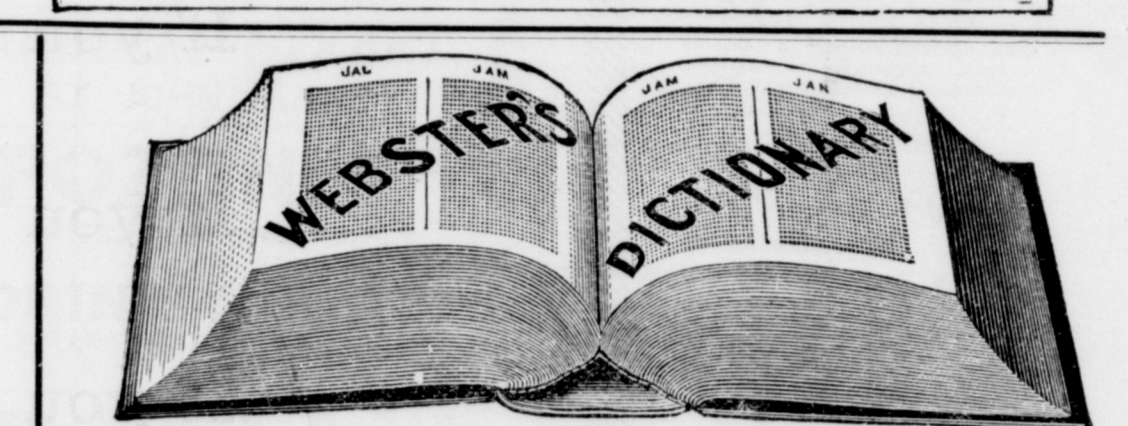
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