## LOVE AND CHICKENS

My aunt Lucretia is an old fashioned old maid with a fondness for wearing little black silk aprons and having cookies for breakfast. She still has a complexion like a rose leaf, though I don't dare to say how old she is. Her waist is long and slender and she wears her front hair in quaint little bunches of curls after the fashion of an old portrait. She has remarkably long thin hands and executes ancient pieces on what she calls the instrument with great skill

She adores all sorts of feathered things, especially chickens, though she is afraid that this is not a truly genteel taste. Ministers and plants come next in her affections, and she devotes much time to reading in the winter season, when her duties are lighter. Our home, which is situated in a truly rural district, though accessible to the city by means of the nimble electric car, is particularly adapted to the raising of poultry, especially when one wishes to do it a ter a somewhat secret fashion, as is the way of my aunt. At the front of the house is a sunny old fashioned flower garden filled with cheerful and candid posies, such as petunias, carnations pinks and columbines, but at the back is a large grove where sudden spaces of light give purple shadows to the darkness, and hens and mystery reign under the tall pines and amid the feathery clumps of sumac. Here my aunt spends her busiest hours, busy indeed, in the time of year when an old hen's fancy turns to thoughts of sitting and young broods peck their way out of the shell and go peeping about to the lead of their fussy, clucking mammas, for even the respectable family cat develops bloodpected manner, and she has hot flanner before she engaged in chicken raising, it ory hens. was our delight to sit on the piazza and

dear, the eggs will be ruined by the thun- illuminated her countenance with a look of

We think it hardly possible that we shall be able to do anything to prevent the thunder storm and she flies to find a poultry book and searches the pages for advice as to action on such occasions, but none is ever found, and she is obliged to bear the decree of fate with hopeless resignation. If a small boy comes sauntering along in the direction of stranger paused at the gate and looked inthe chicken grove, she is sure he has stones | quiringly about him. "I wonder who he in his pocket and murder in his heart. All the dogs in the neighborhood are regarded with angry suspicion and their owners are rendered indignant by the treatment they receive if they by any chance venture to ance, but something which was not fastened walk past our domicile. Little girls on as securely as it ought to be, and he who venture too near in search of wild flowers are sternly ordered away, and the summer people in search of the truly rural are warned in the most emphatic manner that the grove is private property. But still, as brother Tom is always saying, things | fate." might be far worse, for aunt Lucretia is a woman who, without an engrossing occupation, would be likely to have views and advanced ideas and lead the family a dance

My aunt is only visible to the world in the late afternoon. From early dawn until that time she haunts the grove, even when the rain is dripping through the luxuriant spring and summer foliage, but she always puts her flock to bed early, and is then her lady-like self sitting on the piazza in her black silk or sprigged muslin gown according to the weather, her long, slim fingers busied over some ornamental knitting, while a book lies open in her lap In the evening she often performs on the piano, though an ailing chick may be nestled in a bower of cotton in her lap, or some too sensitive orphan be tucked cosily into her pocket, and on rare occasions she goes out for a walk or to make a call.

This being rather a forward spring and the grove draped in its delicate green foliage before May had fairly established her claim on the hill, the chickens appeared early, and in the first zest of her chicken raising my aunt worked too hard and exposed herself too much to the uncertain weather of April. She was up and out of doors in the raw uncongenial atmosphere of dawn, she drove miles in search of new and rare eggs for sitting, she coaxed and corrected dilatory hens, she watched those suspected of having uncertain minds, she superintended the making of new coops, she tried new food and scarcely gave herself a moment of rest from one end of the day to the other, and the result was an illness which threatened to become something serious and she was obliged to take her bed and leave the chickens to Almiry, our maid of all work, who declared she knew more about taking care of them asleep than aunt Loo did wide awake, having been brought up on a tarm in Maine.

But lor, she won't believe it," she remarked to me, "'n' there she is groanin' away for fear I'll either let 'em die or won't discipline 'em right. It does beat 'n' she don't do it for profit, neither. The

than she would have been otherwise, but she would not see our family doctor because, as she privately told him, he had lost every patient he had attended on the hill tender and true," or "I cannot sing the lately; there seemed to be a sort of fatality old songs," because of some hallowing old about it, and it would be such a sad thing associations. My sister and I had often for her to die and leave all those chicks just hatched into the world. And as for having any other doctor, she would not and could not, for he was the only one she had a particle of faith in, and she wasn't | whenever we brought this to light. going to take poison stuff at random. It was in vain that we coaxed and protested, she wasn't a bit superstitious, she never was, she said, but she wasn't going to run right after a bad sign in that way.

My aunt was confined to the bed for nearly a week, then came a slow period of east, and a somewhat chilling mist crept ness, there came the sharpest and quickest convalescence when her mind grew more over the valley. Even June days have an vip you ever heard. Most folks laughed,

last. Almira did bravely under the superintendence for some time, though she declared that she could not sit with idle fingers a-watching' them coops for nobody. She'd

from goin' distracted. My aunt objected to this, but she persisted in her determination and braided rags for a mat while sitting in the damp crazy yet, but it stood to reason that she soon should be, if she kept at such tomfoolery any longer. And she did leave, much to our regret, and her works lived after her in the shape of a rug of many colors which my aunt said she could not bear to see the sight of.

She was able to resume the care of her precious broods herself by the time Almira left, though still very pale and weak, and as she complained, she was obliged to neglect them dreadfully.

I used all my eloquence in trying to persuade her to give up poultry altogether, but in vain, though she promised that she would allow no more hens to sit this season in spite of her conviction that it was cruel to deprive the poor things of this privilege. Mary Hunt, a venerable biddy which my aunt had named for an old friend, had just come off with a flock of thirteen, and her hands were quite full already.

One balmy afternoon, when butterflies and daisies were dotting our truly rural landscape and the old pine trees in the grove were whispering softly in the young ear of June, my aunt, her daily duties over thirsty and piratical instinct when meeting | much earlier than usual, was sitting on the these downy innocents in the solitude alone, front piazza with a volume of Robertson's to say nothing of the fierce robber cats who sermons open in her lap. She was looking invest the woods, and watch from secluded her best in a lilac muslin gown with little corners an opportunity to spring upon their prey. Illness, too, enters the chick-sleeves. In her moments of resting, my ens' family in the most sudden and unex aunt always had an air of elegant leisure, and unless one heard a chicken peeping and sweet oil constantly at hand, and goes from some resting place in her lap, or in about with a huge club in her grasp ready her pocket, one would never know that she to hurl at an intruder. During the whole indulged in such tarm-yard tastes and period of brooding my aunt's mind is in a spent the greater part of her time in mixcontinual state of agitation. In old days | ing chicken dough and compelling retract-

Upon this paticular afternoon I came watch the purple pageant of the thunder | home early, and was quite struck by her storm, as it slowly advanced over the sur- appearance. But she assured me that she rounding hills, but now the lovely peace wore nothing different from usual, and and stillness is rudely broken by my aunt's hysterical sobbing and loudly expressed haps some vague presentiment of the arrival of an important guest caused her to "Speckle is sitting, and oh, dear, oh, give such a wonderful curl to her hair and der! Isn't there anything that we can do to youth. My aunt did have presentiments and I was rather inclined to believe in

"There, auntie Loo, there he is!" I exclaimed a few moments later, "a minister, too, if his white neck-cloth tells the truth." "Where?" inquired my aunt, aroused by the word "minister." "It is a minister and he's coming here," she added, as the

He was a little man, but he walked with a rather martial air and held his head as if it were not only something of great importwas afraid of losing it off. A smile either of benevolence or self-satisfaction bedecked his somewhat flushed countenance.

"Aunt Loo," I whispered, "my prophetic soul tells me that this man is your

My aunt's usually calm countenance became suddenly agitated. She grew white and scarlet by turns as the man advanced up the walk, the smile broadening on his clerical countenance.

I thought it best to retreat into the house, but could not resist taking a peep from the

"Lucretia, is it possible!" I heard him exclaim in rapturous singsong. "I was told that I should find you little changed, but really, really, you have hardly changed at all in all these years."
"Israel Doane!" cried my aunt, but

rather faintly, "I thought-I thought

"Doubtless you are surprised to see me, but I assure you I have looked forward with great pleasure to this ah, reunion." My aunt immediately became her usual calm, collected self once more.

"I thought you were laboring among the heathen," she remarked rather coldly, inviting him to come into the house.

"Could'nt we, ah, would it not be more pleasant to remain here on the verandah? Beautiful rural spot this village. I returned to this country last month. My health has always suffered from the climate of the tropics, and last winter my physician informed me that a change was absolutely necessary. Hereafter I shall try to make make myself useful at home. Old ties and old associations make home very dear,

"I hope your family are well," remarked my aunt, readjusting her gold spectacles as if to obtain a better view of her visitor.

"My family consists of one married daughter, whom I trust is well. Her health was excellent when I last heard from her. My wife departed this life last year. Yes, poor Ellen sleeps under the skies of a land far distant from that of her birth. An exemplary wife and mother, Lucretia, though she was not my first love," with a drop anywhere in the house. He told glance of tender meaning at my aunt.

I thought it best to withdraw at this point. And now it dawned upon me that I had heard the name of Israel Doane before all how her mind is set upon them fowls, He was an old lover of my aunt from whom she had been separated by some trivial misidea of her winterin' fourteen roosters, 'n' understanding. My mother had told me they eatin' themselves up pretty much of the affair long ago, and it was for his every month, 'n' and she could ha' got much as thirty cents a pound for 'em." sake that my aunt kept in a little box in her disturbance. My aunt's face became vividignment and absolute econignment and absolute econignment. Her anxious mind made her much worse enamel forget-me-not, and a scarlet cornuly scarlet. The sexton tip toed up the omy. I have not examined copia with a Cupid and merry Christmas on isle and looked acout in bewilderment. it, and had never since my remembrance been able to sing "Douglas, Douglas, come across this little box in an unlawful rummaging in my aunt's private nooks, when children, and though she was overindulgent she was very stern and severe

> The Reverend Israel did not look like a hero of romance. His attractions must have waned during his long years of absence, I thought. I wondered what my aunt thought on this point.

> The wind suddenly veered around to the

at ease, for she was able to watch Almira uncertain glory in our fair New England, them that had order known better, as well and superintend the care of the chickens at and my aunt took her visitor into the as the silly boys and girls. And your not remain long, declining an invitation to dinner. He was to be in our vicinity for some time, he said, and it would give him goin' with her. Of course, I knowed all got to have some kind o' work to keep great pleasure to call again on the next the time just what 'twas, but I don't think day, in fact, he might drop in upon us any time during his sojourn at Aylestord. Mary ered, even them that was the most tickled." asked him to come to dinner to-morrow, which invitation he accepted without seclusion of the grove. At the end of this time she gave us warning of her intention to the door where there was a lingering to leave our service, saying that she wasn't good-by, which afforded us some amusement, especially as my aunt came in looking very guilty and with her cheeks dyed with blushes. She ate no dinner that night and was in such a state of absent-mindedness that she forgot to release the other one that Topknot hatched had died, top-not rooster who had been imprisoned in a small coop for discipline, having indulged too much in roving habits, and there he remained all night. The next morning she greatly deplored her carelessness, finding him very stiff and lame, from his cramped position.

It was evident that for once, my aunt's mind had strayed from chickens, and all that forenoon she walked about like one in a dream. She haunted the chicken grove as usual, but for some reason or other the chickens had cause either for surprise or complaint, for they kept up such a peeping that the whole neighbor-hood looked inquiringly in the direction of my aunt's secret bower, and the ice-man sympathetically inquired it we were killing spring chickens, greatly to my aunt's hor-

When I returned from the city about three o'clock in the afternoon I repaired to the grove to consult my aunt on some household matter, but did not find her there. It was evident that she had only just left the place, however, for lying open on one of the benches in the midst of the coops was an old book on etiquette which I had often seen in her bookcase. I picked it up, curious to see what branch of etiquette was engaging the mind of my beloved relative just now. The book was opened at

On the renewal of an old love affair! arrived when I entered the house once dim religious light of the rose colored Japmore, and it was with difficulty that I re- anese lanterns which bung overhead, trained from laughter when my aunt came looked more awful than I ever imagined into the room, and greeted him with polite | her capable of looking. cordiality, not too effusive, according to to the advice in the book, but a gracious-ness tempered with dignity and not a little often put one there for a moment, though I maidenly reserve.

bland, a little ponderous, perhaps, but again, that is all." ready to make himself agreeable and to have us make ourselves agreeable to him. He was left to aunt Loo chiefly, however, who seemed to entertain him most successfully. She executed at his request the Battle of Prague and the Maiden's Prayer, with a good deal of expression, though rather tremulously, "I wandered by the brookside." He evidently found the music very affecting, but to me, in all aunt Loo's efforts there was either too much or too little music, I could hardly tell which, not being much of a musician myself.

After dinner, it being Friday evening, my aunt's visitor suggested that they should go to prayer meeting together as the chapel to go, ot course, and after a hurried trip to | plied good riddance. the chicken grove to see that everything was right for the night, from which she returned with an anxious countenance, the two set out, looking quite lover-like as they walked leisurely along through the creeping shadows, while the late robins piped to them from the overhanging tree boughs, and the new moon silvered in the roseate

Lorinda, our maid-of-all work, who was a cousin of Almira's and had taken her place, was a methodist, and had gone away a little way ahead of the pair, and from her I heard this story of the proceed-

There are always a good many people at the Hill prayer-meetings, the church being made up of good, faithful christians and then there is nowhere else for the young people to go on that particular evening. It isn't tashionable to take sentimental walks along the leafy lanes and bowery cross roads at the Hill, and sitting on piazzas becomes monotonous even for loving couples, so the loving couples all betake themselves to the back seats in the chapel, and the younger boys and girls also, so that it is a cheerful place, and the speakers feel their hearts warmed by the crowd and there are never any awkward

It was rather warm in doors this evening but the opening hymn was lively in spite of this, and in the prayer which followed, the minister prayed especially for the foreign missions, and though it was not a meeting set apart for the cause of missions, the first speaker alluded to some recent missionary news, which circumstance, of course, aroused in the breast of August, 1891, constantly ever since that time. my aunt's friend, the newly returned During a portion of that time the machine was remissionary, a desire to give some of his own experience in the field. Personal experience is always interesting, and after he commenced speaking, though as Lorinda said "he was so slow that the crickets on the lawn outside, had to come in to fill up his pauses, and you could ha' heard a pin when he first went out ter heathendom, he come pooty nigh one time bein' eaten up in their approval. My own by the cannibals, he said, and there was a

great feelin' of grace in the house.' But after a while when the people were favor. The valuable features getting more and more interested, a strange of the "YOST" are lightness, noise awoke in his immediate vicinity, an strength, durabili y, simplicinsistent peep, peep, like the cry of ity, quick and direct action The young people tittered, the older ones looked serene and questioning. Then the noise stopped for awhile but soon went on again louder and more shrill than ever. Then it hushed once more for quite a long time and everybody looked relieved, and to use Lorinda's words again:

"Your aunt's minister had got to the exhortation part of his speakin', and was talkin' real solemn. He was askin' somethin' as to how we careless tolks that didn't do nothin' or think nothin' about them in heathen darkness would feel it we ever met our sins against them face to face, and then remarked real deep 'n' low, 'I pause for a reply.' 'N' atter a second of solemn still-

parlor. I had told Mary what I knew of aunt's minister looked real provoked though him with the greatest cordiality, but he did he kep' on talkin,' and the yip kep a goin'

Mary and I were sitting on the piazza hearing the treetoads pipe to the meditative eve, when my aunt returned breathless and alone.

"Don't say a word, dears," she exclaimed. "I took a chicken to prayer-meeting with me by mistake. I tucked it into my pocket, intending to take it to Speckle's and it didn't seem worth the while to have her bring up one aloxe. It was only just before I went to meeting, and being in a hurry, I came away and forgot all about it untill it began to peep. What set it out I can't imagine but I never knew so young a chicken with so loud a voice. Oh, dear, I don't know as I shall ever get over it, it was so mortifying, and Mr. Doane was speaking so beautifully, and ——"
"Why didn't you suffocate the little wretch, aunt," I said, trying to be sympath-

e ic. "Such a little thing would be so easy to kill in that way. It wouldn't have hurt him much.'

My aunt who had the little thing in her hands, a downy white ball with black bead eyes, was dumb with indignation for some moments. Then she delivered me a lecture on my want of feeling.

"I suppose the poor little creature is hungry," she said. "I ought not to have neglected to feed it to-night." The chicken was no sooner disposed of under some motherly breast or other, than | Cotton Frills for Dresses (all shades) - - -

Mr. Doane came through the gate, almost as breathless as my aunt had been on her arrival. 'The most extraordinary thing!" he

exclaimed, "the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of." It was certainly the most unfortunate remark he could have made. My aunt, who On the renewal of an old love affair! had just returned to the piazza, drew her-The hero of the old love affair had just self up to her full height and even in the

"I don't know as it was very extraordindon't know that I ever carried one abroad The hero, himself, was beaming and with me before. I forgot to take it out

The minister looked as if he thought it more extraordinary than ever, but he tried

to be conciliatory.
"Ah!" he said, "I am very ford of poultry raising myself, but I didn't know that you were interested in it. I-ah-I as a tender reminder of old days, and sang | couldn't imagine from whence the noise

My aunt made no reply, but sat very stiffly upright, gazing at the moon which surveyed the scene from over the pine tops. In fact she could not be induced to speak for the remainder of the evening.

The visitor looked rather crestfallen as he took his departure at an early hour. Mary and I invited him to repeat his visit at an early day as cordially as possible, bell was calling with an insistent and silvery | but my aunt was chilling as an iceberg clang through the sunset. She consented and said good evening in a tone which im-

He came again and again, but the blandness of his manner had no effect on the iciness of my aunt, and at last he left town, and my aunt looked sorry, but relieved, at his departure.

"Aunt," I said one day, when we were speaking of her old friend, "I really thought you were going to marry him. It would have been so delightfully romantic, you know, and-

"I have only just found out that I never wanted to marry him," interrupted my aunt. "That unfortunate evening of the prayer-meeting convinced me. I shall pray for him, but I never wish to see him

An 18-year-old Bombay girl, bas a picture at the Paris Salon.

St. John, N. B., 3rd July, 1894.

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