

POETRY.

"GOD BLESS YOU."

The phrase is trite; the insurance And heartless gibberish use it, And often hypocrites amuse it...

SELECT STORY.

IN A PREDICAMENT.

What Came of Nell's Masquerading in Grandma's Clothes.

In an easy chair on the broad, old-fashioned parlor that extended the entire length of the rambling old farm house...

A slight noise caused her to glance carelessly over her shoulder; a change instantly swept over her face; the color left her cheeks and a look of terror crept into her eyes.

In the doorway stood the figure of an old woman dressed in a quaint brocade sash the style of forty years ago. Soft laces lay in graceful folds around her white throat; her silky brown hair was smoothed carefully beneath the dainty cap trimmed with pretty lavender ribbons...

"For want of better employment, I suppose. After grandpa and grandma left, I felt rather lonesome, so I concluded to go to the garage and 'fix up' like I did when I was a child."

"A child, indeed. You speak as though you were as old as Methuselah!" "I am eighteen and feel quite grown up. Well, to proceed with my story, I was up in the garage, was on my feet when I saw as a large caken chest, the one we used to play house on, so I took a peep into it to see what mystery it contained. The first thing that met my gaze was this—pointing to her dress. "I thought I would put it on and see if I did look like grandma; everyone says I am the 'living image' of her. Then I came down to scare Dorothy, she is so superstitious and would imagine the horses had run off, or something dreadful had happened and grandma's ghost was appearing to her. But Dorothy was out, she always is if you want her. You were the only one left, so I tried the experiment on you, and from your reactions I think I succeeded. This is the way you looked. And Nell leaned back in her chair, rolled her eyes around in a manner that was truly startling, and at the same time exclaimed in tragic tones: "Is it you or your ghost?"

"What a torment you are! Perhaps if you had been in my place you would have looked worse than I did. You do resemble grandma. Where are you going?" "Just down to the hammock," she returned carelessly.

"Eleanor Parker Cameron, you shall do no such thing!" "Why not?" questioned Nell, coolly. "Some one might see you and then what would they say! The country is such a dreadful place for gossip."

to the house; my granddaughter, Ethel Cameron, is here and I wish you to meet her."

"I will on conditions. I told mother not to expect me home for tea. Will you let me stay? you always did."

"Agreed," she replied; "that is Ethel on the porch; is she not pretty?" "Very nice looking, a regular blonde, but I prefer brown hair and rosy cheeks."

"Nell smiled broadly at the very plain compliment, and thought how disgusted Ethel would be when she would tell her. By this time they had reached the house. "What if Ethel should tell him?" she thought. "I will risk it anyway."

"You should not contradict your elders," answered Nell severely. "I will leave Ethel to entertain you while I see Dorothy about the supper, and ignoring Ethel's appealing look, she started for the kitchen. Dorothy was nowhere to be found. "She must be at the spring house," thought Nell, and immediately started in that direction. Just as she reached the garden gate the object of her search came up the hill with a bucket of water in one hand and a pan of eggs in the other.

"Dorothy!" she called out. "The woman looked wildly around her. "Where are you?" she gasped. "Here by the gate." Dorothy gave one glance, then uttered a shriek, turned and ran down the hill. In her haste she tumbled and fell, the bucket overturned and the contents spilt all over her.

"What can be the matter?" muttered Nell, as she hastened after her. "Are you much hurt?" she asked, sympathetically. "It's her ghost—her ghost!" she groaned. "It is only Nell, don't you know me?" "I put grandma's dress on just for fun."

"Well, you do look a heap like her." "I came to tell you there would be company here to tea."

"Law makes you don't say so! Help me up. We'll have to be up or it will be late." She tried to rise, but sank back with a groan. "It's my foot, she moaned; "I must have sprained it."

been doing, dressing up for the stage, eh?"

"Instead of answering Nell fled into the house, closing the door behind her, while the astonished group looked on in silence. Ethel came to the rescue, explained the matter as best she could, blaming Nell as little as possible.

"Certainly," she returned. "He is Frank Meade, the son of our nearest neighbor. I knew him at once, although it is ten years since I saw him last. What, going already? Then I shall expect you to dinner to-morrow."

Early the next morning Nell started for the orchard, for she felt as though she could not face Mr. Meade. Sitting beneath the friendly shade of an apple tree, she wondered if he had come yet, and what he thought of her. Looking up she saw the object of her thoughts leaning against a neighboring tree, regarding her thoughtfully. She started up, but he caught her hands in his and said he had come to talk with her.

"As well now as any time," she replied, coldly. "I suppose you have come to lecture me. Then she told how wretched she had been and how she hated herself for the part she had played. "If I only had told you at first," she continued, "how much trouble it would have saved, but I thought I could hide my folly. But grandma will never stop teasing me, and worse than all, Dorothy has to suffer for me."

"Broken bones are easier mended than broken hearts," he returned. "What do you mean?" she demanded. "That I love you dearly; will you marry me?" "You will never call me grandma or laugh at me, will you?" "No, indeed!" "And you didn't suspect who I was, did you?"

"No, although different things puzzled me. I thought it was because I had not seen you for so long. Come, Nell, answer my question and not keep me in suspense any longer."

"Since you seem so anxious about it, I really suppose I will have to say—yes." When they went in to dinner Mr. Parker asked, jokingly: "How is grandma to-day?" "If you please, sir," said Frank, "this lady has promised to be Mrs. Meade. We have decided on the 25th of August. I invite you all to the wedding."

"Well, well, well! I never thought of such a thing. Take her, my boy, and you will be happy if she is anything like her 'Grandma Parker.'" "Home."

"Are you?" with a toss of the head. The new-comer pushed past Mrs. Jaycox, her very cap borders bristling with indignation.

"Miss Tunis swept her checked-skirted flounces through the rooms, looking here and there with light-blue prominent eyes, and leaving an odor of mille fleurs behind her which combined oddly with the scent of Mrs. Jaycox's camphor bottle.

"To think that people can be content to live in such a place as this!" laughed she, superciliously. "You wouldn't like it, I suppose?" said Miss Tunis.

"Well, there's no law compelling you to do so," observed Mrs. Jaycox, her face getting redder and redder—"and so I'd have you to know, Miss Tunis, whatever my son John may have told you."

"He said I should like it here," said Miss Tunis; "but I don't." "I never heard an engaged girl speak out so bold in all my life!" said Miss Hartley to herself.

"No, I don't," said Miss Tunis. "It's a deal too old-fashioned and hobgoblin to suit me—though, indeed, if this back kitchen could be pulled down and a sunny bay-window built out in its place—"

"Then I can tell you it won't be done in my time!" said Mrs. Jaycox. "And if you've come here only to find fault and criticize, young lady, the best thing you can do is to turn around and go back again!"

"Is the woman crazy?" said Miss Tunis. "Your son, Mr. John Jaycox, told me—" "I don't care what he told you!" said Mrs. Jaycox, stormily patting her foot on the bright stripes of the home-made rag carpet. "I ain't crazy—but I guess I should be pretty soon if you came here to live."

"Miss Tunis laughed disdainfully as she crossed the wooden threshold. "The place don't suit me at all," declared she. "Glad to hear it," said Mrs. Jaycox. "Back to the depot, driver," called out Miss Tunis—and the next moment the two old ladies were left looking at each other. Then for the first time Mrs. Jaycox burst into tears.

"Don't cry, Mrs. Jaycox," said Mrs. Hartley. "don't! 'Tain't worth cryin' about."

"And that's the woman I'm going to have for my head for a darter-in-law," sobbed poor old Mrs. Jaycox. "Oh, I wish the Lord had seen fit to take me before things came to this! Oh, why couldn't I have been contented with Kate Kesley, when John wanted her so bad? Kate never would have had fault with the old house, no, nor the old woman neither."

And she cried sadder, bitter tears than ever, and even the camphor bottle possessed no spell to exercise her grief. Mrs. Hartley was vainly essaying to console her, when there was the confusion of another arrival outside the door—and in a second the poor old lady felt the strong clasp of tender arms around her.

"Mother! Why, mother, what's the matter? What can have happened to make you shed tears like this?" "John! 'Tain't never you!" "Yes, mother, it is!" "But—oh, but!" "She is here, mother!" "Tain't good enough for her," hysterically cried out Mrs. Jaycox. "The old home where your father brought me, Old Grandpa Deen, don't suit her! You'll have to get rid of both of us, John, before you can please your fine new wife!"

"But, mother, you don't understand her," pleaded John. "She is ready to be a daughter to you in heart and spirit." "It's not as much as that," persisted Mrs. Jaycox. "With her scents and her silks and her mincing talk! I'd rather go to the poor-house and be done with it. I'm only an old woman, and haven't long to live! Oh, John, how could you go to the city and pick out a woman like that! If it had been Kate Kesley, now—Kate Kesley that understood my ways, and knew how I liked things done! But it's too late—oh, it's too late!" and the old woman broke forth once more into tears and sobs.

"Mother, I don't understand what you're talking about," said John. "She's insulted me and broke my heart!" "Mother, do you mean—" "I mean Miss Tunis, with her fine city ways!" wailed Mrs. Jaycox. "Miss Tunis!" echoed John. "But I don't mean Miss Tunis at all. I mean my wife. Come in, Kate!" he called cheerily from the open window. "My mother will be glad to see you, I am sure."

A bright-faced woman, dressed in soft gray cashmere with a blue-bird's wing in her hat, obeyed the summons at once. "Mother! I'm here, hesitatingly, and Mrs. Jaycox uttered an exclamation of joy. "Am I dreaming," she cried. "It's Kate Kesley, after all—my Kate! And the Lord has forgiven me my meddling!" "I don't see how things just exactly as I wanted 'em. Come close to me, Kate. Give me another of them kisses. I want to be certain sure it's you, and not that tuppin' city gal with the paint and powder on her face and the bustle that flapped back and forth when she walked. What made John write to me it was Miss Tunis?"

"I never wrote to you that it was Miss Tunis, mother," explained John Jaycox. "I said I was to be married to a lady who boarded at the house. And Kate boarded there. She was cashier in Rock & Gunn's, and I love her. Miss Tunis' aunt kept the house. She wants to invest some money in real estate, and as I knew you talked of selling the old place I advised Miss Tunis to come here and look at it."

"I'll never sell it to her," said Mrs. Jaycox, with a shudder. "If you'll please me, mother, you'll never sell it at all," said Kate, stealing one arm around the old lady's waist. "We can all three be so happy here, in the dear old home, mother."

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