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MISS DOLLY CORNERED.

"I shouldn't be surprised any day, Dolly, to see David Wiggins tying his horse at your gate," said Mr. Blount, roughly, gathering in the reins. "Nonsense, brother! anything the matter with his own hitching-post?" retorted Miss Dolly, turning in the doorway.

Mr. Blount laughed. Everybody felt bound to laugh at Miss Dolly's crisp sayings. She had kept her friends in good humor these forty years.

"And when David does call on you," pursued Mr. Blount, more seriously, "I do hope, Dolly, you'll give him a chance to do his errand. That'll be no more'n fair, and the man won't be easy till he has freed his mind."

"What mischief are you the forerunner of now, James Blount?" cried Miss Dolly, facing about like a soldier on drill. "What upon earth have I to do with David's errands?"

"Well, his wife's been dead a year or so," said Mr. Blount, suggestively shutting one eye and squinting with the other down the length of his whipstock, "and lately he's been asking about you. You can put that together to suit yourself."

"Fiddle-sticks!" said Miss Dolly, energetically. "I shan't say have him, or don't have him—though there isn't a likelier man living than David—but I do say, Dolly, you ought to give him a hearing."

And having convinced himself beyond a reasonable doubt that the whip was all right, Mr. Blount tickled his sleepy horse with it, and drove away.

"Oh, my sorrows! ejaculated Miss Dolly, closing the door with an afflicted countenance, and sitting down so quietly for once that a photographer might have copied her then and there.

Not that he could have done her justice for her expression was too quick and varied to be caught by any trick of chemicals, and without it Miss Dolly's physiognomy would have been rather characterless but for her rather Roman nose. This organ gave tone to her face; by which I would not be understood literally, as saying that she talked through it in a nasal whine. I mean simply that, in a metaphorical sense, this bold feature spoke loudly of energy. And Miss Dolly had always had an abundant need of energy—else why the nose? Every two years during her childhood she had been tip-toed into the east bedroom to see a new baby till, at her mother's death, five little brothers fell to her charge to be coaxed and scolded into manhood.

"You can't bring up them boys," croaked a dolorous aunt. "They'll run square over you, Dorothy Almeida."

Dorothy Almeida was Miss Dolly's baptismal name, but it was so manifestly too big for her that most of her friends would as soon have thought of labeling a tiny homeopathic vial with quack medicine advertisement as of calling her by it.

"Let 'em run over me, as long as it doesn't hurt 'em?" laughs Miss Dolly, skewering her flaxen hair with a goose-quill, and tying a bow upon her calico long-sleeved preparatory to "bringing up" said youths.

From that day forward she went cheerily on, making the best of everything though it must be confessed she had often had odds and ends to work with, as people usually do have who are born with a faculty. Somehow she found time for all her duties excepting matrimony. If that were a duty, it was one she couldn't and wouldn't attend to while her father and the children needed her. Divers young men thought this a pity, among them David Wiggins.

"Don't be silly, David," said Dolly, when hinted as much to her, whereupon David went off straightway and married Olive Searle, the plainest girl in the parish. This happened thirty years ago, and now David was again wifeless, and again the current of his thoughts turned toward Miss Dolly, who still lived at the old homestead near the foot of Bryant's falls. Her father had died some months before. Of the boys, James and Ezekiel had settled on the neighboring farms and the remaining three were in the West. David's benevolent heart warmed with compassion as he remembered Dolly's lonely condition, and he felt that it would be exceedingly kind in him to offer her a home, especially as he owned as good a place as you'd find on the river, while the Blount cottage was fast falling to decay. He wouldn't let her former refusal tell against her, for, now he looked back, he really didn't see how she could have married anybody at that period. She ought to be rewarded for the devotion she had shown to the family, and, for his part, he felt magnanimous enough to give her a second chance to accept him. Such was the worthy widower's state of mind when he asked James Blount,

with mock humility, whether it would be of any use for him to try and make a bargain with Dolly.

"That's more'n I can tell," Mr. Blount had answered, "Dolly's a puzzle. You'll have to find out yourself."

Mr. Wiggins smiled, in complacent anticipation of acceptance. Indeed, if it might not seem like a reproach to the memory of his lost Olive, I should say that the kind-hearted man rejoiced in this opportunity of making Miss Dolly's happiness.

Benevolence was in his face, benevolence was in his spirit, as he sailed forth at an early day to acquaint her with her good fortune. The broken harrow which he had strapped into the wagon to give the neighbors a plausible reason for his trip to the Falls was by no means typical of mental lucidity in its owner. His feeling as he approached Miss Dolly's moss-grown cottage was purely one of thankfulness that it was in his power to provide her a better home. Not that he was grateful to his dead wife for leaving a vacancy there. Mr. Wiggins had mourned faithfully for Olive a year and a day.

Miss Dolly was out in the garden gathering catnip. She never used it herself, but there were nervous old ladies in the village who looked upon this herb as the substance pleasant dreams are made of and Miss Dolly dried it every year, and often left little bundles of it when she made visits of consultation. She had built a chip fire under the tea-kettle, and then whisked off to pick an apronful of the pungent leaves while the water was boiling. There she was, stooping beneath the eaves of a log cabin sun-bonnet, and humming a lively fugue tune, when Mr. Wiggins drove up.

"Come, my beloved, haste away," piped Miss Dolly, cheerily, snapping briskly at the stalks.

"Cut short the hours of thy delay; Fly like a youthful—"

"Fly like a youthful—" struck in a whoozy bass.

The sun-bonnet tipped back like a cart-body.

"Sakes alive!" cried Miss Dolly, not in the words of the hymn, as Mr. Wiggins strode toward her on his slightly rheumatic leg.

"I didn't mean to put you out," laughed he, shaking hands heartily, "but it seemed kind of natural to take part with you in invitation."

"You always had a way of falling in at the most unheard of time, I remember," retorted Miss Dolly, saucily, recovering herself, and going on gathering catnip. She was fifty years old now, and hoped she had her wits about her.

"You need to say I kept good time, only too much of it," pursued Mr. Wiggins, with a sudden inspiration; "but I tell you what, Dolly, time never dragged with me then as it does these days!"

"It is a dull season," said Dolly, with exasperating simplicity. "I suppose the grasshoppers have eaten most of your wheat, haven't they, so it'll hardly pay for reaping?"

"Just so," assented Mr. Wiggins, discomfited. He had not traveled five miles in the heat to discuss the state of the crops.

"Walk in and sit down, won't you?" said Dolly, with reluctant hospitality. Her apron was crumpled at last to its utmost capacity. She devoutly wished it had been larger.

"Well, yes, I don't care if I do," he answered after a hypocritical show of hesitation. "I had a little business further on, at the blacksmith's. No hurry, though, as I know of," and he turned to let down the bars for Dolly, who meanwhile nimbly slipped through the fence, catnip and all.

"Bless my heart! I don't see but what you're as spry as ever you was," said he, admiringly, as he puffed along in her wake. "Still you must be getting into years, Dolly, as well as I—no offense, I hope—and I was wondering whether or no it wasn't lonesome for you living alone here; a woman so!"

"Oh, I never was one of the lonesome kind," responded Dolly, briskly, seating her guest in the patchwork cushioned rocking-chair; "and for that matter, hardly a day passes without some of James' folks running in."

"Yes, I know; but if you were to change your situation, wouldn't you enjoy life better, think?"

Miss Dolly fidgeted at the green paper-curtains, and intimated that her present happiness would be completed if the grasshoppers would stop feeding on her garden sauces.

"That's just it," continued Mr. Wiggins eagerly; "you do seem to need a man to look out for your farming interests, now don't you, Dolly? a man that'll be ready and willing to do for you, and make you comfortable?"

"I don't know," said Dolly dryly. "The year before father died I did have Silas Potter, and he is the most faithful creature living; but what, with the extra cooking and washing I had to do for him, my work was about doubled, and when mud-time came I was glad enough to send off, and hire

by the day. I about made up my mind that men folks round the house cost more'n they come to."

"I guess we don't understand one another," said Mr. Wiggins, slightly disconcerted by this unflattering view of his sex. "I wasn't speaking of hired help, Dolly. Naturally you would get tired of that; it's worryin' to a woman. But if you was to have a companion, now—one that could give you a good home, with wood and water under cover—"

"Shoo! shoo!" cried Dolly, flying out after an inquiring chicken on the door-step.

Mr. Wiggins drew his red pocket handkerchief from his hat to wipe his glowing face. Certainly he hadn't felt the heat so all through haying.

"How's your health now-a-days?" asked Miss Dolly, frisking back with a look of resolute unconcern.

"Very good; remarkably good! I don't know where you'll find a man, Dolly, with a tougher constitution than I've got."

"Ah!" Dolly blushed like a sumac in October.

"Yes, I'm well," pursued Mr. Wiggins, perseveringly; "and I'm tolerably well-to-do, with nothing to hinder my marrying again, provided I can see the woman to my mind."

"There's the deacon's widow," suggested Dolly, officiously; "she's pious, economical—"

"She's left with means enough to carry her through handsomely," interrupted Mr. Wiggins, quickly. "Now I'd rather have a wife to provide for—one that needed a home. In fact, Dolly, I have my eye on the little woman I want this minute!"

He had both eyes on her, for that matter, and Dolly was forced to recognize the situation, whether she accepted it or not.

"I've managed to sugar my tea so far, David, without calling upon my neighbors," chirruped she, stopping to lay straight the braided mat, "and I might as well keep on, I don't feel it a tax, as some folks would. But there's Martha Dunning, she's having a hard time to get along. Why don't you take her, David? She'd appreciate such a nice house as yours."

"It would seem as if 'most any woman might," said Mr. Wiggins, in an injured tone, "all finished off complete, painted outside and in—"

"She'd be delighted with it, I am sure of it!" broke in Dolly, with an air of conviction, as she darted into the kitchen to lift a boiling kettle from the crane.

"But you don't mean that you won't marry me, Dolly?" pleaded Mr. Wiggins anxiously, following to the door. "I've been lottin' on seein' you at the head of things in my house."

"Martha is a grand manager," said Dolly, coolly. "David needn't think he can buy me with a set of new buildings!" added she, mentally, snapping down the lid of the pug-nosed teapot. "I never did have the name of being cropping!"

"I tell you, Dolly, I won't have Martha; I don't like her turn!" he cried, testily, balancing himself on the threshold, yet not daring to step over it. Dolly gave her undivided attention to winging the hearth.

"You know you was always the woman of my choice, Dolly," pursued Mr. Wiggins, as tenderly as he could consistently with the distance between them. "And we were both young—"

"Pshaw!" snapped Miss Dolly, scorning her wing; "that's beyond the memory of man!" He grasped a door-post in either hand, looking wretched enough to slay himself on the spot, after the fashion of Sampson. Evidently he had not touched the right chord as yet. Miss Dolly was not to be won by the attraction of wealth and position, nor even by tender allusions to the past. He would appeal to her kindness of heart.

"I need to believe you had some feelin', Dolly," said he, tremulously; "but you don't seem to have any for me. Here I am left alone in the world; children all paired off, 'thout's Matilda, and she'll go before the snow flies; house empty—"

"I suppose you can have a home with any one of your boys, and welcome," put in Miss Dolly, faintly, still fluttering about the chimney like a swallow.

"Yes, if worse comes to worst, I suppose I can," assented Mr. Wiggins, mournfully, anything but consoled by this reflection. "It would break me down terribly, though, you may depend, to give up my place that I set so much by, and crowd myself on to my children."

No response save the clattering of the tongs.

"And it's dreadful melancholy business for a man at my time of life to drag along without a partner. I'm getting to be old, Dolly," Mr. Wiggins brushed his sleeve across his eyes as a feruled school boy might have done. "Yes, I'm getting to be old Dolly," he repeated brokenly; "and

it stands to reason that I haven't many years to live; but I did hope we might go down hill together, Dolly, you chirkin me up with that spry way of yours that I always took to, and I carryin' the belt of—"

Here Miss Dolly gave a little sniff, nothing worth mentioning only for the effect produced on Mr. Wiggins. Indeed, had his ears been as old as he pretended, he would not have suspected her of being affected by anything more serious than a cold in the head.

"Can't you make up your mind to have me, Dolly?" pleaded he, crossing the threshold in his hopeful eagerness. "I don't see how I'm going to stand it if you can't."

"Then Martha wouldn't suit," said Miss Dolly, archly, making a great pretense of wiping a cinder from her eye. "What a shame, now, when she needs the property so much!"

"Hang the property! I'd mortgage the whole of it rather than not get you, Dolly," cried Mr. Wiggins, with a vehemence that quite closed her mouth.

And so at last he had Miss Dolly cornered.

A HOUSE ONE THOUSAND YEARS OLD.

The loftiest house, and the most perfect in the matter of architecture I have ever seen was that which a wood chopper occupied one winter in the forest of Santa Cruz County. It was the cavity of a redwood tree, 240 feet in height. Fire had eaten away the trunk at the base until a circular room had been formed, sixteen feet in diameter. At twenty feet or more from the ground was a knot-hole, which afforded egress for the smoke. With hammocks hung from pegs, and a few cooking utensils hung upon other pegs, that house lacked no essential thing. This woodman was in possession of a house which had been a thousand years in process of building. Perhaps on the very day it was finished, he came along and entered in. How did all jack knife and hand-saw architect ure sink into insignificance in contrast with this house in the solitudes of the great forest! Moreover, the tenant fared like a prince. Within thirty yards of his cavernous house a mountain stream went rushing past to the sea. In the swirls and eddies under the shelving rocks, if one could not land half a dozen trout within an hour, he deserved to go hungry as a penalty for his awkwardness. Now and then a deer came out into the openings, and at no great distance, quail, rabbits and pigeons could be found. What did this man want more than nature furnished him? He had a house with "cupola" two hundred and forty feet high, and game at the cost of taking it. This Arcadian simplicity would have made a lasting impression but for a volunteer remark that nothing could be added to give life a more perfect zest. "Well, yes," said he, "I reckon if you are going to town you might tell Jim to send me up a gallon of whiskey and some plug tobacco." It will not do to invest a hollow tree with too much of sentiment and poetry. If that message had not been suggested, we should have been under the delusion to this day that the lives of those people, dwelling in a house fashioned a thousand years ago, were rounded to a perfect fullness, without one artificial want.—Overland Monthly.

Mr. F. W. Mitchell has concluded not to build an Opera House this season. Upon opening the proposals received for the work Mr. Mitchell found that they exceeded the architect's estimate several thousand dollars. Bids were received from Cleveland, Pittsburg, Meadville, Franklin, and other places. The bids from Franklin were for the stone and brick work, and were at least twenty per cent. below any other. This fact speaks well for our contractors. The bidders assign as a reason for their large figures that labor and material are much higher now than last season. We hope that prices will have fallen sufficiently by next year to enable Mr. Mitchell to carry out his design for an Opera House, which he will undoubtedly do whenever the cost does not exceed the architect's estimate.—Venango Spectator.

Some of the papers are telling a story about an absent-minded man who invited a party to his house to dinner. Just before their arrival he went up stairs to change his dress. He forgot all about them, thought it was bed time, and got into bed. A servant who entered his room to tell him his guests were waiting for him, found him fast asleep.

A Baltimore lightning rod man fell fifty feet to the ground, but escaped serious injury. Half an hour before the accident he had been suspended from the top of a shot tower by the same apparatus which afterward gave way.