

EXTRAVAGANT

By ANNA L. FINN.

"Bob is always talking about the delicious pies and cakes his mother makes," Jean Winston confided to her mother, at the same time giving an admiring glance at the beautiful solitaire which adorned her third finger. "You see," she continued, "he wants me to know that I will have to be quite proficient in the culinary art to compete with her."

Mrs. Winston smiled at her daughter's simplicity. "Well, why don't you show him what you can do, Jean?" she replied. "He doesn't know that you have been taking a course in domestic science and are already quite proficient. Why not surprise him?"

"That's a perfectly splendid idea, mumsie," Jean exclaimed. "Bob is coming to dinner tonight and I'll make the most elaborate cake imaginable. It will surely rival anything which Mrs. Rogers ever made."

So donning the largest apron available, Jean set about her task. True to her desire, the cake was indeed an elaborate affair, for every known ingredient necessary to the making of a perfect cake was used by Jean. "There," she exclaimed, as she admiringly put the finishing touches to the dainty pink and white frosting, "if that doesn't beat Bob's mother's cakes than I'm greatly mistaken." She was quite beside herself, for the cake was a grand success and one of which any girl might well be proud. She could picture Bob munching a piece of the toothsome dainty. "Won't he be surprised and delighted," she thought. So the cake was put away for safe keeping and Jean proceeded to busy herself about the house.

The day passed very quickly and, glancing at the clock, she realized that she had just about an hour in which to dress for dinner. Donning her favorite blue frock, she was about to proceed down stairs when suddenly she became aware of the fact that something was missing. "Oh, my ring! Where could I have put it?" she exclaimed. After a very careful search of her favorite hiding places she failed to find any trace of the lost treasure. Soon she had the whole household transformed into a searching party, but all without avail. The ring could not be found.

"Oh, what shall I do?" bemoaned Jean. "I can never tell Bob I have lost it; he would think it so careless of me. I'm sure I had it this morning," she continued. "But in my foolish pride and excitement over that horrid cake I lost it. I just hate the old cake now!"

All, of course, were in sympathy with her; but when one has lost her treasured engagement ring it is hard to be consoled.

In due course of time Bob arrived, and to all outward appearances Jean was immensely happy. "What if I should miss it from my finger," she soliloquized. The thought caused her some concern, but she quietly dismissed it, hoping against hope that such a thing would not come to pass.

The dinner progressed very favorably, and finally the cake was brought forth. Bob was greatly impressed with its tempting appearance, and Jean promptly explained that she had made it especially for him and expressed the hope that he would like it. He was, of course, anxious to sample Jean's cooking and a very generous portion was served him.

Jean was quite elated, and was waiting anxiously for the words of praise which she knew she was sure to receive. Great was her surprise, however, as she glanced up at Bob to see a distressed look on his face. "Why, what's the trouble? Is there anything the matter with the cake?" Jean anxiously inquired. All eyes were immediately on Bob.

"Oh, no, not at all," he assured her. "Only I struck something rather hard," and presently he drew forth a portion of the cake in which was imbedded nothing less than Jean's cherished ring. Poor Bob; he looked both mystified and embarrassed. But Jean at once cleared up the situation. "Oh, my precious ring!" she rapturously exclaimed. "Why, how did it ever get into that cake?" Instantly she remembered removing it from her finger before commencing to bake the cake, and concluded that in some mysterious way it must have dropped into the mixture.

Great mirth followed and Jean joined the merriment, as she realized her terrible blunder, despite her efforts to display her talents in the all-important line.

"But it wasn't such a bad cake after all, was it, Bob?" she fondly inquired, after the merriment had subsided. "Well, I should say not," he replied; "it was a perfect jewel of a cake, but," he continued, "I'm afraid you will have to find a more economical recipe before we are married, because my salary would never warrant diamond flavored cakes." (Copyright, 1919, by the McClure Newspaper Syndicate.)

Worm Turns.

"Doctor, I don't quite understand this bill you sent me."

"Well?"

"You have one item here, 'Professional services, \$5.' That's clear enough. But what's this other charge, 'Reading matter, 35 cents?' Is that a war tax?"

"No. That's to repay me for the magazine you carried off when you left my office."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

TRUE LOVE LAUGHS AT AGE

Shafts of Father Time Powerless to Affect Those Blessed With Mutual Affection.

Ordinarily, we would cuss to the limit a "peeper" or an eavesdropper. But we have a confession to make on the first count, and we would plead mitigating circumstances. Here is the story:

On a drizzling, foggy night, our way lay down a side street toward home. Several rods ahead there was a shaft of light and when we reached the spot we found a window with the shade half-way up. Wickedly, but not maliciously, we hesitated, stopped—and we peeped.

There sat an old man and his wife. They must have been well up to the allotted three-score of years. He was smoking and she was knitting. Still we peeped. Then she looked up at him and smiled and said something. He laid down a book, struggled up from out of his comfortable seat and kind of hobbled out of the room, shortly returning and carrying a glass of water, which he handed to her.

And as she drank she held the wrinkled and bony hand of her lover. Then, as she finished drinking, she released his hand and the look she gave him and the look he gave her were like shafts of sunshine breaking through the murky clouds after days of rain.

That picture has haunted us a long time. Somehow she seems beautiful in our eyes, and yet we did not get a "closeup" of her features. And he, why as we keep thinking of him, we hark back to the days when we once visited a fine old Southern gentleman who possessed the graces of a Chesterfield and the courtesy of a Don Juan. Then we recall the words of a poet which fits the case precisely: "Let Time reach out with his sickle as far as ever he can; although he can reach ruddy cheeks and ripe lips and flashing eyes, he cannot quite reach love."

When a man really loves a woman she will never grow old, and when a woman loves a man he is neither decrepit nor bowed nor tremulous. She is the same lass he wooed and he is always the same gallant young fellow who won her heart and her hand. They are absolutely equals, happy and free. These two lovers are traveling toward the City of Silence, but they are leaving behind a picture never to be forgotten.—Fremont Herald.

Patriotic Kansan.

I had looked forward to my first glimpse of France with an almost fanatical eagerness. France—the land of dreams—I had visioned it so often! But my first real sight of it, save for a few harbor lights, was not at all the thrilling experience that I had expected. As we steamed up the river to Bordeaux I stood, with a group of eager watchers, beside the rail, and looked at the fields stretching along the sides of the river. They were very green, even though it was winter time; and though I was almost breathless with the wonder of reaching a promised land, that vivid green was the only thing that I could quite comprehend.

"I never saw grass like that!" I exclaimed stupidly.

One of the men—a newspaper man from the middle West—answered me.

"You ought to see the grass that we grow in Kansas!" he said.—Margaret E. Sangster in the Christian Herald.

Dog Watches for Auto.

Does evolution in the life of animals cause them to take added-care in going across a street infested with autos? Some folks says it does. Early in the auto age numerous dogs were killed because they would run out to bark at an auto and, judging the speed by that of a horse-drawn vehicle, they often were run over.

This fact can still be noticed in some country districts, where autos are not plentiful. Close students and lovers of dogs in the city say they have often noticed dogs looking to the left and to the right before they start across a street. Of course, not all of them do, neither do all human beings, but the "thinking" dog does. Watch it for yourself.

Future of "Tired" Nations.

The recuperative powers of nations is great beyond belief, and hope is ever present as long as the spark of vitality is left. The same superhuman effort that was put forward to repel the invader will again be exerted to remedy the damage that has been done; only there must be a breathing space between effort, and in that space lies the greatest danger. This danger, however, is more imaginary than real, and whatever means are resorted to by the population to deaden the effect of this reactive period, it soon pallies and the sober minds of the populace again attain the ascendancy.—Forbes Magazine.

Extravagance in Combs.

The notice, "Ladies are requested to remove their combs," appears now on theater programs in London, because of the vogue of the huge Spanish comb among smart women. Some of the combs are of enormous size. The tortoise shell vogue is an expensive one. A light tortoise shell dressing set costs \$1,000 or more.

Protected His Tonisils.

John Lay denies the story that he had his tonsils snubbed by gazing skyward the other afternoon at the airplane that was cutting didos in the sky. He says the machine shifted its position often enough to keep him turning about, so that part of the time his mouth was in the shade.—Sikeston Standard.

FROM A CLEAR SKY

By AGNES C. BROGAN.

Rosalia walked beside the tangled hedges of roses in her garden and looked wistfully up and down the road.

"Reckon," she said, "we may as well give up looking for some one to come or something to happen Susan, we've been looking a good many years."

The black cat who was the lone little woman's only companion, answered by a sympathetic purr.

"Seems," Rosalia went on, "that we ought to get over expecting. If anything new or pleasant had been coming our way, it would have come when the old house was fresh, when father tended the rose vines and kept them neat, when carriages drove past our door with happy folks coming to town for holiday, or stopping in to visit."

Rosalia sank down upon a grassy mound and drew the cat into her lap, silent with her memories.

"Carriages come no more down our quiet lane," she told the cat, "it's autos now, great whirling autos flying along the great white road." Rosalia rose to her feet smiling whimsically upward, "anything that will come our way these days, puss, must drop out of a clear sky." And as the woman stood gazing absently upward, a whirling sound coming not from the main road, rent the air. Then she saw it—the wonder thing with the outspread wings of a monster bird sweeping the sky. And before Rosalia could catch her astonished breath, the wonder thing circled, drooped, and still circling, came crashing toward her own neglected garden.

Like a throbbing monster it lay in the wide space beyond the rose hedge; and Rosalia, trembling, rushed to a man who frantically beckoned from its side. He was a young man and deadly white.

"You'd better get someone," he gasped, "to help carry me inside. Nothing but a broken bone, I guess—awful jar, but made landing—in time." Then the man of the airplane fainted.

When she returned with the assurance that help would soon come, the young man turned upon the cushions she propped about him.

"It's probably nothing to worry about," he said slowly, "but you never can tell. Might be internal injury. So I wondered—if you'd be kind enough—to write a sort of—message to a girl. You could mail it to her from me in case—" he smiled faintly. "Well, in either case," he said.

So Rosalia brought her best note-paper, and seated herself close to the great broken bird, which had soared toward the sky.

"Yes," she prompted.

"Begin it," the man said steadily.

"Dearest," that includes everything."

"Dearest," Rosalia wrote, and waited. "Today only, do I dare to tell you that which has long been in my heart, I love you. Always, I think I have loved you—" She still waited as he lay with closed eyes apparently thinking.

Rosalia was thinking also. She had wished for something to happen. Something miraculous had happened, the "something" had darted into her solitude from out a clear sky. Romance itself, was close to her, and she, as usual, but an onlooker. She thought of this dearest "girl" far away, wondering if she had listened wearily for a step that never came back. But the "Dearest" girl did not live, she was sure, in an old house set far back from the road, where briars and cares grew thick, to screen and choke young life. The dearest girl's lover had not gone away years before. He was a young lover still. Neither had heartless parents sent him abroad to finish a medical education, killing romance—country romance they had called it, with one blow. And after twenty-five years the memory of that broken romance still had power to bring a mist to Rosalia's blue eyes.

He had married—her own lover of long ago—a gay creature abroad, who had not lived long enough to return with her husband to his home. And when he had returned, taking up in later years his father's practice of medicine, Rosalia kept resolutely and proudly out of his way.

As an auto rounded the curve, she jumped apprehensively to her feet and hurried into the house. It was the same step she remembered, which now crossed the porch, as the doctor carried the aviator upon his own broad back. The same confident laugh which echoed back from her sitting room.

Presently the doctor sought her out.

"We shall need you," he said, but his eyes were upon her, as he talked with his patient.

And later when Rosalia and her lover of long ago stood together beside the airplane in the garden, the doctor bent to pick up a piece of paper.

"Dearest," he read, "today only, do I dare to tell you that which has long been in my heart, I love you. Always, I think, I have loved you."

He turned, as he was leaving, to put the paper into Rosalia's hand.

"I will come again this evening," he said.

And as she would have continued the young lover's letter, she saw beneath her own handwriting a hastily added line:

"This is my message to you, Rosalia, the message I, myself, would have written."

And when the moon shone through the old house windows at evening, she found herself again listening for a step.

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THE MAY BASKET

By GENEVA A. ELDRIDGE.

Scent of apple blossoms filled Cynthia Smith's living room, a clumsy bee tumbled up and down the outside of the screen door, and now and then a swallow darted across the sunshine, his blue wings glistening. Away down the street sounded the rat-tat of a drum, and Cynthia heard the patter of children's feet running toward the town square. Still she sat tense and upright in the old-fashioned rocking chair, her mouth drawn in a straight hard line, her eyes fixed upon the work in her hands.

The screen door squeaked on its spring and a round-faced, brown-eyed little boy squeezed in, his eyes filled with surprise when he saw her sitting there so stiff, her work in her hands, and he stammered a little as he said: "Wh-why, Aunt Cynthia, ain't you going to meet the train and see the p-parade?"

Soft and quick came her answer: "No, dear, not today."

"But Aunt Cynthia, they ain't goin' to be no more p-parade days, an' I got on my white suit, an' mother thought maybe you'd like to have a little boy what was all spic and span to go wiv you."

And his little face grew wistful and troubled. He had never seen an Aunt Cynthia like this before, so straight and strange.

He meant to know before he left just why she was staying home the day everyone else in town was going down to welcome the boys from France. So he crept up close and whispered: "Is it 'cause Joe ain't comin', auntie?" Tears sprang to her eyes as she gathered the little spic and span boy close.

"Yes, Teddie boy, that's just why auntie ain't goin'. She can't bear it."

Now that Teddie was sure he felt that he ought to say something to help make auntie happier, so he said as he stroked her face with his fat little hand: "Never mind, auntie; I've got a secret and maybe tonight 'bout dark you'll know it. Maybe right 'fore supper, maybe right after, anyway, don't you come out doors right that time, will you?"

And auntie promised to stay in the house. Then hearing his mother calling he scampered away leaving Aunt Cynthia alone with her thoughts. Slowly she closed her eyes and in imagination saw the town square filled with people, the train pulling in filled with returning soldiers, the happy greetings, and far and faint she heard the band and the cheering.

The hot tears trickled slowly down her face as she whispered, "And mine reported missing; my boy, who was the pride of my heart!" And then Teddie's happy little face seemed to shine out, and she remembered what a comfort he had been all the weary months, "and now he is coming to hang me a May basket, bless his dear little heart, and I must cheer up for his sake. I think I will plan a little surprise myself."

So she went into her dining room and set the pretty table, bringing in great bunches of apple blossoms to decorate it with until the room looked like fairyland in the pink and white dress. She frosted little round cakes and made an iced drink for the crystal glasses, and almost before she knew it, twilight came drifting down. The drums had ceased their rat-tat and happy voices called to one another in the street. "It's almost time for Teddie and his secret," she thought as she patted her hair into place. Then she heard steps tiptoeing up the board walk and a child's quick panting breath, and she smiled the old-time glad smile that she used to greet the boy with who was missing tonight when he came to hang May baskets at the very same door.

When two fat fists pounded hard on the screen door she waited only long enough for a small boy to hide before she opened the door, to find a dainty little basket, all fringed and festooned and fairly bursting with candy kisses, setting on the step.

"Why, how surprised I am," she said. "Who could have left this beautiful little basket here? Surely it's a mistake; some little boy must have thought Susie Grimes lived here."

Just then a small boy in white wriggled out from behind the snowball bush and called breathlessly, "No, no, Aunt Cynthia, 'tain't no 'stake, it's my secret and some more of it is 'hind the catalpa tree. You come see." But just then a khaki-clad figure sprang out with wide-open arms, and then Ted's secret was out.

"Oh, Joe," cried Aunt Cynthia as she wept in his arms, "how you must have felt not to find me at the train to meet you."

"That's all right, mother; I don't blame you under the circumstances."

"When Ted told me his secret I thought I'd wait and surprise you."

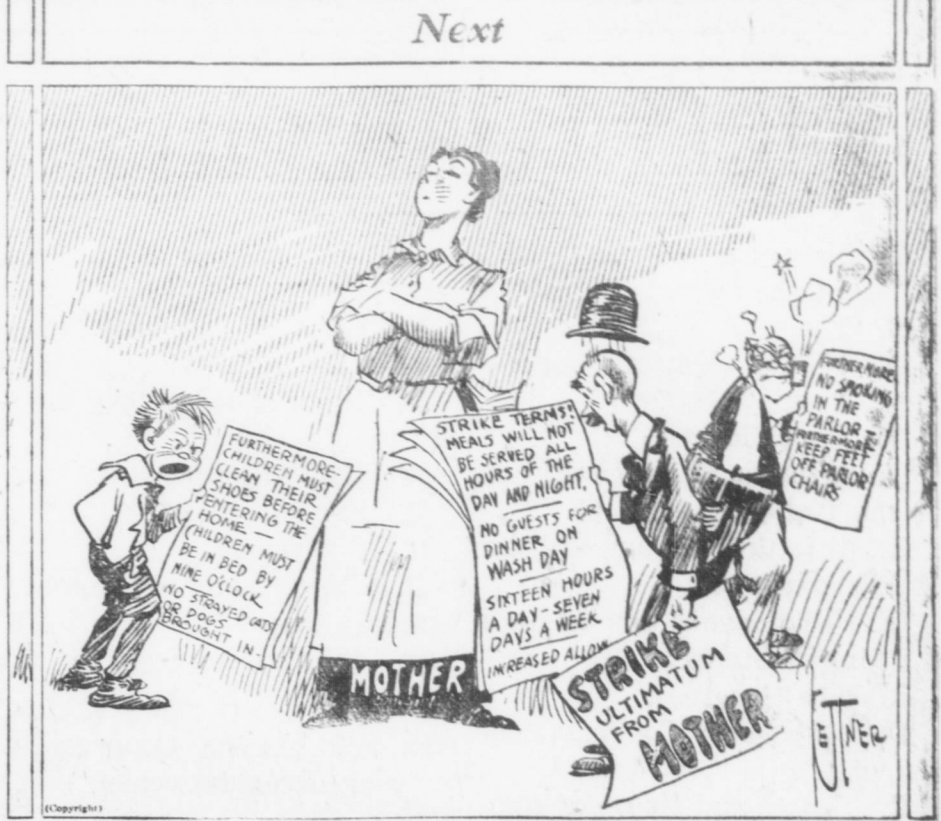
"Some May basket all around, hey? Say, Ted, it looks like frosted cakes and lemonade in the dining room; let's hurry for mess."

And as mother and son wiped the tears of gladness from their eyes, a little voice shrilled out: "You won't never cry no more on p-parade day, will you, Aunt Cynthia?" (Copyright, 1919, McClure Newspaper Syndicate.)

No Housework for Them.

"Well, the soldiers learned to sweep, wash and cook."

"Yep, the present crop of brides is going to have a perpetual cinch."



FLORY

By MILDRED WHITE.

"Silly twaddle!" remarked James Comstock, disgustingly, and laid the book aside.

"Whose 'twaddle'?" asked a sweet voice near him, "is it?"

James glanced at the cover.

"By Flory," he quoted contemptuously. "Flory is exactly the sort of person one would expect to touch up on her subjects, like a butterfly among the flowers, with no substance or reality to hold."

"Haven't you," asked the girl at his side, "imbibed some of Flory's poetic phraseology? Now, I know a man who is enraptured over the little books, considers them the acme of art. Certainly they sell well."

James Comstock turned to look into the piquant face upraised to his own. Like various other guests at Mrs. Van Houton's house party, he was exceedingly curious concerning this new arrival in their social midst.

The rest of the crowd had been known to each other, either by name or reputation for years. Rhoda Kent was one of Mrs. Van Houton's discoveries. To use her son's expression, his mother had "sprung a new one," and she was delighted in her young friend's reserve. The most favored had been able to learn nothing of Rhoda's past, present or future from her own lips.

It was the unusual charm of her personality which caused deep interest upon all sides, and much conjecture. Her clothing, though in good taste, was so independently simple that many wondered if Mrs. Van Houton had taken on a protegee.

James Comstock, being acceptably the most interesting man in the set, was naturally her vis-a-vis. In fact, during the days of proximity in the fine old house his heart had known its first serious affection.

James, the heretofore invulnerable, was, as Billy Van Houton said, "decidedly hard hit."

Never before, he gloomily admitted to himself, had face or voice of woman haunted the nightly hours which should be devoted to healthful slumber. So James was justified in possessing more than the usual share of curiosity concerning the real life of the winsome Rhoda.

"Perhaps," he said in answer to her defense of the book discussed, "this 'Flory' may say more, in a light manner, than I am clever enough to grasp. But, fancy, for instance, being married to such a dreamer. Poor husband of Flory! With his wife always soaring above the blue. She isn't so bad at rhyme, though, I'll admit; seems to have a number of little verses scattered through here and there, with a bar of music to start them off. Helps to sell, I suppose. Makes the book look easy to read."

Miss Kent nodded laughingly. "But you would not want to be the suffering husband who must listen to his wife singing those things around the house," she said.

"Heaven forbid!" James piously ejaculated. And the lovely girl at his side arose in response to Mrs. Van Houton's call.

"Come here, Rhoda," cried that merry person. "Here are half a dozen bored people wishing to be entertained. My hope lies in you."

James Comstock gazed after the graceful figure regretfully. The glance she threw back at him was strangely disquieting. For days he had been joyously secure in a consciousness of the girl's preference. Unaccountably discouragement came upon him. Rhoda's eyes had gazed at him reproachfully, her lips had closed firmly, as though in displeasure. Then presently he heard her voice in song, as she accompanied herself upon the piano.

It was a little Scotch tune that the girl played and the words sounded vaguely familiar. Comstock leaning forward, listening attentively, found that voice and tune thrilled him with inexplicable tenderness. Where—had he—heard—the words?

Idly his gaze fell upon the opened book of "Flory." Then he knew. It was one of the despised Flory's verses that his beloved was singing. And after a round of involuntary hand-clapping he heard Mrs. Van Houton's triumphant announcement: "I had not intended to tell you for

awhile; we have had such fun keeping our secret. But Rhoda Kent is 'Flory,' as you have guessed, with those delightful books to her credit." Comstock sat staring dully at the volume in his hand long after silence proclaimed that Rhoda's audience had departed. Bitterly he recalled his recent condemning conversation, with its fervent "Heaven forbid!" that a wife such as she should be his own. Well, he had done for himself this time, he bitterly reflected, and this time was all that counted in the world.

"If you please," asked Rhoda severely, "may I have that book of 'silly twaddle'?"

Wretchedly he looked up into the lovely face above his.

"And—I was going to ask you to be my wife."

"Heaven forbid!" murmured Rhoda. "A wife floating around in the blue." Her voice broke in soft uncontrollable laughter. Eagerly he caught at her hands.

"I will drop the name 'Flory,'" Rhoda said later; "Mrs. James Comstock will give to the book the proper dignity which it deserves."

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Flour From Beets.

The sugar flour of northern France is made by pouring fresh beet pulp into the top of a tower of warm air, where it passes through a series of gratings rotating one above another, and is delivered into air gradually increasing in temperature up to about 250 degrees Fahrenheit. The product weighs about 25 per cent of the weight of the beets.

World Record in Treaties.

Some painstaking person has compiled a list of treaties from 1560 B. C. to 1860 A. D. In those 34 centuries the world achieved 8,000 treaties, and we are told that each of them on the average lasted a little longer than two years. It is as true now as it was 1,500 years before the Christian era that treaties are only kept when there is an honest intention among all parties of keeping them.

Everybody Can Take Milk.

If a person tells me "I cannot take milk" I always say: "You can if you will take it in a certain way." It is a question usually of taking it right or of taking it like soup, with a spoon, with a bite of some carbohydrate substance, cracker or bread, between the sips. I do not think everybody must take milk, but I think everybody can.—Dr. R. C. Cabot, in "A Layman's Handbook of Medicine."

Wouldn't Sit on a Box.

The man in the box office of a Broadway theater is responsible for this. He asserts that a Brooklyn youth and his best girl stepped up to the box office window the other night and asked for two tickets for the show, which is a musical comedy. Only box seats were available. Returning to the girl the youth said: "They have nothing left but box seats." "Let's go home, then," she replied with a frown. "I won't sit on a box."

MRS. RAYMOND ROBINS



Mrs. Raymond Robins, president of the National Women's Trade Union League.