Bovril helps you to "turn the corner"

The Purple Lady

BY GEORGIA WOOD PANGBORN

PART I.

It was a rainy afternoon, so Joe and Althea were in the attic, cutting fashion ladies out of an old Godey's Lady's Book. That is, Althea cut out the ladies. Joe designed animals on yellow wrapping paper. These, he said, would eat the ladies up. But when the back of Althea's wrist went to her mouth and her eyes fixed mournfully on him filled and filled, he said hastily that it was only a few of the animals who were like that. The rest were good and would protect the ladies. Just let him have his turn at the scissors and she would see. And so, indeed, it proved, for the beasts fought so terribly among themselves that in a short time good and bad alike were nothing but a heap of torn scraps, while the ladies, quite unscathed, still stood along the floor crack. Then Joe said he smelled the cookies being taken out of the oven and went down to see.

Althea was hungry. People at home were sick. People at home, though this she did not know, were nearly at their wits' end. So the kitchen at home was at sixes and sevens, and the little cooking done there was almost inedible in result. Mrs. Mack knew all about it and was terribly sorry, and helped by having Althea over at her house so much that she began to feel as if she had a little daughter of her own as well as that square, blundering, noisy little son. And as she watched the two together, how splendidly they got on, her dreams would sweep foolishly forward to a time when Joe should no longer be so square and blundering nor Althea so tiny and frail. What a pair they would make if they carried out the fine promise of their babyhood!

The far corners of the attic were a little dimmer than she liked; in particular, the corner where the model of the machine stood, all legs and elbows and long fingers. It had been there ever since she made the acquaintance of Joe's attic (which was the same as always), and though Joe had explained all about it—how it wouldn't go and couldn't hurt anybody—she had never quite liked it. It stood in front of a little black trunk which she had eyed longingly through the machine's sprawling levers. But Joe said the trunk things weren't old-fashioned things you could dress up in, but the machine's things, drawings and models. He had seen them once, and some day, when he was a man, he was to have them and the machine and see if he could find out what it needed to make it go. It was something about printing; he knew that much, and he told Althea what printing was.

But, of course, now that things turned to dreams, the machine was as unsubstantial as the rest, so as she looked at it through half-closed eyes Althea was not surprised that it should thin, dissolve, become invisible. Oh, how lovely! She had done it! She had dreamed the lady real!

Yes, there she was, a real dream lady, lady size, too, not just a doll, and she wore a great braid of yellow hair around the top of her head like a crown.

She was sitting on the floor in front of the trunk, and her wide purple skirts made a billowy circle about her until she was like some great inverted flower. The trunk was open, and it was not just full of drawings and things. She was taking out the loveliest little dresses, just right for a doll, and holding them up and looking at them, then folding them up and putting them away again, the way you do to see if there are moths. Clove pinks! Well, I should think so! There they were at her throat, just where the lacy ruffs made a V, finished at its point with a tiny black velvet bow. As a paper lady she had not been wearing clove pinks. In a number of ways she was not quite like the paper lady—only the way of wearing her hair, and the gown with its lovely wide skirts. The material had a white ground and was all sprigged with tiny flowers and true lovers' knots.

And then, while she held up a tiny white dress between her face and Althea, Althea saw that her eyes were looking at her above the little outheld dress. Her mouth was hidden, but Althea knew it smiled.

But just as Althea was about to speak, Joe had to come storming up and then there was no lady except the paper one still in her hand, and the sprawling machine, as before, stood in front of the trunk.

Althea sat in the largest, most comfortable chair in what had been Mrs. Mack's room, but was now hers. Although there was furnace heat throughout the house, in this room a bit of wood-fire also helped to thrust back the January cold. For it was the January of 1918, and a winter storm was raging against the windows.

Mrs. Mack was sitting on an ottoman at Althea's feet—a dowager who had quite resigned her crown, but who remained—O, yes, remained a power behind the throne of the new queen. Now, in the old queen's face, so long as it was unobserved, was the light of battle; perhaps of desperation. Only when the young woman's eyes were upon her—then it was calm, confident, reassuring.

Althea turned from the frosted window to Joe's mother.

"How was he when you looked in last?"

"Sleeping, I think. At least he was quiet."

"Well," said Althea confidently. "I can be patient. It isn't as if I couldn't understand why he can't bear the sight of me. The world is no place for women,' he said. That tells it all. He never could bear even small cruelties, and he has been seeing things that it almost kills us to read about. We know how he has fought—his medals would tell us, even if we didn't know anyway."

"Yes," said his mother, and her voice was calm. She even bent down and adjusted the logs more precisely. "It is a wound of the spirit, but as honorable a one as the other—or the gas. I have sometimes thought that in this war more than in other wars the enemy has had power to reach a man's soul. I may be mistaken; yet, if it is so, such a wound must heal. I do not believe any such wound, even of the soul, can touch the real centre.

"So you have the little things all airing? How sweet and confident they look with the little sleeves spread out! Wait till the arms get in them and begin to flap and wave! Joe wore out everything! I never saw such a baby. He scrubbed through his long dresses just as he did later through his knickerbockers. It's a shame that he didn't leave anything of his wardrobe for his own baby—but they never think of that!"

"I do wish," said Althea, "I could have embroidered some slips. Of course, the woolen things are most important this weather, but I wanted a frilly cap, too. Poor baby! He won't be going out much in this weather, but I'd like to see him in one. There's nothing quite like a baby's face with a frill around it and a bow under the chin."

"Well," said Mrs. Mack doubtfully, "it's terrible the way they get ribbon ends in their mouths. Bad for them and hard on ribbons. You tie them under one ear, not under the chin. But even so, they always get them and chew them."

"By the by——" said Althea suddenly, then stopped with shy, sidelong look.

"Yes, my dear?"

"I wish—that little trunk in the attic, the one behind your father's model. Are you sure there's nothing in it but drawing and things like that?"

"You are thinking of your old attic ghost? O, my dear, don't get the notion that it was anything more than a phantom of your poor little hungry tummy. The first thing the fakirs and those people do when they want to see visions is to fast. You'd be wanting to get into that trunk, of course. Children always want to get into shut things, and you certainly had been fasting."

"And yet," persisted Althea, "did you ever look into it—clear down to the bottom?"

"Why, no; not to the bottom, but enough so that I could see. It's only drawings. After my mother's death my father just put everything away, stuffed his drawings into the trunk, dragged the poor old model in front of it, and forgot it, as well as he could. He had had great hopes of it, but it would have taken money to finish it, and when she went and he had me to keep, he just took a bookkeeper's position at the Tracy lumber yard and finished out his days there."

"I thought then," said Althea, "it was old doll things she was looking over. But now—I know," and she pointed at her own collection, "it wasn't doll things. If—if I could," she said. "I mean, if it were wise—I suppose it wouldn't be—I'd ask you to let me go up and look."

"Why, you dear, persistent little Fatima! I'll look; of course I will, though I'm afraid you'll be disappointed. It wouldn't do for you to go up those stairs and pull heavy attic things around, of course. How funny it would be if there should be anything under the poor old drawings. There's just one thing that makes me think you may be right, and that's my not being able to find any of my own old things before Joe came. I hunted everywhere. I did want them. I felt just as you do now. I wanted oceans of lovely things for my baby, and in my case I really had plenty, but I was greedy for more, and there wasn't a sock or a cap or a nightie of what I had worn. I concluded she must have sent them to the Chicago fire sufferers. You know a tide of old clothes set toward Chicago in '71, just as our things all went to Belgium. That was the year of her death. I concluded it was that, and let it go.

"I was only a year old when she died," sai'd Mrs. Mack, looking wistfully at an ill-done crayon portrait. "I have no memory of her at all."

She paused, and then repeated the tragic little story. Althea had heard it, and she knew that Althea had heard it, yet she repeated it.

"She had gone out into the garden. You know in those days there was a tongue of the real woods that came down between our garden and the village. Hunters sometimes followed their game there, honestly supposing there were no houses near. On that morning my father heard shots and went out, as he sometimes did, to warn them. He found four lads who had just got a fox and were so proud of their splendid pelt! He knew the boys, and they were especial pets of my mother's, too, and he brought them all up to the garden to find her and show her their prize. And—there she lay * * * brought down like a partridge!

"Poor boys! After these years, I ache more for them even than for my father and mother! Of course, they knew it was one of their bullets that had killed her, though there was no way of telling who had fired the shot—not that it really mattered. But the boyhood of them all died then and there along with her. They only stayed long enough to be her pallbearers and be exonerated by everybody. Then they left town. One of them died in the Indian fighting, and another in the Spanish war. The others—I don't know. They just dropped out."

"I believe she came back," said Althea. "She would!"

"If she could," agreed Mrs. Mack, "and now, I must see to the furnace."

(To be continued.)

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Woman's Sphere

The Dangerous Year of Married Life.

The Swedish journal "Charm" publishes an article on "The Dangerous Year of Married Life" which critics, after long study, have decided is the third. They arrived at this through study of the divorce statistics, which disclosed that a third, or at least a fourth, of all divorces occur in the third year of marriage. After passing the third year there is every prospect that the couple will live happily ever after.

But why is the third year the most dangerous? The experts answer that two years of romantic life are as a rule enough. The hope that the romance may be continued during the following years is erroneous, unless husband and wife are able to talk themselves into an endless romance. And to this are added practical considerations. Thus, for instance, pecuniary worries may easily become the causes of divorce, for it makes, of course, a difference whether one or two persons shall be supported.

The first child, too, often makes a difference. The child, which really should bind husband and wife to each other, often separates them. And a husband who does not possess sufficient income cannot always content himself with the wife's great interest in the child, for he realizes that he no longer means everything to his wife.

A New Light on Martha.

"Aunt Nan," said Beth, "I'm beginning to feel very sympathetic toward Martha, the sister of Mary. I just had to run over for a few minutes and talk about it."

Aunt Nan smiled understandingly. "Miss Potter s going to stay with you girls during the conference, isn't she? And you and Nell don't quite agree about the way to entertain her? Perhaps Nell even refuses to cook and dust quite as much as you think is necessary?"

"No-o, not exactly. Nell does what I ask her to do, though she always says it isn't necessary to do so many things and serve so many courses and all that. Honestly, Aunt Nan, sometimes I think that Nell has no sense of duty toward a distinguished guest. And she quotes the story of Mary and Martha, and so do I. I've always had more or less sympathy for Martha, and I can't help wondering why Christ seemed more pleased with Mary. Why do you suppose He said what He did? Really, He almost scolded Martha, who was the one who was busy doing things for His comfort."

"I used to feel much the same way," replied Aunt Nan; "so I understand perfectly. For many years Martha was a perplexity to me, but at last I've got her straightened out in my mind. Lovely Mrs. Alice Freeman Palmer helped me to do it. When I was a girl at Wellesley she used to come over sometimes and stay to lunch or dinner. At table she would frequently become so much interested in talking to the girls next her that she would scarcely see when a new course was set in front of her. Then, suddenly realizing that her plate was full, she would push it across the table to her husband. 'You eat it, dear,' she would say with her half-mischievous, wholly magnetic smile and then turn back to the girls with whom she had been talking.

"One day it flashed across me how much more a Mary hostess who wanted to be taught would mean to Mrs. Palmer than a Martha hostess who merely placed food in front of her could possibly mean. And if that circumstance were true of her, how much truer it must have been of Christ, who said, 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work.'

"Another glimpse of Martha's character came from an article in which the writer spoke of her as having, not a sense of duty, that grand, big, exalting thing, but a sense of duties, the little niminy-piminy cares of everyday life. And the third glimpse was from Dr. Patterson, our dear old preacher at home. I sat beside him at a dinner the Pattersons were giving for a great preacher from Scotland. Observing the harassed face of his daughter at the other end of the table, and the perfunctory attention that she was giving to the guest of honor, Dr. Patterson whispered to me, 'She needs the Master's message, doesn't she, that poor distracted daughter of mine?' But one dish is needful, though perhaps the Martha spirit could never grasp that fact.'

"'Dish?' I said in astonishment. 'Why, Dr. Patterson, I thought the Bible says, "But one thing is needful," and that it meant the "good part," which Mary had chosen.'

"He smiled benignly. 'Yes,' he replied, 'that's one interpretation, and a good one, of coruse, but the word used in the original can perfectly well be translated "dish," and don't you think that's a good way to translate it?'"

"One dish, or its equivalent, and peace and quiet and the chance to enjoy every minute of Miss Potter's visit!" exclaimed Beth. "Well, Aunt Nan, you can tell Dr. Patterson that that advice sounds good to a poor Martha person like me!"

In the Bible.

"I don't think flying machines are so very wonderful," said little Sammy, after his mother had been telling him the story of their invention. "Teacher read about one in the Bible the other day."

"In the Bible?" exclaimed his mother. 'Are you sure?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Sammy. "She told us that Esau sold his heirship to his brother Jacob."

No Relation.

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Second Scholar — "No. That was Zero—another man altogether."

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