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TORONTO B592

The Sealed Room

By Edwin Baird.

CHAPTER V.

"Well, if you ain't the limit!" remarked Miss Plum, sitting up in bed and hugging her knees. "Honest, I don't see how you could 'a' done it, kid. Sure you ain't kiddin' me?"

Winifred, brushing her heavy blond hair before the crinkly mirror, indicated, without resentment, that she was not kidding.

"Well, you sure are the limit," repeated Miss Plum; and then, stretching her tired body beneath the sheet, like Oliver Twist, asked for more.

But Winifred had fully narrated the evening's episode but a dozen times or more, and had elaborated it and polished it to death, and there was nothing more to tell. She said so. She also said she was tired, and all she wanted now was a glass of milk and her husband bed. Besides, she was thinking now of another matter, upon which she did not care to dwell—unless persuaded to do so.

She did not mention that; but when two girls, of similar tastes and habits, share the same bed in a furnished room they become united by a sort of telepathy, requiring few words and no explanation. Miss Henrietta Plum, gazing sympathetically at her lovely room-mate, saw only her back, but she read her thoughts unerringly. She said in a gentler voice:

"Ain't it thrillin', Win, you meetin' 'im the second time? Jus' like a novel, wasn't it. Win? D'you s'pose you'll ever see 'im again?"

Winifred lowered the hair-brush and gazed at her reflection in the wavy mirror, and the deep blue eyes, gazing back at her, contained the same wistful look which first had attracted Tom Mackay.

"Goodley," she murmured pensively, and picked up the card from the mantel and read, for perhaps the fifth time, the printed words thereon. "If only he wasn't an auto-mechanic! If he only hadn't spoken of the car! Why, oh—"

"Say, kid," said Miss Plum, sitting up and hugging her knees with her thin arms, her eyes wide with astonishment, "what's the matter with you? A mechanic—"

"Don't you dare call him that!" cried Winifred, and I'm getting so I hate everything and I wish I'd lived on a farm! I wish I'd never met him! I wish I'd never seen him!" she added, in a burst of self-contradiction, "he didn't look at all, come to think of it, like the second well-bred and handsome—"

"Handsome!" he? Handsome?" eagerly interrupted Miss Plum.

"Oh, dear!" Winifred frowned, and buried her face in her hands. "Maybe he ain't no auto man after all. Maybe that card he gave you belongs to somebody else."

Winifred's blue eyes lit with a sudden hope, which as suddenly died away.

"No," she sighed, brushing her hair in a thick yellow plait. "It's his, all right. He told me his name, and it was Irish. I don't remember just what, but it must have been Patrick J. Henneberry."

A little later, clad in a kimono-flowered dressing robe, she pattered down the musty hall to the bathroom, and later still, glowing rosily, she procured a bottle of milk from the window ledge, swallowed the contents, turned out the gas, and crept quietly into bed beside Henrietta.

For five minutes silence embraced the room. Then, softly: "Win!"

"Yes?"

"Sleep?"

"No."

"Win, if it should happen he wasn't a auto man, what would you rather he'd be?"

A sudden and violent commotion in the bed denoted that Win, far from being sleepy, had turned on her other side in wide-awake animation.

"D'you know, I was just thinking of that very same thing! I was thinking that people who live in the country are the only ones who have any fun in this world. They're the only ones who get a square deal these days. What do you and I get out of life, living like beggars in a place like this, working for starvation wages—"

"Well, but what would you rather he'd be?"

"I wish he was a farmer!" said Winifred with indubitable emphasis. "And I wish he loved me, and wanted to marry me, and carry me back to his farm. But shucks! What's the use of wishing? You could tell by his clothes and the way he talked that he never saw a farm in his life, and wouldn't know a pig from a yearling heifer." With this she turned her face to the wall and shaped her thoughts for sleep.

While she is sleeping and dreaming of Tom, suppose we look in on him? The exciting events of the last few hours had left his mind in a chaotic swirl, which disregarded sleep. He had, of course, forgotten his train, now screaming across the western prairies. Thus we find him pacing his room, and thinking, always thinking, of her.

He thought of the things she had said to him as they strolled along together, and he wondered now, though he hadn't then, why she had said so little of Dora. Why hadn't she told him who Dora was? Why hadn't she explained how she happened to know such a girl, and why she was so concerned about her? Why had she made such a mystery of the thing? And what did all this signify?

He shrank from naming the obvious answer, even to himself; and yet, it lay coiled in the back of his mind, as poisonous as a cobra and, ready to spring and devour him, contributed no little to his sleeplessness.

Once, in a restless striding to and fro, he was stung by a poignant regret that he had come to Chicago—or, having come, that he had encountered her. If he hadn't met her he would be sleeping now, instead of suffering this torment. As matters stood—well, here he was insanely in love with a girl whom he scarcely knew, of whose existence he was unaware eight hours ago, and who, if indications augured aright, could never become his wife.

"And even if she could," he savagely muttered, "she probably wouldn't."

Strangely, this thought eased his turmoil and, calmed somewhat, he threw away his cigar and began undressing.

Finally he went to bed. And his last conscious thought, before he slipped into a troubled sleep, was this:

"It doesn't matter to me what she is. I'll quit worrying about her. She may be straight, or she may not—but she wouldn't marry a farmer, anyway."

The next morning after leaving the hotel he passed irresolute, drawn to and fro by the impulse to go to Dora Kirk's home.

A taxicab standing at the curb opposite him, he approached, nearly jostled the chauffeur.

"Taxi, sir?"

"Yes," said Tom, and gave him her address.

He was reached to the waiting figure in Mrs. Dora Stookey, the landlady.

"Miss Snow," said she in response to his question, "left early this ma-rnin' for the hospital. And your name, sir," she added, surveying him with quickening interest, "don't it happen to be Henneberry?"

"No. It's Tom McKay."

"Is as now?" said Mrs. Stookey, patently disappointed. "Well, well! Then 'e's not the young man what saved the life of Dora, Miss, last night."

"I suppose I helped a little," said Tom, turning to go, that Winifred Miss Snow did a great deal more than I."

The motherly eyes of Mrs. Stookey, following him down the precipitous stairs, expressed a bewilderment too profound for words.

But Tom was hurrying back to the taxi, his mind intent on one thing alone, and so he failed to perceive the perplexity he had occasioned.

"Where to, boss?" asked the chauffeur.

"County hospital," said Tom, jumping in and slamming the door.

They reached their destination too late. Winifred, Tom was told in the superintendent's office, had departed five minutes before.

He immediately thought of following her, and then, recognizing the difficulty here—for none knew where she had gone it seemed,—he asked if he might speak to Miss Dora Kirk, who the doctor said, was "recovering nicely."

His request was granted, an attendant was told to conduct him to her ward, and presently stood beside her cot in a long, white room of many such cots, in which the air hung heavy with the smell of drugs, and where white-gowned nurses moved silently about their duties. He looked down into her wasted face, and when she smiled feebly up at him with apologetic friendliness, a sharp compassion surged within him. Her unnaturally large eyes and chalk-white skin made him think, somehow, of a dark weed grown in a sunless spot. He pitied her from the depths of his heart.

"I dunno how to thank you, Mr. Henneberry—" she began, in a thin little voice.

"Please don't try," he interrupted. "Everything's all right now, I hope. But why do you call me Henneberry? It's not my name, although you're the second person to-day to think so."

Her sunken eyes widened in puzzled surprise. Her lips parted questioningly.

"Why, that's funny. Win said—Who are you, then, if you ain't Mr. Henneberry?"

He told her his name and his occupation, and while she was marveling at this disclosure he asked concerning herself.

"Course you'll want to know," she answered, "how Win come to hook up with a Moll like me—"

(To be continued.)

A good citizen is known by the food he eats.

I have tried painting buildings almost every time of the year, and it is my opinion that late fall is best. Too warm, the oil dries out before it has time to strike well into the wood. Too late, cold weather freezes it. When it dries slowly and surely it stays. After finishing a job of painting do not waste what is left. Pour on half an inch of linseed-oil, place in the cellar and it will keep a long time.—V.

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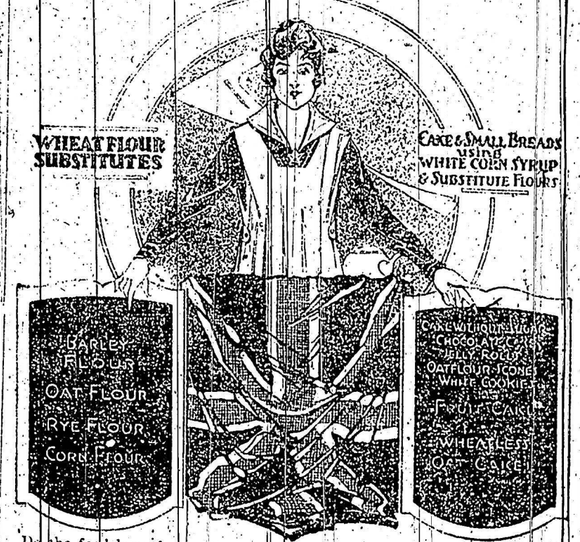
About the House

WHAT MAY I SERVE?

Food Board Answers the Question that Arises Every Day Where Women Foregather at Patriotic Teas and Entertainments.



Do the food laws for public eating places govern patriotic teas and all entertainments where refreshments are served?

Yes. They apply to all public entertainments, lawn socials, bazaars, tea meetings, public luncheons, dinners, picnics, fairs, club and fraternal societies' meetings, private and semi-private luncheons, dinners, parties and picnics where food is served to fifteen or more people other than members of the family.

Is a license required before food can be served at any of these gatherings?

No.

Is the Food Board opposed to the serving of refreshments at patriotic entertainments?

The Food Board lays down no hard and fast rules on the subject, but believe in every woman exercising common sense and good judgment in this matter.

Can sandwiches be served at all?

Yes, any time except between 11.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m.

What can be served in place of sandwiches?

As it is only in the middle of the day that they are taboo, there should be no difficulty on this score. Salad, chicken, fish or eggs, with substitute breads, give plenty of variety and adequately fill the bill.

May bread be served as a garnish?

Only with poached eggs.

Can white bread be served without a substitute being put on the table as well?

No. Substitutes must always accompany white bread when served at any kind of public function.

Where can recipes be secured for the use of substitutes?

Write to the Food Board for its bread-making booklet, enclosing five cents for same. Clip the papers for recipes.

How much butter may each guest have?

Half an ounce is the allowance, although an additional half-ounce may be given if asked for.

What are the meat restrictions?

Beef and veal may only be served at the evening meal on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Only one helping is allowed to each guest.

When can bacon be served?

Any time. The pork restrictions have been removed.

What about sugar?

Here a hostess has to step warily. No sugar bowls must be in evidence. One level teaspoon or two small cubes

Food Control Corner

are allowed for ... similar amount for dessert.

... No. It is not used ... moist in ... queen ...

What sort of cake ...

The plainest possible ... proportion of substitute ... gar being ...

Can cake be iced ...

Yes, provided no ... used. The confectioners ... icing now.

Are there any substitutes ... that may be used in ...

Yes. Write to the Food Board for its glucose and white corn syrup booklet, which contains recipes for cakes and puddings, showing how to use these products as sugar.

Is it ideal to serve ice cream ...

Yes, but if made at home ... be taken to see that ... per cent. of fats is used ... paration, and no more than ... a half pounds of sugar ... lons of ice cream.

What about wedding ...

The simpler the better. ... of the "bending board" ... of fashion. The hostess ... good sense at a time like ... with her friends in the ... the simple, rather than ... in the fare she provides.

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