The Acton Free Press.

Forty-fourth Year—No. 22. ACTON, ONTARIO, THURSDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 28, 1918 Single Copies—Five Cents

The Acton Free Press

THE ACTON FREE PRESS is published every Thursday morning at the Free Press Building, Mill Street, Acton Ontario. The subscription price is $1.50 per year, in advance. Postage is charged additional to offices in the United States. The date to which subscriptions are paid is indicated on the address label.

ADVERTISING RATES—Transient advertisements, 10 cents per line agate measurement, for first insertion and 5 cents per line for each subsequent insertion. Contract display advertisements, for 50 inches or more, per annum, 10 cents per inch each insertion. Advertisements without specific directions will be inserted till forbid and charged accordingly.

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A SPLENDID THING

It is a splendid thing to be a man, just now—
A man with brawn and courage, who can fight,
Or one with brains to make the proper plans
And chart the courses that will lead to victory.
Again it is a wondrous thing to be
A man of means—with money to push on
And aid and speed the work in every way
Where funds are needed. I am not a man,
And yet it is a splendid thing, to-day,
To be a woman—one with brawn to go
Hight in the face of our inhuman foe
And nurse the soldiers, feed the fighting host,
Drive ambulances, and do everything
One sees needs doing! It is also fine
To be a woman with sufficient brain
To help the men in all they undertake
And then suggest another thing or two
Worth undertaking! And again, the last,
A woman's money is a needed thing,
And it is something well-worth living for,
To give a fortune to a suffering world,
That in the future years it may be free
From every menace that would dare repeat
This war's grim horrors! It is wonderful
To be alive and part of this great work
Of helping on a true Democracy—
One that shall be a pure, unquestioned state
Wherein no trace of past injustices
To man or woman, humankind or beast,
Shall ever more deflle the Union Jack,
The chosen emblem of our liberty.
And, whether we be born a man
Or born a woman, we have chance to die
True patriots, all—and this, perchance, may be
More precious even than our splendid lives!

—Lurana Sheldon.

The Day Clarissa Dyed

By Florence V. Mead

YOUNG MR. DAVIS laid down his newspaper and glanced very apprehensively across the breakfast table at his wife's costume. Her hair was neatly and becomingly arranged, but even to the dull, masculine eye her gingham dress was decidedly "out of style." Mr. Davis had learned to associate such callous difference to fashion on his wife's part only with some violent, domestic cataclysm.

"Hello, Clarissa! What's going on this morning? I thought you cleaned the attic and hoed out the furnace only last week."

"Horace," his wife answered solemnly, "I am going to dye to-day."

Mr. Davis' round face paled a little; then he caught the twinkle in her eye, and rallied.

"Huh! Not in that dress. You can't scare me," he declared. "If you felt that anything like that were going to happen—with all these stylish neighbors round us—you'd have on that Georgy crape thing of yours and a tall, white lily clasped in your left hand instead of that roll. Whatever or whomever you are going to dye, Clarissa, don't do it!" he pleaded. "Let Schucks do it. I pass their sign every time I go downtown. 'Other dyers do not amount to Schucks,' and it is such a pretty green and yellow sign that I have always wanted to try him. Can' Schucks do your dyeing for you, Clarissa?"

Mrs. Davis shook her head. "And waste three packages of dark-blue dye—ten cents apiece or three for a quarter? I should say not!"

Mr. Davis held up a warning finger. "Clarissa, when will you learn that it doesn't pay to eat a spoiled ten-cent watermelon to save it, and then call in the doctor at three dollars a visit? Remember the tamales you bought when we first came to California. You insisted on getting three because they were three for a quarter. You took a bite, I took a bite—and neither of us ever took another bite of those tamales.'"

Mrs. Davis rose from the table with great dignity. "I have affairs of moment to attend to to-day. I cannot longer listen to your childish prattle."

"Be sure to think up something nice for us to do this afternoon, Clare," Horace said, as he kissed her good-by at the front door. "You know I have a half holiday. How would a picnic do, with some of your nice potato salad?"

But evidently his wife's mind was already intent on her day of dyeing, for without answering she thrust him out of the door and hurried to her kitchen.

In the kitchen he found her when he returned home at one o'clock. The room was permeated with a strange, pungent odor, and Clarissa stood above a steaming wash boiler; with a small lath and a broom handle she was alternately lifting and prodding a furry, seething mass.

"What in the world—?" began Mr. Davis.

"Don't stand there talking all day, Horace Davis, but come help at the obsequies. Take a stick and help me steer this into the dish pan. Don't touch it! There, your fingers will be all black! I told you not to. Of course it's hot—that's a striking peculiarity of boiling water. It's my blue chinchilla auto coat that this California sun was turning pink. It has no lining—so I'm sure—it will—turn out—well."

Her words came disjointedly, jerkily, but unceasingly, for they were designed to head off any verbal resistance on the part of Mr. Davis; but indeed he experienced such surprise at being suddenly raised to the position of chief helper that he scarcely opened his lips until he was hoisting the unwieldily, flapping garment to the clothesline in the back yard.

"The neighbors will think that we have skinned a black sheep," he remarked.

Clarissa giggled. "It does look like it! Wouldn't it be fun to carry out the idea and ask the Carrs and Harpers in for a lamb roast to-morrow night? Only they will have to wear dark clothes for fear the chairs will rub off."

Mr. Davis stopped short in his progress toward the house and looked at Clarissa suspiciously. "What have you—"

"They're fine, Horace, simply fine!" she interrupted hastily. "You know the man at Barker's told me there wasn't any possible way to restore the color to those leather seats that this California sun has faded out, but I just couldn't give it up; so I gave them a good dose of navy-blue dye—rubbed it on with a sponge—of course I didn't 'boil 'them,' Horace—and then I applied a coat of floor wax, and they are a hundred per cent. improved."

"A hundred per cent," she repeated nervously, as her husband silently inspected a rejuvenated chair and gingerly seated himself on the shining leather.

"No, I shouldn't ask the neighbors to dinner," he said. "I'd close my eyes to say grace, and when I'd open them again I'd find that every last little Carr had slid off his slippery seat and come to a stop beneath the table-cloth. It would be worse than one of those slippery napkins that you have to crawl after on your hands and knees under the table. Really, though, Clare, these chairs do look fine. You're a genius. And now what are we going to do this afternoon?"

The anxious look in Clarissa's face had given way to one of serene satisfaction, which was in turn replaced by a wheedling expression. "You know, Horace, how dreadfully that blue Brussels rug in the guest room is faded—a regular dirty white. I really thought we'd have to buy a new one, but it occurred to me that, if you'd clean that squirter thing that you use to spray the orange trees and fill it with blue dye, we could tuck old newspapers all round the sides of the room and then you could spray the rug a yard at a time, and I'd put on my rubber gloves and take a small scrubbing brush and rub it in. I'd add a bit of green to make it a lovely shade of Gobelin blue."

Clarissa stopped, quite out of breath. Her husband gasped and looked at her stonily. "Oh, let's send for Schucks!" he said.

"No," replied Clarissa firmly, "we can't afford it. It is a perfectly feasible plan. Before we were married you said you'd die for me, and now you won't even dye for me."

"But this is such a glorious day to be outdoors!" protested Mr. Davis.

"Well,' 'aged Clarissa, with apparent resignation, "I suppose I'll have to give it up. It would take two hours, of course, but I thought that after that we should have plenty of time for a dip in the ocean and a supper on the beach by moonlight with some sponge cake and that potato salad that's in the refrigerator."

There was a deathlike silence, and Clarissa fired her last gun. "A new rug costs exactly eighty-five dollars," she murmured.

"Oh, well! I ought to have known enough to give in at once," Horace said, with a laugh. "Dye everything in the house except me, if you wish, Clare. Nothing can make or keep me blue, though, so long as I've got you."

Clarissa smiled sweetly. "Then you won't mind that I dyed all those white socks of yours, Horace? I looked all round over the house for something to dye,—it seems a pity to waste any of the dye,—and I came across your stockings. You know you never would wear them because they were white, and they are such a lovely quality! They came out a little light in color because they are cotton and the dye really was for wool, but I laid out a pair on the bed for you to wear to the beach, and I am sure you will be pleased with them."

"D'you know," remarked Mr. Davis jovially several hours later, to Mr. Carr and Mr. Harper, as they walked toward the beach, "my wife is the most economical and ingenious person I ever saw! I appreciate it more every day. I helped her dye a large rug this afternoon, and by George! It looks as fine as an eight-five dollar rug straight from Barker's! She dyed these stockings, too. They didn't look quite so bright at home in a dark room," he added somewhat ruefully, as he turned his foot to one side.

Fitting his key into the bathhouse lock, Mr. Davis opened the door and disappeared with a grin.

Five minutes later he reappeared, still fully dressed, and sat down gloomily upon the beach.

"Have concluded I don't want to go in to-day. Water's too cold," he replied to all wondering inquirers, and with that they were forced to rest content. To their pleadings he remained obdurate, and he even subsided into a morose silence, from which the moonlight supper and the sponge cake failed to arouse him.

But once at home, he roused himself into action. He feverishly unlaced his shoes, pulled off his stockings, and thrust two bright, Dutch blue feet before the astonished eyes of his wife.

"Why didn't I want to go in swimming?" he asked, with caustic emphasis. "Why couldn't I enjoy that potato salad? Look! Do you suppose I wanted to be the laughing stock of that beach? Do you suppose I could think of anything else except how long it takes blue dye to wear off?"

"It—it—will all come off if you boil them," faltered Clarissa.

"Boil them!" cried Mr. Davis. "It's near enough to tragedy already, Clarissa," he said, and his voice was low and full of feeling, "this has got to stop right here! Not another thing in this house is going to be dyed a dark, deep rich navy blue, even if we do waste two cents' worth of dye. I told you to stop your nefarious operations when you reached me, but you didn't, and now this abominable fluid is going to lick the dust!"

Marching into the kitchen, he seized the wash boiler; silently Clarissa opened the door and meekly she led the way out to the moonlight.

"Pour it right there."

He obeyed mechanically and then stiffened with sudden suspicion.

"Why?"

"Because," said Clarissa in honeyed tones, "this is my forget-me-not bed, and this California sun is so strong it fades even fl—"—But the kitchen door slammed, and Clarissa, giggling gently, crept into the house, stole a look of pride at the dining-room chairs and the guest-room rug, and rejoiced that she had not that day dyed in vain.

THE MOTHER OF JOHN

It had been a trying day at the office. Three of the men had said good-by to their associates before leaving for the training camps. Older men had been found to take the places of Sears and Livingstone, and a young woman was at Emory's desk. It seemed to John that the whole world was changing, that nothing was left the same.

Sears came over and gripped his hand. "Good-by, youngster. We'll try to finish up the job before your time comes."

John colored. "I only wish I were going along with you fellows," he said. "I'm not waiting to be twenty-one."

Sears looked at him kindly. "What's in the way?" he asked with abrupt friendliness. "Mother?"

"Yes." John waited a moment before he could go on. "You see I'm all she has."

"Of course, old man. I'm glad you don't have to go now. In fact I think fellows like you should be exempted. When a woman's a widow with only one child, it doesn't seem fair to take him away from her."

"I hate to seem to be hiding behind my mother," John said, with a bitterness that took his listener by surprise. "Just as I hate to hide behind my age. Sometimes I seem to myself a contemptible coward. But when I think of asking my mother to let me go, I just—well, I simply can't bring myself to it."

"Of course you can't," Sears agreed, and clapped him on the shoulder. "Your duty is right here and before the two years are up, this little matter is going to be settled for good. Well, good-by, John. See you later."

He went out with swinging step, his shoulders back and his lips smiling. But John was not ashamed of the tears through which he saw the columns of figures before him. For no one could be sure that Sears would keep that promise and "see him later"—not in this world at least.

John was late getting home from the office that day. The new workers being unfamiliar with the office routine, needed to have a great many things explained. The work dragged. He missed the accustomed faces of the three young men with whom he had been associated ever since his business life began. He missed Sears' friendly voice, Livingstone's laughter, and Emory's humorous comments on everything that happened. His thoughts wandered from his work and followed his three friends. In fancy he saw them putting on their uniforms, going to the training camps, throwing themselves heart and soul into fitting themselves to be efficient soldiers.

"That's the work for a man these days," thought John, looking down discontentedly at the ledger before him. "What business has an able-bodied fellow like me, with red blood in his veins, playing with figures when the world's on fire?"

John's mother heard his latchkey in the door about seven o'clock. She came into the hall to greet him. "It has been a long day, dear."

"Yes," he said, without meeting her eyes. "Lot of new help and it slows things up tremendously. Hope your dinner isn't spoiled, for I'm as hungry as a bear."

The dinner was not spoiled, but John's appetite did not sustain his boast, and they did not talk as much as usual. There seemed a strange constraint between the mother and son who loved each other so dearly.

At the conclusion of the short meal, John pushed back his chair. "Want any help, mother?"

"No, dear. I'm sure I haven't worked as hard as you have to-day."

"Then if you don't mind, I believe I'll go out and [illegible] a walk. I'm restless for some[illegible]"

Mrs. Wallace did not reply. John looking at her [illegible] surprised to see her face unnaturally flushed. He wondered if his [illegible]tion of leaving her had hurt her [illegible]ings, though it was not like her to be over-sensitive. "I won't be gone long," he added hastily. "When a fellow's chained to a desk all day, he sometimes feels like stretching his legs in the evening."

"John," said his mother in a clear voice, "before you go out, there's just something I want to ask you. You can think it over while you are walking."

"Yes?" he said interrogatively, and waited for her to speak. Then he saw to his amazement that her hands were trembling and that her color had receded, leaving her face unnaturally pale. He thought he understood and crossed the room to her quickly, taking her shaking hand in his.

"Don't be worried, mother. I don't believe there is anything to be afraid of. It'll be two years before I'm twenty-one and the chances are that the war will be over before then. And unless they lower the draft age, you haven't any need to be anxious."

His mother did not look reassured. Instead it seemed to him that she had grown a shade paler.

"Yes, John, but have you never felt that it might—that it might be your duty to enlist now?"

He released his hold upon her hands and took a step backward. His face expressed such amazement that she spoke hurriedly.

"I'm not saying that it is, John. That is something no human being can decided for another, no matter how close the tie. A wife cannot decide for her husband, nor a mother for her son. I only want you to be sure where your duty lies."

"Why, mother," John gasped, "don't you understand—" He broke off and stared at her helplessly. "You mean you want me to enlist," he said in a voice of bewildered incredulity.

"I want you to do the right thing, that's all."

"But if I went, you would be left alone."

"I'm not urging you to go my son. But loneliness is not the hardest thing to bear."

He passed his hand across his forehead, and seated himself. He had forgotten all about his restlessness and his craving for a long walk.

"Why, mother, I thought you'd be all broken up at the very idea. I thought it would break your heart to have me at the Front." Unconsciously he was going through the same arguments that he had used with himself in her behalf. "I'm all you've got," he ended vehemently. "It would seem heartless for me to go and leave you before I had to."

His mother had remained standing when he seated himself. He noticed now her erect carriage. She lifted her head slightly.

"A mother's heart doesn't break because her son does his duty. It might if he failed to do it," she said quietly.

He could not keep back the truth longer. It came with a rush.

"Why, mother, I'm wild to go. I haven't known how to bear it, saying good-bye to the other boys and staying on. But I've been telling myself I mustn't think of such a thing, on your account. I thought you'd feel that I owed it to you to stay with you as long as I could."

"But, John, boy, there's a bigger duty for the young men of to-day than staying home with their mothers. Happiness doesn't mean much. Love does not count much. The only thing that matters is that the right should win."

John looked at his mother and saw her face transfigured. His soul was on its knees before this sublime renunciation. He was his mother's all, and yet his life weighed nothing in the balance against right and duty. And it came across him with overwhelming force that she was not alone, that thousands of such mothers were giving their sons as freely as she did, to the service of Humanity. The men that were the strongest, the loves that were the dearest were all secondary to the one supreme duty of vindicating right and justice, against brute force.

John dropped on his knees and hid his face in his mother's lap. Her hand rested on his head and it was no longer trembling.

"Oh, mother," he said, "I'm glad I'm the son of a woman like you!"—Harriet Lummis Smith.

CHARACTER

What is your brave act without a brave nature behind it? What is your smile unless I know that you are kind? What is your indignant blow unless your heart is on fire? What is all your activity without you? How instantly the impression of a character creates itself, springs into shape behind a deed! A man cannot sell you goods across a counter, or drive you a mile in his carriage on the road, take your ticket in the cars, or hold the door open to let you pass, without your getting if you are sensitive, some idea of what sort of a man he is and seeing his deed colored with the complexion of his character.—Phillips Brooks.

TWENTY YEARS AGO

From the Issue of the Free Press of Thursday, December 1, 1898

A few days of sleighing this week.

This is the season when a man puts in an oil stove to warm his bedroom and has to open all the windows to let the odor out.

A. T. Brown has materially improved the appearance of his drug store the past week, the result of the skill of the paper hangers and painters.

Mr. Robert Holmes shipped a car of fat hogs to Toronto on Monday. The prices are more encouraging this week being up to $4.00 and $4.10.

The bargain days of the railways are over for the present. The regular rates were restored on Monday.

The majority of citizens cleaned their sidewalks of snow after Saturday's storm. The neglect of a few places rendered it necessary for people to wade through the drifts on their way to church Sunday morning.

St. Alban's Church is in the hands of painters and decorators. The church will be re-opened with special services next Sunday.

A lecture which entertained his audience with song and story entitled, "Jack Canuck and his friends," was given in Knox Church on Monday night by Rev. R. Haddow.

Last Thursday was an ideal day and Thanksgiving was enjoyably spent. The services in the various churches were fairly well attended. Driving was very rough, but skating was fairly good.

A chartered bank for Acton is within the probabilities of the near future. Officials of both the Traders and the Merchants Banks have been prospecting recently.

At the meeting of the Council on Monday evening the contracts were let for engine, boiler, dynamo, etc., for the Municipal Lighting System. The walls of the new power house are within a few feet of completion, preparations are made for rushing the carpenter work, the machinery will be delivered as soon as the power house is ready. The poles and wire will be erected at once and the system in running order as soon as possible.

IN THE DARNING BASKET

Mothers who have a family to mend for will find this a very useful hint. Buy a length of fine black, also some white net. Keep it in the work basket for mending large holes. A big darn in a stocking or in a little pair of woollen combinations is unsightly, but not if done as directed. Cut a piece of net—black net for dark colored materials and black stockings; white for light-colored garments. The piece should be bigger than the hole to be covered—that is over lapping it, about an inch all round. Tack it in position, then darn in and out of the meshes of the net. You will now have a neat darn which looks almost as if woven. Another advantage is that these net darns last longer than do those minus the net foundation.

IF THE BOCHE SPOKE ENGLISH

During the recent American advance out of Chateau Thierry a Red Cross captain was looking about for suitable hospital sites when he met an American negro soldier marching along toward Chateau Thierry, following closely behind a German major. The negro had transferred his pack from his own back to the back of the German officer, and had also transferred the German major's monocle to his own eye. Thus equipped, the black warrior was parading triumphantly down the road. As he passed the Red Cross captain he called out:

"I say, look heah what dis niggah done got!"—New York Evening Post.

NO TRUCK WITH THE BOCHES

The following resolution was unanimously passed at a general meeting of the Liverpool, Eng., Cotton Association:

"That it be a rule of the association that no member, or his firm, shall trade directly or indirectly with the present enemies of Great Britain for a period of 10 years after the conclusion of peace."

THE OLD FRIENDS

There are no friends like the old friends, the friends of other days,
With whom I talked and often walked in pleasant winding ways.
My eyes are dim, my ears are dull, yet I can see and hear
Across the years that intervene since they and I were near.
I see the happy villagers and hear the merry shout
The hunky boys and girls set up whenever school was out.
I'm breathing still the freshness of those fragrant days of yore,
And my eyes with tears are misted that I'll see them nevermore.

There are no friends like the old friends, the friends I used to know
In the glad days, in the sad days, the days of long ago,
When life was like a river and the river like a song,
That it sang and sighed in ripples as it wound 'n way along.
I think of them with pleasure and I think of them with pain,
A pleasure that's entrancing and a pain that's like the rain.
My heart is filled with longing, and my soul is ill at ease
When I hear the old friends calling in the music of the breeze.

There are no friends like the old friends, the friends I long for now,
As winter shakes its first faint flakes of snow upon my brow
I hear their voices calling clear across the gulf of years,
And I answer them with laughter, and I answer them with tears;
I live the old days over, for to me they seem a part
Of the very soul and substance of the fiber of my heart.
There are no friends like the old friends, the friends I used to know
When life was sweet and simple in the golden long ago.

—Rev. Campbell Coyle, D. D.

FAIR PRICES, SQUARE DEALING

In an able article by Dr. W. C. Keirstead, M. A., Ph. D., professor of Philosophy and Economics at the University of New Brunswick, on "The Municipal Council and the Cost of Living," in which he deals with the now authorized appointment of a Fair Price Committee in each municipality, he says:—

"This puts the matter where it belongs. The Canada Food Board has already regulated the profits of manufacturers and wholesalers, but the retail prices of such articles as fish, milk, bread, substitutes or other necessaries is a municipal problem, of fundamental interest to the citizens in the municipality and a proper subject of municipal jurisdiction. This Order in Council gives the municipality ample power to deal with all complaints regarding prices, supplies or the wastes of necessaries.

"The officers of a council will have the intimate knowledge essential for the proper regulation, and the sense of municipal responsibility will have a tendency to limit criticism to what is reasonable and constructive. It would be a mistake to unload upon the Food Board the problems that rightly belong to our municipality.

"Further, necessities include fuel, clothing and other items of common household expenditure. Thanks to the Food Board, the gains of speculation have been largely eliminated from dealers in food supplies, and their profits or spread are curbed and have not advanced with the higher level of prices or the increased cost of living or of doing business. In other lines of necessaries, however, such as shoes and clothing, dealers have taken without hindrance or criticism the speculative gains of a rising market, and have profited by war conditions. The Fair Price Committee may turn its attention to these necessaries also.

NOBLE SAYINGS

Knowledge is the treasure, but judgment the treasurer of a wise man.—W. Penn.

Health is the first good lent to men;
A gentle disposition then;
Next, to be rich by no by wayes;
Lastly, with friends t' enjoy our dayes.
—Herrick.
—Herrick.

Be of good comfort, Master Ridley; we shall this day kindle such a candle in England, as I trust in God, shall never be extinguished.—Latimer.

Religion without joy—it is no religion.—Theodore Parker.

No nation can be destroyed while it possesses a good home life.—J. G. Holland.

LAND OF THE BEYOND

There is a country into which there is to-day a yearly immigration with which no other country in any age has had anything to compare. Every year, 35,000,000 of people enter its ports and crowd its territory as newcomers and colonists.

Every month 3,000,000 are numbered as fresh arrivals. Every twenty-four hours there are 100,000.

And this has been going on and will continue century after century. For the country in question is the Land of the Beyond, that is on the other side of the grave.

THE DEATHLESS ARMY

Serbia's history—the history of "the nation that can never die"—is a guarantee that she will worthily fulfil her role in the new confederation. The importance of the new Jugoslav state can hardly be exaggerated. It is to it that the world will confide the key of the East. It will be the duty of the new state to see that no power shall ever again seek to dominate Europe and the East. The Jugoslavs resume once more the proud mission of Guardians of the Gate, which they held for centuries when they rolled back the tide of Moslem invasion and kept the cross supreme above the Crescent.—Washington Post.

A LADDER WHICH CAN'T SLIP OR FALL OVER

A ladder which can be used with equal facility on a side-hill or in the home has been invented by B. H. Keith, of Mansfield, Ohio. It has two additional legs or props, one at each side. This prevents the ladder from slipping, and increases its strength. When the ladder is on a level surface both extra legs are used, but when it is used on a hill or on uneven ground, only the leg on the downhill side is necessary as the prop.

A SORT OF PETER SCHLEMIHL

Bill Collector—Mr. Owens not in, eh? (suddenly sees shadow on ground glass door.) "Why you young rascal, there he is now."

Office Boy (looking)—"Aw—say! That ain't the boss. He's out, I tell you. That's only his shadow."—Boston Evening Transcript.