

The Free Press Short Story

An Adventure for Mother

BY MARGARET R. GEEBACH

"What in the world's the matter?" asked Emily Jane, pausing with the potato masher poised in her hand. "Mother who was occupied with the grave, turned to listen. 'Walter and Hugh I suppose,' she said. 'Walter never can resist a chance to tease.' 'No, but listen to father!' said Emily Jane. 'He's fairly shouting over something! I haven't heard him laugh so hard for—' Just then father burst into the kitchen like an uproarious schoolboy, with Walter and Hugh in close pursuit. 'Listen!' he commanded waving the evening paper impressively, and read: 'The Loudon burglary case is the first on the docket of the next session of court and will therefore come up for trial on June 18. This session of court will be unique as the first one in the county with women impaneled as jurors. Those whose names have been drawn are as follows: Mrs. Martha J. Benbow, wife of—' 'Father, you're fooling!' exclaimed Emily Jane, running to look over his shoulder. 'Look at mother!' cried Hugh. 'She's as white as a sheet!' 'You're just in fun, aren't you, father?' inquired mother, leaving the grave to its fate while she reached for the paper with one hand and sought her reading glasses on the clock shelf with the other. 'Not a bit of it!' declared father. 'Look for yourself! Here it is.' Mother read the brief paragraph several times in silence. Emily Jane, having satisfied her doubts, went to rescue the grave. 'It's a joke on mother!' declared Walter. 'Here's mother, who always said she didn't want any vote because it would be so horrid to have to serve on a jury, and she just wouldn't do it—she'd pay her fine or go to jail or do anything at all to get out of it. And isn't she the very first woman in the county to be drawn for the job! O my! What'll you do now, mother, skip the country or hide in the coal bin?' 'I don't see why she has to serve!' argued Hugh, who always argued about everything. 'They ought to let people off who have to keep house and get meals for a family and—' 'Keep still, boys!' said father. 'Give mother a chance to say a word for herself.' 'Must I really do it?' asked mother with a quiver of her comfortable double chin. 'Isn't there any way to get out of it? Oh, I just can't!' 'I don't see why you should have to honor your name, and if you get drawn for the Loudon burglary case, it will be the occasion of your life. Why, that case has the whole town stirred up—masked bands and all that! And then, since it's the first time women have served on a jury, the courthouse will be jammed.' 'Oh, that's just it!' lamented mother, upsetting the flour sieve in her excitement. 'Why, I never even went to see a case tried, and they'll get me tangled up and—' 'Hold on, mother!' Walter interrupted her. 'You're not going to be summoned as a witness, you know! You'll just sit and listen and then go out and vote whatever you think is right after you've heard the evidence. I wish I were in your place!' 'Supper's on the table and getting cold,' put in Emily Jane. 'We can talk it all over while we're eating. Come, boys! Come father! Never you mind mother!' she added gently pushing her into her chair. 'You'll do it all right, and we'll all be proud of you!' Great hilarity prevailed during the meal. 'I understand now,' said Walter over the mound of potatoes on his plate, 'why they have a woman with scales on top of the courthouse. I always thought it was funny, when women hadn't a thing to do with settling the cases; but people are coming to their senses now and living up to their emblem. And you're it, mother, the Lady of the Scales, that's you!' 'You talk as if mother were a marmalade!' said Hugh, grinning. 'Anyhow it's going to take some brains to decide that Loudon case. Say, I wish I'd been round when those fellows come driving up to Loudon's jewelry store in a car! And then going in and holding up old Loudon and his clerk with revolvers—and masks on and—' 'I'm glad I wasn't there!' said mother, shivering slightly. 'It'll be bad enough to hear them to all about it, if I do. But the men got away, didn't they?' 'Sure, they went right on before anybody could catch them!' said Hugh. 'But of course everybody in six countries got busy looking them up; and when this girl over in Jacksonburg got a diamond engagement ring from a fellow who was getting two dollars a day scrubbing cars in a garage people began to talk. Then when Mr. Loudon went over and identified it as part of the stock he'd lost, it was plain as daylight he must have been it!' 'Well, you don't have to decide it,' said Walter. 'That's mother's job. And don't you be scared mother. We'll all go and sit in the front row, and when you're sworn in we'll all burst into tears and tell the judge you've given a good mother to us, and won't he please make the sentence as light as possible and—'

Friday. It was really kind of the boys thought Emily Jane, to have such unusually large holes in their socks that week. By Saturday noon the house was in order, and the baking all done. Then another eclipse of spirit seemed about to fall on mother, but fortunately an advertising handbill thrown in at the door gave Emily Jane an inspiration. 'Mother, you've simply got to come up town with me this afternoon,' Miss Markell is having a sale of hats. This is your chance to get a new one to wear with your brown dress. You can't wear that rusty old black one with this beautiful brown velveteen!' 'Mother objected. 'O, Emily Jane, it's too much expense.' 'No, it isn't, mother!' persisted Emily Jane. 'Come along anyway and see what she has; you don't have to buy.' Two hours later Emily Jane and mother emerged from Miss Markell's with something in a paper bag. 'It's a wonderful bargain!' Emily Jane was saying. 'Three dollars for a seven dollar hat! That's beautiful, and it's exactly the shade of your brown dress!' 'When they got home Walter was standing in the doorway. 'Well, mother,' he called, 'they've given you another surprise! The session is postponed another week! The judge has the gout.' 'Emily Jane groaned in spirit. 'How should they get through that week with no washing to do?' 'Father,' she said privately to Mr. Benbow that night, 'we're simply got to get a crate of cherries next week.' 'Cherries? My dear girl!' cried Mr. Benbow. 'Do you know how scarce cherries are this year? Your mother said she wouldn't dream of paying the price for them.' 'I know,' said Emily Jane, 'but it's cherries or doctor's bills! I've done all I can but she won't consent to any more dress-making or millinery, and we just cleaned house in May. We've simply got to keep her busy till this wretched jury service begins; it's all that keeps her up, and cherries are the only thing I can think of.' 'All right,' grumbled her father, 'I suppose we must, but it will worry her, knowing how dear they are.' 'That's why I want you to get them, father,' said Emily Jane. 'You needn't tell her the price, only say you had a chance to get some, and it made you so hungry for cherries preserves that you couldn't resist. She won't grudge the price anyway if you want them.' 'So in spite of the heat Mrs. Benbow spent the next week happily enough over her preserving kettle. A further inspiration had added two dozen pineapples for marmalade; and once more mother made momentous decisions; this time of quantities of sugar, stage of preservedness, quality of rubber rings; she formed rapid and accurate conclusions without any undue strain. Here again she was in her own sphere and could almost forget that she was ordered to leave it for the unfamiliar jury box. By this time Mr. Benbow had become aware that the impending jury duty was not a joke to his wife. In spite of Emily Jane's devices the anticipation was telling on her; she tossed at night and talked in her sleep. 'I'll tell you what we'll do, mother,' he said one evening when she was almost through with the preserving. 'You know I get my vacation the latter part of July. Well, you and I will just run off and take a little trip all by ourselves to see the folks in Iowa. You have all these new clothes, and Emily Jane can manage with only the boys to cook for. What do you say?' He was repaid by the brightening of her face and by the eager plans she began to make. For three whole hours she arranged everything beautifully and had the first two days' menu all planned for Emily Jane before the fateful jangle of the telephone bell interrupted her. After she had answered the call she looked so startled that Emily Jane ran to her. 'Session postponed—July 15!' 'Of all things!' cried Emily Jane indignantly. 'Oh, well, raspberries are ripe, and then blackberries, come! And you shall have a trip some time, mother dearest!' The long weeks wore themselves out at last. The Loudon case was up for trial, and the expected crowd had gathered. It was not often that so sensational a case disturbed the quiet of the rural county seat. Even before daylight the carriages and automobiles had come in from the neighboring towns and the scattered farm-houses, bringing a curious throng. As soon as the doors were opened people went pouring in, determined to obtain seats. By nine o'clock, when court opened, even the window sills and the radiators were occupied, and man spectators were content merely to stand. The Benbowers sat, not indeed in the front row, but in prominent places, and their gaze rested on a matronly figure a few rows ahead in one of the seats reserved for the talemans. She was dressed in brown velveteen; her double chin quivered now and then, and her eyes seemed not to dare to look their way. Mrs. Benbow, having that morning broken three plates, salted her coffee and cut her fingers with the bread knife, had finally been robed in the brown velveteen with Emily Jane's assistance and had walked to the courthouse with a queer, shabby sensation on her knees. Now she was trying to accustom herself to the strange surroundings and pick out if she could the persons who were to play the leading parts in the day's drama. It was not hard of course to distinguish the judge; he looked the part with his grave judicial face. Once she thought she caught a twinkle in his eye when one of the lawyers spoke to him, but of course that could be nothing but her imagination! The lawyers were mostly familiar figures, but the counsel for defense had been brought from another

county. She did not like his face; it looked sarcastic and disagreeable. She did not look long at him, for he made her uneasy. The groups near by were safe to look at. That pale girl with the handkerchief in her hand must surely be the one whose engagement ring had brought her fiance into trouble. That also made Mrs. Benbow uncomfortable, and she was glad when the drawing of jurors began. As chances would have it, hers was the first name drawn; somehow she answered to her name, and then the disagreeable lawyer from Barker County began to ask her questions. She hoped nobody could hear her heart beat; it sounded very loud in her own ears. 'Ah—Mrs. Benbow,' said the counsel for the defense suavely, 'you are quite sure you have formed no prejudice against the prisoner?' 'I—why—no, sir, I hope not,' replied Mrs. Benbow shakily. 'You have never seen him, do not know him in any way?' persisted the lawyer. 'Where is he, please?' she asked uncertainly, looking round with bewilderment at the maze of faces. 'There he is!' said the lawyer, pointing to the prisoner at the bar. Mrs. Benbow turned to look, and the defendant raised to her the face of a boy—a boy no older than Walter; a face worn and haggard, but with a straight gaze from brown eyes that somehow asked her to believe in him. 'What that boy?' she exclaimed. 'He is not the prisoner!' 'He is the prisoner, madam!' insisted the lawyer. 'You never saw him before?' 'Oh, no! But he can't be the prisoner surely! That boy! With a face like that! He never—' 'Challenged!' snapped the prosecutor, and Mrs. Benbow, still dazed, was escorted from the stand. 'I don't understand it at all!' she said to her family, who met her at the front entrance after struggling through the delighted crowd. 'It's all right, mother,' said Mr. Benbow. 'You gave your verdict a little too soon, that's all.' 'And probably a correct one,' added Walter. 'I'll back mother every time. For woman,' he quoted, 'knows all man knows and in addition knows everything—by intuition!' 'I don't see why they had to put her off the jury for that,' grumbled Hugh. 'All the rest probably think the same, only they aren't saying so. I'll bet they've got the wrong fellow.' 'Never mind; it's over now,' whispered Emily Jane, and you looked so nice in your new things, mother.' Mrs. Benbow, still slightly bewildered, straightened her new hat and declared, 'That person who interrupted me was very rude, I must say! He didn't even let me finish my sentence. I'm rather disappointed not to have gone on after all. It would have been a real adventure to sit on a jury. You had better believe that, if I get a chance on any of the other cases, they won't throw me out so easily!' 'Keep Douglas' Egyptian Liniment always in the stable, ready for immediate use. Removes prou, flesh and inflammation, Thrush or Hoof Rot, and infection of cow's teat.

HOW TO SELECT SEED POTATOES

Selecting the seed is one of the most important factors in successful potato culture; unfortunately, far too many farmers seem to neglect this essential point. There are generally three ways of selecting the seed: 1. Putting aside a certain quantity of tubers in the spring. 2. Choosing the nicest part of a field, and selecting the nicest seed in it. 3. Selecting the nicest part of a field, and selecting the nicest seed in it. The first method is the most popular, which does not mean that it is the best, as its adoption is due to the law of minimum effort rather than to its results. It consists in putting aside in a corner of the cellar in the spring, a certain quantity of tubers corresponding approximately to the area which is to be planted. The second method is followed by a fair number of potato planters who wish to succeed and it is more logical than the first. The nicest part of the field is chosen for the future seed and all diseased plants are removed. Finally, here is the most methodical and rational method, which a very small number only has adopted. It consists in using foundation seed which has been submitted to two field and two cellar inspections and an extensive selection. The procedure is very easy. At digging time four or five tubers from each of these plants are taken and kept separately. The following spring, each tuber is cut into four sections which are planted in a single hill. During the season growth, all the grower has to do is to watch for and pull out the diseased plants. If a plant in a hill shows symptoms of disease, pull out the whole hill. By following this last method, the presence of the qualities in the tubers necessary for a successful crop is assured. These qualities are production, varied type, vigor and freedom from disease.

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PLANTING HERBACEOUS PERENNIALS In the milder sections of the country most perennials can be planted successfully until quite late in fall, but where the winters are severe, care should be taken so that planting is finished several weeks before the ground is hard frozen and a mulch of straw or other suitable material applied. Perennials that have grown from seed sown in spring, and transplanted during the summer should be ready to put in their permanent places in September. If the ground is dry water thoroughly so that the soil adheres to the roots when the plants are lifted. If planting in a border, group three to five plants of each variety together leaving ample space so that each plant can develop to its full size. Iris plants can be divided quite late in September although July and August are generally considered the best time to do this. At the Central Experimental Farm we have found that iris plants generally begin to show signs of falling after three or four years. When the flowers begin to grow smaller the plant should be dug up and the oldest parts of the rhizome discarded. Pieces with several fans of good healthy leaves should be chosen and three or four can be planted about a foot apart in a clump for a larger border. In a small border a single division is sometimes sufficient. The soil where they have to go should be well dug and some bone meal added before replanting. The roots should be made firm but the rhizomes should be just at the surface of the soil. A sunny position should be chosen for the tall bearded varieties. Perennials stay in the same place for many years, but in time the flowers begin to fall and grow smaller than they used to do. When this occurs it is time to move and divide them. September is the best season to do this. If it is possible to give them a new bed it is better to do so. If this cannot be done then the plants should be dug up and the old soil removed and new, good soil put in its place. A handful of bonemeal for each plant should be mixed in with the new soil. After digging the plant wash off all the soil and divide the roots as carefully as possible. Divisions with four or five eyes are the best for an ordinary garden, though smaller divisions can be made if a larger number of plants are required. Perennials should be planted so that there is two inches of soil above the eye. Too deep planting is one of the causes why perennials fail to bloom.

WHEN TO STICK

You hear so much in praise of the people who stick to things that sometimes you lose sight of the fact that this may also be a mistake. Some of you may know young people who took a fancy to each other when they were about fourteen. Long ago that they were not congenial. They never think alike on any subject. The little peculiarities of each one irritate the other. Yet they have a queer, mistaken idea of loyalty so that they will probably stick to each other, and some day add one more to the number of unhappy marriages. Twenty years ago a young man who had been a Rippled scholar, and had a position in a small college, received a dazzling offer from a business man of his acquaintance. The business man believed in the young fellow's ability, and promised to make him a millionaire. To the young scholar that promise had a pleasant sound, and he took the job offered him. After about three years, he made up his mind that he was paying too big a price for being a millionaire; he gave up his job and went back to teaching. Of course there were plenty of people to shake their heads over him, and pronounce him a rolling stone; but a few thought him a sensible man to whom he had found the thing to stick to which he wanted to stick. The fact that he has since risen to the top of his profession would indicate that the few were correct in their judgment. Ready-made Medicine.—You need no physician for ordinary ills when you have at hand a bottle of Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil. For coughs, colds, sore throat, bronchial troubles, it is invaluable; for scalds, burns, bruises, sprains it is unsurpassed; while for cuts, sores and the like it is an unquestionable healer. It needs no testimonial other than the use, and that will satisfy anyone as to its effectiveness.

CHILDREN

Pop (to his bright infant): 'What's wrong' (12 years old): 'I had a terrible scene with your wife.' In her school essay on 'Parents,' a little girl wrote: 'We get our parents as late an age that it is impossible to change their habits.' Cartoon in College Humor: One little girl to her playmate: 'So long, Mamma, Mamma's giving a party and I gotta go home and make precocious remarks.' Emily had been to school for the first time. When asked what she had learned she sighed, hopelessly, 'Auffin'. I've got to go back to-morrow.' Miller's Worm Powders were devised to promptly relieve children who suffer from the ravages of worms. It is a simple preparation to destroy stomachic and intestinal worms without shock or injury to the most sensitive system. They act thoroughly and painlessly, and though in some cases they may cause vomiting, that is an indication of their powerful action and not of any nauseating property.

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