

Novel Wedding

Barrie and Helen Arnold threw themselves down on the grass, under the apple tree, in the orchard, to think of some plan by which to break the monotony of their country life.

Her mother was dead, and her three sisters were married, and she was the youngest, remained at home and acted as housekeeper for her father and two brothers.

Helen Arnold was Jean's bosom friend, who spent several weeks every summer at the Barrie farm.

This morning the two girls sought the shade of the apple trees to keep cool while they searched their brains for some new recreation.

"There's no use waiting for something to turn up any longer," said Jean. "Two weeks have gone since you and not a thing has happened to remember your visit by. Now last year we had our masquerade, and dear old Philo died, and then we kept that tramp one night, don't you remember you said we might be entertaining an angel unawares."

"Well, I would rather nothing would happen than have another old tramp come along, and we could not spare anything off of the farm to die, not even your kitten, for if you are to be a maid, of course you must have a kitten," said Helen.

"What I have it," exclaimed Jean. "I'll have a wedding; not a common affair, a real novelty, you know, that will make old Mrs. Jones talk this year, for we'll send her the first invitation, and her Sary the second."

"A wedding," said Helen, "how can you? Who will be the bride, and who is the bridegroom. Now, look at Jean; you are always getting us into some scrape, and if this is just a trick, I'll—"

"Don't make any objections now, nor ask too many questions," interrupted Jean. "You just follow my instructions and we will have some fun. Now, first of all, we must get out the invitations. We'll have to write them ourselves and we must post them before the mail goes out this afternoon."

So the girls returned to the house and sat down hard at work writing out the invitations.

When the men had gone back to the hay field, and the dinner had been done up, Jean and Helen looked for the postoffice.

Jean emptied twenty-five letters from her shopping bag out on the table. Mrs. Dean, the post-mistress, came in to give another party, and Jean thought you'd be givin' one to your friend went home."

"I'm just going to entertain a few of my friends," answered Jean, who was not anxious to give any more information than she could help.

"Why, ain't you goin' to ask any one to your party, Jean?" added Mrs. Dean, noticing the letters were all addressed to ladies.

But Jean evaded this question and said, "Good-bye, Mrs. Dean. I'm glad we were in time for the mail, for we want these letters to go as soon as possible."

When the contents of the Centreville mail of that afternoon had reached its destination, there were puzzled heads more than one home. When Sara Jones received her invitation she said, "Why, this is Jean Barrie's writing; it must be an invitation to a party, but she addressed to you and I both, both."

"Why, bless me!" exclaimed Mrs. Jones. "What can the child want me to her party for, it must be a carpet-bag party."

"It's an invitation to a wedding—Jean's going to be married," added the astonished Sara.

"Oooh, gracious, Sary! you must be mistaken. Jean Barrie will never get married while her father needs her. She won't even look at a boy, let alone turn up her nose even at our Johnny, and he a-goin' to be one of the best farmers around Centreville, and get a hundred acres of land to start with; and I'm going to give him that Jersey calf if he lives, and two feather beds and a patch-work quilt," exclaimed Mrs. Jones in one breath.

"But who's she a goin' to be married to?" Mrs. Jones continued. "I didn't know us she'd done any courtin'." Let her see the invitation, Sary. Now like that's the reason that friend of hers is stayin' there so long. I saw her looking at some calico down at the store the other day, and Jean said she wanted it to line some quilts with, and I wondered why she was makin' such a fuss about it."

"By this time Mrs. Jones had adjusted her spectacles and was scanning the dainty written note.

"Now, that's strange," she said, "it says who she's to be married to, and you don't read like the invitation when his Mary Jane was going to get married, and your pa's brother William's invitation wasn't done in this way. Pears to me if I was gettin' an invitation I wouldn't get it up like that, and I'd have it printed in ink, instead of writin' it. Well, Sary, I feel kind of curies about it, but I'll queer now they didn't ask me and our Johnny," added Mrs. Jones after pausing a few minutes, and her Johnny has always been so near Sary. I'm glad she told us in the invitation she'd take no presents."

While Mrs. Jones was thus commenting on her invitation to Jean's wed-

ding, Miss Beatrice Gardener, a friend of Helen's and Jean's in a neighboring village was equally surprised over the invitation she had received.

"That's just like Jean; she never does things like anyone else," said Beatrice. "But the idea of a wedding invitation without the name of the groom! And there are to be no presents. Jean always said she would not accept presents if she had a wedding—but she always said she was never going to get married. Girls always say that until they get a good chance, I wonder why she did not invite brother Ned; she surely cannot expect me to go alone. But I've known Jean long enough. I ought not to be surprised at anything she does, and I'll go if I have to go alone on my wheel."

In another not very distant village Mrs. Harry Randolph, the leader of society in her neighborhood, sat reading her invitation when her husband came in.

"Harry, here is the queerest wedding invitation I have ever seen; Jean Barrie is to be married, and the name of the groom is not given, and you are not invited."

"It's strange she has asked one of us and not the other," said Harry. "She must have known you could not go alone. I thought she was the girl who was never going to get married."

"Oh," said Mrs. Randolph, "girls are always changing their minds, but I'll go, for there's a mystery about this invitation that interests me, and I can drive myself, anyway."

While these invitations were thus stirring up the curiosity in the several homes until it was bubbling and boiling impatient for the eventful day to arrive, Helen and Jean were hustling around at home getting everything in readiness. Jean, after persuading her father and brothers to vow secrecy, told them all about her plans, and soon had them coaxed into her service. Her father looked after getting a turkey ready for her, and both the boys promised to be near where they could assist the guests from their carriages when they arrived, and look after the horses.

When Wednesday arrived the girls were too busy to talk much, for "everything must be in readiness by two o'clock," they said.

The men came from the hay-field for an early dinner, and by twelve o'clock had gone back, leaving the girls alone.

"I wish Jessie had come this morning," said Jean.

Jessie was one of Jean's married sisters, who was always ready to help when there was a prospect of fun.

"Well, here she is now," called a cheery voice at the door.

"Oh, Jess," cried the girls, "we're so glad you've come. We're in such a hurry to get the tables ready and get ourselves dressed, and Mrs. Jones might come any time now. She always makes a point of being an hour and fifty minutes ahead of time."

So the girls talked and worked and were just putting on the finishing touches when Jean, looking down the road, saw Mrs. Jones and "her Sary" coming.

"Here comes Mrs. Jones, with her white apron on, and with a market basket on her arm," she said.

Then the three girls fled to Jean's room, where their costumes were all ready for them; and while they were dressing the remainder of the guests arrived. They came on bicycles, dog-carts, in spring wagons and on foot. Tom and Fred waited at the front gate to take care of the horses, and when the last one had arrived they disappeared and returned to the hay-field to resume their work. When the guests were all seated in the par-

lor, Mrs. Jones, who was sitting next to Mrs. Harry Randolph, after having sufficiently scanned her neighbor, ventured to ask if she could tell her the name of the groom, for she could not just call it to mind; but Mrs. Randolph had also very singularly forgotten his name.

"I think I saw him this forenoon," added Mrs. Jones. "There was a tall, thin, dark-complexioned young fellow, who was a partner in a large dry-goods establishment in a not-far-distant city; so that until the appointed hour arrived the guests were waiting almost breathlessly for the entrance of the bride-party. Only Mrs. Jones dared break the silence.

"Now, it's strange," she said, "there ain't no men-folks come. My Sary wouldn't think of having a wedding without no men-folks. I feel just as if this ought to be a carpet-rag-bee or a quilting." Say, did you bring a present, Mrs. Randolph?" queried Mrs. Jones.

"No," answered her neighbor, "you know presents are not to be accepted."

"Well, I brought her a jar of pickles," added Mrs. Jones. "I was doin' some down in a brass kettle one day—my mother used to own the kettle. She got it from Uncle Josier when Aunt Marthy died, and say, you ought to see what a purty green that kettle made them pickles; and pickles will come in handy to Jean when she commences housekeeping. Of course if she hadn't said she didn't want no presents we would have brought some silverware. I kind o' thought I'd have brought a cruet set, but my Sary, she thought a silver cake basket is awful nice."

But while Mrs. Jones is thus entertaining her neighbors, look in Jean's room and behold the bride, groom and clergyman ready to descend to the parlor. Jean is robed in a green and white plaid silk that her grandmother used to wear; Helen, with her long brown locks concealed under a wig made of sheep-skin, has on Mr. Barrie's long double-breasted coat, and a pair of Jean's bicycle bloomers, while Jessie, who is to act as clergyman is clad in a long white gown. When all were ready another of Jean's sisters seated herself at the piano and just as she commenced playing a wedding march the bride, groom, and clergyman entered the room, marched slowly to one corner where an arch of evergreens had been made, and there they took their stand.

"Bless me," was all Mrs. Jones said.

Mrs. Randolph and several others laughed. Mrs. Jones' Sary looked stupid. Mrs. Dean looked like the victim of a dupe.

Then the clergyman proceeded with a serio-comic ceremony of her own composition, and after pronouncing the con-

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