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An Odd Honeymoon

BY VIRGINIA BLAIR.

It was a beautiful little cottage with a wide porch, a lawn sloping down to the frozen lake and great trees, heavy now with winter snows. Within was a deep fireplace built of rough stones. "I think it was perfectly lovely of Cousin Beth to let us come here," said the little bride.

Her husband bent and kissed her. "It's the nearest thing to Paradise that I can imagine," he said fervently. "That's the beauty of the country," Joyce emphasized.

"It is bliss after the hurry and worry of getting married," her husband teased. "I don't see why you are not worn to a frazzle, Joy."

"I was so happy," said the little bride softly, "that I didn't have time to get tired. But it does seem good to rest, away from everybody."

"I'll build a fire in the fireplace," Philip said, "and we might get a warm supper over the coals."

Joyce's laughter rippled. "Phil Brandon," she said, "I think you are wonderful to have such confidence in my cooking."

"You do everything well," was his assertion.

But Joyce had some doubts as she tied on the distractingly pretty apron with its pink ribbons and surveyed the pots and pans. Hitherto her culinary skill had been tried only in her mother's dainty apartment, where a chafing-dish and a competent maid had made things easy.

But here there was no obliging housemaid, and the sacks of flour and the cans and bottles of supplies had a discouraging unfinished look.

"I might make pancakes," Joyce ventured doubtfully.

"Of course," was Philip's ecstatic acquiescence.

But while she stirred and whipped and mixed the necessary ingredients energetically, the pancakes were not a success. With unlimited maple syrup, however, they were eatable, and Philip's enthusiasm supplied all defects.

"Of course you can't expect to have things perfect when cooking under such conditions," he said, as he moved the griddle from the coals and wiped off the ashes. "To-morrow when our coal comes we will have the stove in running order, and then we will have feasts—just you and me, king and queen in our own domain."

But the stove didn't help matters much. Joyce's efforts at cooking were distinctly discouraging. Moreover she couldn't keep her finger nails pink and shining and her hair in its usual crown of puffs.

"For I just can't look nice and cook, Phil," she said, almost tearfully one night.

"Never mind," said Phil. But his tone was a trifle doubtful. He did miss Joyce's usual pretty plumage. In spite of love and romance there was something lacking. Philip had lived hitherto in his mother's well-ordered household.

But he wouldn't complain. Joyce was dear and sweet, and he didn't want a cloud on her face—so he ate soggy biscuits and overdone steaks and smiled into her anxious face.

But Joyce couldn't smile. "I never worked so hard in my life," she confessed one morning, "and I don't think I like housekeeping, Phil."

A little shadow came into Philip's eyes. He was of a race of men, strong, home-loving—he had dreamed of the little apartment over which Joyce should preside. He could not afford a servant.

If they did not keep house, a room in a cheap boarding place must be their home. He sighed, then made a little protest. "You know it won't be so hard after you've learned, Joyce."

Joyce leaned forward and looked into the flames. "But I am not sure that I want to learn, Philip," she said.

After that neither of them said much, but something was lost out of their happiness.

By noon they were practically snow-bound. They ate an unappetizing lunch of canned salmon and crackers. Joyce was not in the mood to cook—and, as an inevitable consequence, by four o'clock they had quarrelled.

"If you loved me you wouldn't care what you ate," was Joyce's accusation when Philip had complained of hunger.

"It seems to me that hunger has nothing to do with love," Philip replied.

Philip had visions of what his mother's table would be under like conditions, but, of course, his mother was his mother, and Joyce was Joyce. And his little wife was a dear.

So his arms went about her and he kissed her, and asked if he couldn't get the dinner for a change, and having gained her consent he went into the kitchen to forage.

Somehow the prospect didn't seem hopeful. He wasn't sure that he could fry eggs, but he thought he might try. First he sliced the bacon, glancing into the other room now and then to see Joy in the easy chair.

It seemed difficult to break the eggs properly. He was sure that he wasn't doing it in a workmanlike manner. He was looking at the mixed mass in despair when a voice behind him said, "Let me do it."

He turned with a start. A tall, gray woman stood in the shadows. "I got lost in the snow," she said, "and I saw your light. I knocked, but I guess you were in the other room. So I opened the door and came in, and then you came out and broke the eggs and I saw you didn't know much about it. It ain't work for a man."

"No, it isn't," Philip agreed. Then he added quickly, as though what he said had implied a doubt of Joyce. "But she was tired—it's such a depressing day."

"Nothing ought to be depressing," the woman said, grimly, "when two people ain't been married but two weeks."

"How did you know?" Philip demanded.

"I heard about it over to the farm-house," she said. "You just let me

get your supper," she went on. "I am used to it."

An hour later, a tempting supper steamed on the little table that was drawn up in front of the fireplace. Joyce in a pink crepe gown, sparkled and smiled across at Philip. "Oh, doesn't everything taste good?" she said.

There were curls of crisp bacon around the omelette, and a salad made out of canned asparagus. There were hot biscuits, creamed potatoes, and for dessert an old-fashioned minute pudding with cream.

"I feel like a different person," Joyce said, when they had finished. She drew her chair close to her husband. "Suppose—suppose we had had to dine on your cooking, Phil, dear?"

Philip smiled. "We won't suppose anything so dreadful," he said. "We will just be happy and forget dull care."

But they were not allowed to forget. When the dishes were all washed, the tall gray woman who had served them so silently came in and sat down between them like the silent figure of Fate.

"I don't suppose you want me here," she began without other preamble. "You'd rather be billing and cooing. But I've got something to say. I am an unhappy woman because I couldn't cook a meal for my husband when I was married. I'm going to tell my story to every wife that starts the way I did—and see if I can't save her."

"It ain't that cooking is everything in life," the woman went on, "but in these days women don't seem to think they've got any part in making things go right. They just let their husbands work and they spend the money. A man goes to his work at eight in the morning and comes back at six, and what do women do?" She turned to Joyce. "What will you do," she demanded, "if you don't do your own work?"

"Oh, visit my friends and go downtown—and other things."

"That's just it," said the gray woman, "and you won't feel that you are any part of the world's machinery and after a time your husband won't depend upon you for anything. And deep down in his heart, while he will love you, he will wonder if you really love him when you do not make him comfortable. Not that comfort is everything. But a woman's part is to do things that make the home beautiful, and there's just as much beauty in that omelette that I made you as there is in hand-kerchiefs."

"But I didn't know that, either, when I was first married," she drew a quick breath. "I let my husband eat cold food when it should have been hot, and his bread was soggy and his meat burned, and after a time he got so fed-up with it that I didn't know if he craved for strong liquors because the food was bad. Then he let me and I was almost crazy—and one day I heard a woman making a speech, and she said if wives only knew it they could save their husbands from bad habits by making their homes comfortable. And then I knew what I'd done. But it was too late. I hunted high and I hunted low for my husband, but when I found him he was dead."

"Oh," Joyce laid a sympathetic hand over the hard one.

"And after that I learned to cook, and I just love to go into homes and help to make them comfortable. And where I can make them listen I talk to the wives just as I am talking to you. And it wasn't just the snow that brought me here. The people over to the farm said you didn't know much about getting meals, and they were sorry for him."

Joyce's face flamed. "How dared they?" she began, then as the humor and pathos of the situation dawned upon her she smiled.

"Dear Gray Lady," she said, "will you stay here and teach me to cook?"

The other's rough hand clasped hers.

"Yes," she said, "only my name is not Gray Lady—it's Jane."

"It's been an awfully queer honeymoon, Philip," his little wife confessed a week later, "but it has been lovely, hasn't it? And dear Jane is coming once a week to me in town, and what I don't know now she is to teach me. I am going to be a good wife to you, Philip."

He bent and kissed her.

How Spiders Undress.

It is an interesting sight indeed to watch a spider change its skin and one that will well repay anyone for the time taken up by waiting for the little known—generally speaking—event to take place. When preparing for the change the spider stops eating for several days and makes his preliminary arrangements by fastening himself by a short thread of web to one of the main lines of his snare, this to hold him firmly while he proceeds to undress. First the skin cracks all round the thorax, being held only by the fore part. Next the lower part of the body is uncoiled, and then comes the struggle to free the legs. He works and kicks vigorously, seeming to have a very hard time of it. Fifteen minutes of continued perseverance, however, brings him out of his old dress, the struggle causing him to appear limp and lifeless for some time after it is finished.

Whetstones And Hones.

The particular classes of stone used in sharpening edge tools, such as razors, knives, scythes, etc. are hard, compact and so very silicious that they readily wear down the hardest steel. They are varieties of slate derived from argillaceous schists of the paleozoic. These stones are found in Turkey, Bohemia, Persia and the Harz mountains, in Styria, in the United States, Spain, Peru, and Siberia. One of the best American stones for hones comes from Arkansas.

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Why Sea Breezes Blow.

National Magazine.

Dr. Benjamin, the celebrated pathologist and meteorologist of Camden, New Jersey, on a recent visit to Wildwood, the centre of the most thriving part of Cape May county, gave an interesting discourse on "Sea Breezes," a phenomenon more pronounced at Cape May than anywhere else along the coast, and the chief cause of its superb climate. Under an unclouded sun the surface of the land is quickly heated, and as the hot air rises a vacuum is created into which rushes the cold air from the ocean, with the result that the hotter the day the more pronounced the phenomena. Generally about noon the sun causes the hot air to ascend, forming a vacuum into which rushes a strong, steady breeze from the sea, and as night comes on the land becomes cool and the sea breezes die down again.

Not Anxious.

"You have quite a number of the poets," said Goodby, who was inspecting Woody's library. "Ah, there's Browning! Do you understand him?"

"Ah," said Goodby, continuing his examination, "have you Præ?"

"Certainly not. What's the use of praying? I ain't anxious to understand him."