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FUSS AND FEATHERS

By NANCY WHITTAKER.

D ID you turn out the cow, and put the geese in the stable, Isaac?" said the Widow Havens to her son, as they sat down to the breakfast table one fine summer morning.

"Yes, mother," was the reply, "and I guess I can master that old gander this time. I'm getting so big. You know he knocked me down with his wings the last time we picked 'em."

"Yes, I remember; and Squire Hoffman came right in the middle of it, about that calf, and I, in my old ragged gown, mortified to death, was hindered a whole hour, showing him the poultry and the garden. And now, Hannah," turning to her daughter, a pretty girl of sixteen, "if anybody comes to-day, before we get through, tell them I can't see 'em; for I wouldn't be bothered with company when I am in such a plight. This old gown is all in slits, but I can't afford to spoil a better one. You may wash up the dishes, Hannah," she continued, when breakfast was over, "and set the rooms to rights; and by and by put on the pot, and get the dinner a-going; and by that time I hope we shall be through. Come, Isaac, we will go."

Now, everybody has seen feathers, but there are some who do not know where they come from, and softly repose upon their downy beds without one thought about the cruel way in which the best ones are obtained. They want live geese feathers when they buy, without knowing what it means. We wish such a one could have seen Mrs. Havens and like marching to the barn, with a big basket, a cloth to tie over it, an old chair, and one of Ike's outgrown stockings to put over a goose's head, to keep her from biting while she is picked.

To see Ike run the whole flock up into a corner of the stable, catch one by the neck and wings, and then with his black eyes sparkling with delight, and his freckled face and suspiciously red head, all aglow, with the triumph of capture, as he marched across the floor to lay it gently, but squawking terribly, in his mother's lap, was rather amusing.

Boys are cruel! there's no denying it; when they so love to catch geese and pigs, and fish and game, just for the fun of it, sometimes letting them go, and putting the fish back in the water, because they do not want them, after the triumph of capture is over. Ike, who was a smart, mischievous boy of twelve, loved to do all these things, though he was not particularly ugly, and had really a very soft place in his big, generous heart.

But while Hannah in the neat white cottage is cooking the dinner, and Mrs. Havens in the stable is tearing the feathers in big handfuls from the poor geese—side, back and front, and Isaac is climbing haymows hunting eggs, and cutting up all sorts of pranks between whiles, another actor is on his way to the busy scene.

This was Squire Hoffman, a rich farmer, who lived two or three miles away, whose road to town took him very often past the Widow Havens' cottage. Being an observing man, he had noticed the neatness, and look of care and thrift that always surrounded it; and more than this, that the widow had handsome black eyes and a trim figure, as she sat up stiffly in her pew of a Sunday, giving Ike an occasional nudge, or pinch, to keep him in order, yet all the time looking at the minister, and no doubt hearing all he said.

As the squire had been a widower several years, this must be excused, especially when we consider that his only daughter, Grace Hoffman, was about to be married, and go to a home of her own. As he was a good-looking, large-framed, big-hearted, benevolent-looking man, with three large farms and money in the bank, we must conclude that he was considered a pretty good catch among the widows and maidens, if he once made up his mind to marry again.

And it was of this very thing he was thinking as, seated on Selim, his handsome black horse, he rode toward town upon this particular July morning.

"I really don't know what I had better do," he soliloquized. "There is Grace going to leave me, and I can't say a word against it, she has got such a noble fellow in the one she loves, and the very one I would have chosen for her. But there's nobody left but Aunt Dinah in the kitchen, good old soul, but just no company at all for me. And here I am, not fifty years old, and I may live twenty or thirty years yet, healthily as I am, and must I live all that time alone, with nobody to care for, and nobody to care for me? It's all nonsense. I declare I won't do it, if I can find anyone to marry me."

"But who shall it be? There's the Widow Spriggins, good-looking, no children to bother one, smart, tidy and with a nice farm of her own; but such a temper, sharp as steel, and keen as a razor, I guess a little too keen for me. A man wants a little peace in the de-

cline of his life, if ever; and he'd have none with the Widow Spriggins. Then there is Miss Molly Hopkins—a nice, likely, pious woman as ever was, but very homely, and I don't fancy her one bit. And there's that young Widow Drake, pretty and languishing, and squinting all the time over at my pew, I do believe. But she isn't the kind for me. Dolly Weaver is a nice woman, but a little too old, and Polly Peppercorn is too young.

"But there is the Widow Havens, handsome as a picture, and neat and smart, and thrifty enough to pay her way twice over. There are those two young ones, to be sure, but they need not be in the way at all. Hannah is just such a girl as one likes to see around, busy as a bee, rosy as the morning, and chery as a little candry, and, indeed, sings about as sweetly. I can see that Sam is casing sheep's eyes at her already, every time he comes home for a vacation, and I don't blame him a bit. They're not as rich as some, but we have enough, and who cares. I always did like that boy Ike. If his face is freckled, and his head red, he will make a smart man yet. He is chock full of fun and smartness, with steam enough to burst a common boiler. I want just such a boy on the farm all the time, to run of errands, get up the cows, feed the poultry, go to mill, drive horse to plow, and a hundred other things I don't think of just now. And that reminds me that I need just such a boy dreadfully, just now, to rake hay and do chores, while we are mowing. I wonder if the widow couldn't spare him a few days."

By this time the squire had got just opposite Mrs. Havens' barn, and upon the spur of the moment he rode right into the shed beside it, that faced the highway, intending to hitch Selim, and to go into the house to ask the widow for her boy. But just as he had dismounted, and was hanging his bridle over the hook, he heard a shout of laughter and the ring of voices close at hand. There was a window-hole close by, cut for ventilation of the stables, and looking through it he saw a sight that made him want to join in the chorus.

For there sat the widow in her torn gown, with a goose in her lap, busily ripping off the feathers in great handfuls, and with a handkerchief over her head to keep them out of her hair, looking smart, energetic and rosy, and ready to explode with laughter, while upon a hen-coop, near at hand, stood Ike, in the very act of delivering an oration. The fact was, the last time he went to town with his mother he went into the court-house, and listened to a lawyer's plea in a case in which he had been interested, and since then he had been full of it. And now he had just been and marked out a great image on the stable wall to represent the judge, and a dozen others, close by, of smaller dimensions, for the jury, while his clients, the flock of geese, were the plaintiff, and his mother, their tormentor, the defendant; and just then he was putting in the closing plea:

"Now, your honor knows that these poor clients of mine are all the more to be pitied, and have all the more need to have justice done them for being weak and simple folks, so gentle and lamb-like that they would never harm anything bigger than a fly, or a pollywog, while that wicked woman, the defendant—and he pointed fiercely at his mother—"is strong and cruel as the grave. You have just listened, your honor, and you gentlemen of the jury—and he gave his hand a lofty yet graceful wave toward them—"to the evidence just brought into court, and can you doubt that it is abundantly proved that she feloniously, and by force of arms, and with full intent, seized and overpowered them, every one of them, and ruthlessly tore the hair and skin from their backs—the feathers, you know—deliberately and cruelly shut out the light of heaven from their eyes with an old blinder made of wool, and abused them in the most shocking and shameful way, for which wicked treatment she has made herself amenable to that statute enacted for the prevention of cruelty to animals. I leave the case in your hands, gentlemen of the jury, knowing that you will be sure to do justice to the cause of the oppressed, and see the laws of your country faithfully executed;" and, with a sweeping bow to judge and jury, the young orator jumped from his rostrum, or, in reality, turned a somersault from it, over to the stable floor, landing on his feet, amid cheers and bravos of one at least of his audience, and the squawks of two at least of his clients.

He rebounded like a shot at the sound of the applause, and looking up suddenly, there stood the squire in the doorway, laughing loudly at the amusing performance.

"Well done, my boy!" he exclaimed, heartily; "you acted it to perfection, and I'm sure you'll be equal to the best of them one of these days."

caught, Ike slunk away, with his cheeks blazing and the freckles brighter than ever, while his mother's face flushed hotly, and straightened in an instant, for about the same reasons; and in her agitation and surprise she jumped up, and came near letting go the half-picked client. She sat down again, however, with a bow to the squire, that might be considered a very stiff and awkward one.

"I hope you don't think we pick geese here every day, squire," she said, "though I think you caught us at it once before."

"Yes, but it's work that must be done, Mrs. Havens. I hope, however, that my presence here will not be considered an intrusion. I had no idea of playing the eavesdropper when I rode into the shed just now, but, really, your young lawyer was so amusing that I couldn't help it. That boy will make a smart and talented man one of these days, Mrs. Havens, you see if he doesn't; and that reminds me that I called to see if you could spare him a few days. We want such a boy just now very much, and I will give him good wages."

"Well, that is just as you and he can agree. Our little hoeing and mowing is done, thank fortune, and he can go if he likes. He is a smart boy, if I do say it; but he has the queerest notions in his head. He and Hannah both take after their father, and love their books a little too well. They both read every spare minute, and Ike has a notion that he wants to go to college, like your Samuel. Now, with our poverty, the idea is preposterous; and yet here I have been like a fool all the morning trying to encourage and help him contrive how to do it, just to please him."

"And how was that?" said the squire, smiling, as he helped himself without asking to a seat on the milking-stool, in the most familiar and neighborly way.

"Well, in the first place, feathers are a dollar a pound, and Ike had a notion that there might be great profit in stocking the little farm with geese. Then when I raised some objections, he concluded that picking and selling berries, and catching birds and game, would do a great deal, and that by keeping school and raising strawberries we could do the rest, and school Hannah into the bargain. So we are going to set the strawberries right away, a plan I was willing to encourage, as I knew it might be very profitable.

"There, that goose is done, but where is Isaac, I'd like to know?"

And going to the door, she let out the goose and called loudly for the boy to catch another, as she explained to the squire.

"Pray, let him go, Mrs. Havens," said the squire, good-humoredly. "You are almost through, and I would just as lief catch you one as not," and sitting the action to the word, he walked over, and caught the smallest one, and laid it in Mrs. Havens' lap. Then he walked back, and, catching the old gander, the father of the flock, in spite of his loud and animated remonstrances, he went back, and sitting down upon the stool, laid him across his knee, and in spite of his naked head, and wrathful demonstrations, proceeded very leisurely and scientifically, to strip off his coat.

"You see, Mrs. Havens," he said, "that I am an old hand at the business, as my wife never did it, and so it always fell to me, or Dinah, or both. But the house became full of beds, and I soon tired of it, and sold off my flock."

"As I would mine if we didn't need the profits for clothes, and schooling for the children—especially if Ike has to go to college. I guess it will take a good many pounds of feathers to send him there," said she.

"Supposing I should tell you of a better way," said the squire, earnestly, and with a slight blush. "Here you have a snug little place that might bring a thousand dollars or so; and off there, I have more land than I well know what to do with. Now, my daughter Grace is about to leave me; and my home will be without a mistress, and myself without any congenial society. Now, I like you better than any other woman I know of, and if you would become my wife, and the mistress of my establishment, I think we could arrange matters nicely. Then you could sell this little place, and put the money in the bank, against the time Isaac would want to go to college, and Hannah, who is one of the sweetest girls I know, could live with us, go to school to the village academy, and be well provided for by us when she marries. Now, what do you say to my plan?"

"That I will consider it seriously," said the widow, with flaming cheeks, eyes cast down, and a very nervous pull at the feathers.

And Ike just at this juncture crawled out slyly from behind an old barrel, in the manger, crept cautiously out at the door, without being perceived by the blushing pair of lovers, and ran to the house, to tell the news to the astonished Hannah, with a good many eloquent additions and explanations.

came one of the smartest lawyers in the State; while pretty Hannah married Samuel—the only son—and lived with the old folks at the Homestead.—New York Weekly.

SCIENCE & MECHANICS

L. W. Dallas, an English statistician, has proved that the birth rate in India depends directly on the rainfall. A drouth makes bad crops, fewer marriages and fewer children; the sequence is logical.

Two English inventors have devised a relay for talking machines whereby the sounds produced are strongly reinforced by compressed air. With this instrument ordinary conversation will carry a quarter of a mile, and some sounds can be heard as far as two or three miles.

The only metals commonly known as magnetic are iron, cobalt and nickel. Dr. Heuser, a German, now proves that the faculty of being magnetic does not apply to these particular metals as such, but can be developed in special alloys containing no traces of the natural magnetic metals.

Reports from Spain say that Senor Balsora, an employe in the Government telegraph department, has been making some highly successful experiments with torpedoes whose course is directed by means of the wireless telegraph. The pulsations are made to act on delicate controlling apparatus within the torpedoes, no physical connection being needed.

In a recent communication to the Paris Academy of Sciences Professor Chateau announced that he found Radium rays will counteract the poison of serpent venom. Viper or cobra poison, he said, loses its virulence after fifty or sixty hours of exposure. Victims of cobra bites, however, usually die in a few minutes; hence radium can hardly be considered an antidote.

The price of radium has increased owing to the difficulty of obtaining further supplies. The consequence is that research work has almost ceased. Sir William Ramsay states that \$100 a milligramme or at the rate of \$3,000,000 an ounce, is now demanded. An expert is of the opinion that not more than a half ounce of radium has been manufactured since Professor and Mme. Curie discovered it.

The Plea of "Solo."

The straight and simple lines marked out for her family by Mrs. Lane were a source of great satisfaction to her and of considerable amusement to her neighbors.

"There is nothing more tiresome and ill-bred than fruitless argument," announced that determined woman to one of her friends, whom she counted an agreeable person, but lacking in spirit, "and we have made a rule never to have it in our family."

"I don't see how one can always avoid it," said the meek-spirited neighbor, "when all the members of a family have different opinions."

"It's no harm to have opinions if you keep them to yourself," said Mrs. Lane, indignantly. "But I'll tell you how we manage. For instance, at the table; of course if one of the children makes a statement which I cannot indorse, I simply say, 'That is pure foolishness. Let us hear no more of it.' But if one of the other children attempts to start an argument, why, then I have to be more firm, and send him or her from the table. Of course my older son and daughter have come to years of discretion, and never think of transgressing the rule."

"But do you and Mr. Lane always think alike?" ventured her friend.

"Not always," said Mrs. Lane, frankly. "but we pursue the same system with each other. If I express an opinion from which Mr. Lane differs, I say pleasantly, 'You remember our little rule, my dear,' and naturally he stops at once. And if he expresses one from which I differ, I just smile across the table at him and say, 'As I cannot subscribe to that, and we must bear in mind our rule, will you kindly say no more, my dear?' You see, it's a simple matter, if each one will do his or her part, and it does so greatly add to the peace of a household."—Youth's Companion.

No Loophole.

A New Hampshire lawyer, for some years judge of the police court in Concord, was a natural peacemaker, and always endeavored, says the Green Bag, to smooth over any slight differences between persons brought before him.

On one occasion, when the charge was for technical assault, it came out in the course of evidence that the parties were neighbors, and had formerly been on the best of terms.

"It is a pity," the judge said, persuasively, "that old friends, as you seem to have been, should appear before me in such a way. Surely this is a case which might be settled out of court."

"It can't be done, judge," answered the plaintiff, seriously. "I thought of that myself, but the coward won't fight."



The Paramount Question.

If it is taken for granted that every citizen is interested in the discussion of the good roads question and the proposition that the Government of the United States shall co-operate with the States in highway construction and improvement. There are always political questions of importance, of course; but the question of good common roads is paramount to them all as an economic proposition, because it reaches all classes and callings in town and country. It is pregnant with interest to the consuming population of towns and cities, and to railroads, manufacturers and tradesmen as well. But the weightier consideration is, that church, school and farm interests must inevitably be retarded while road conditions remain as they are to-day. If the American home is to be preserved, the American farm must be fostered. The logic of this deduction will readily present itself. If ignorance is the parent of superstition and superstition shuts out the light from the soul that should be free, then the progress of civilization and the wholesome growth of the religion of the Lord depends upon the universal spread of education in the land. The higher schools and colleges are doing a grand work, but the free common schools are the more important, because they are the schools of the masses in which are laid the deep and lasting foundations for coming lives of usefulness and for the betterment of mankind. The common schools are the schools of the rural population. Whatever tends to better these schools, to make them stronger and of higher curriculum, to give greater efficiency and better discipline, and to make them easily accessible all the time, should be the concern of every patriotic citizen. Nothing can possibly conduce so much to these results as improved highways. Neither rural church or school, nor yet the farm, can flourish where impassable roads abound, and if these cannot flourish our free institutions will soon or late topple and fall. The question of national aid to good roads is one the Government cannot afford to ignore much longer. The necessity for it is so apparent that it is without the domain of controversy. Statesmen and philosophers know that good roads develop good people. Improvement of highways means not only advancement of commercial interests, but also moral welfare. The highways are the paths along which civilization and development move.

Wide Tires.

One of the means of improving the condition of the highways which is of importance, but generally disregarded, is the use of wide tires on drays and wagons carrying heavy loads. Such tires are of great value in rolling the surface of the road and avoiding the formation of ruts. The belief that increasing the width of the tire increases the draft probably arises from the fact that as a rule the increase in width of tire is accompanied by a decrease in the diameter of the wheel. Of course, diminishing the diameter of the wheel increases the draft, and increasing the diameter of the wheel diminishes the draft. The radius of the wheel constitutes the lever arm through which the power of the team acts to move the load. The shorter the lever the greater a power required to move the load.

Experiments invariably show the advantages of wide tires on good roads, both in the less power required than with narrow tires and in the beneficial effect upon the road. As to the effect of the width of the tire, where the diameter of the wheel remains the same, a trial was made where forty per cent. more power was required to draw a load on a wagon having one and one-half-inch tires than on a wagon having three-inch tires.

Many European countries have laws regulating the width of tires. In Germany four-inch tires are required for heavy loads. In France the tires must be from three to ten inches, according to the load, and the front axle must be shorter than the rear axle to prevent "tracking." In Austria wagons carrying two and a quarter tons must have tires at least four and one-third inches wide, and every load over four and a half tons must be carried on tires six and one-fourth inches in width. Switzerland has similar regulations. In some sections of the United States laws have been enacted regulating the width of tires on wagons carrying heavy loads, but in many instances they are ignored.

There seems to be a general awakening upon the subject of improved roads throughout the country, and more liberal appropriations for this purpose should be made in the future than have been made in the past. On the contrary, however, at present roads once good are not being kept up as they should be. It will not improve the financial

condition if roads are not kept good to facilitate the marketing of produce. It is poor economy to let made roads fall into bad order, for it is an expensive matter taking them up again. However, this year is an exceptional time for tightness of cash, and a little patience must be exercised in the matter of roads. Along with a general improvement in road matters there should be developed a better appreciation of the importance and value of wide tires in road improvement, that laws may be made on the subject and gradually brought into force. The subject needs frequent and earnest discussion in order to secure this.—Journal Jamaica Agricultural Society.

Butter is Awfully Yellow in Springfield

Consumers of butter in this city may have noticed of late an unwonted golden hue in the color of that delectable article. It has the true yellow praised by the pastoral poet from the earliest ages. A dealer accounts for this by stating that this year all over western Massachusetts and Vermont the dandelions have been more plentiful than for many years. The cows in their herding consume a quantity of these, to the end that their milk is affected, and consequently the butter. As the dandelion crop passes the butter will regain a less brilliant color. A less poetic dealer says that the rich appearance is probably due in a greater use of coloring matter by the dairymen.—Springfield Republican.

Clock to Run 30,000 Years.

The Hon. H. G. Strutt, of England, has invented what is the closest approach to perpetual motion yet devised. It is a clock that will run for 30,000 years, unless the wear of some of its parts destroys it before that time. One-twelfth of a grain of radium is hung over a small electroscope, made of two thin strips of silver. These, charged with electricity emanating from the radium, move apart, touch the sides of the vacuum tube in which they are fixed, transfer their charge to an aluminum wire (thus ringing a bell) are discharged, fall together again, and then apart again, and so on for the 30,000 years or so already mentioned.—New York World.

The Oldest Indian.

Switchley Lowery, a full blooded Cherokee, perhaps the oldest Indian in the five nations, died recently at his home, on Lowery Prairie, fifteen miles north of Tahlequah.

He was one of the original emigrants from the southeastern States, but his full sojourn in the West is not exactly known. He has probably been here 100 years.

Several generations have sprung from him, who lived in different parts of the nation, and are and have been good citizens. Mr. Lowery had a good name among his neighbors and everywhere he was known, having the respect and confidence of all.—Tahlequah Leader.

Duration of Digestion.

The times of digestion of different foods are about as follows on an average: Milk, rice, about an hour or less; whipped eggs, barley soup, salmon, trout, about 1½ hours; peas and flesh, about 2 hours or more; sago, 1½ hours; barley, boiled milk, raw eggs, cabbage with vinegar, soup with fat and bread, about 2 hours; raw milk (Richet), baked eggs, ox liver, 2½ hours; lamb, beans, potatoes, cabbage hash, 2½ hours; boiled eggs, beefsteak, white bread, ham, beef, fish, mutton, 3 hours; pork, poultry, veal, brown bread, 4 hours; salt pork, hard-boiled eggs, 5 hours.—Russell's Strength and Diet.

A New Social Experiment.

A new social experiment was tried in New York the other day and apparently met with success. The bride of a large wedding did not live in that city. Her very conservative family, which has lived for years in a home on the Hudson, shuddered at the idea of a wedding reception in a restaurant. It happened that a house on Fifth Avenue owned by a friend of the family was for rent. It was completely furnished. So it was rented for the day and there the wedding reception was held in the ex-squisiteness of a handsome home which might have belonged to the family.—Philadelphia Record.

Woman Slew Two Blacksnakes.

Mrs. Michael Lookabaugh, living at the foot of the mountain below Ben-Mar, had a desperate encounter with a pair of blacksnakes in the cellar of her home.

She suddenly came upon the snakes crawling on the floor. Going into the yard she procured a hoe and returning to the cellar attacked the reptiles. After a sharp fight Mrs. Lookabaugh despatched both of the snakes. They were unusually large, one measuring seven feet and the other one six and a half feet in length.—Hagerstown correspondence Baltimore Herald.

Bride's Strange Appeal.

The following advertisement appeared in the London Morning Post: "Will a wealthy and kind-hearted lady assist a poor lady who is engaged to be married in the middle of this month? Her father, a professional man, old, but of very limited means, is required towards a plain wedding trousseau. Particulars if desired.—Address B. M., 06300, Morning Post Office, Strand, W. C."