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THE TOWNBREDS and THEIR COUNTRY PLACE

By Edward Riddle Padgett.

WINTER

WHEN the Townbreds awoke the other Sunday morning at Five Oaks, the ground was covered with a good four inches of snow. White and sparkling in the clear sunlight, it stretched over hill and vale, an unbroken carpet of spotless sheen, as far as the eye could see.

"Our first snow!" cried Mrs. Townbred gaily.

"Um-m-m-h!" grunted Mr. Townbred, vastly more interested in locating his warm bath-robe and hurrying into the next room where John, the hired man, had already built a roaring fire.

But Mrs. Townbred walked to the window and looked out.

"My!" she called with enthusiasm, "it is simply beautiful! Come and see, Ruthvin. Why, people who live in the city don't know what a real snow storm looks like!"

Mr. Townbred, however, seemed perfectly willing to take her word for it—at least until he had thawed out before the tight little drum-stove and donned his clothes. Yet the moment he got downstairs something seemed to be calling him out-of-doors. So he opened the door and stepped out on the porch.

It was cold, but a clear, clean, dry cold such as, somehow, one seems never to find in a city. And the whole countryside was ablaze with the sparkle of sunlight on crusted snow-drifts.

"By George!" he exclaimed pres-

ently. "Some snow—this is the life! And he took a turn or two up and down the porch; so, when Virgie announced breakfast was ready he needed no second call.

Now, always, it had been Mr. Townbred's custom on a Sunday morning immediately after breakfast to, as Mrs. Townbred phrased it, "bury his nose in the Sunday papers"—and woe betide anyone who dared interrupt! Yet, this morning, he really shocked her by suggesting:

"Let's take a walk, Frieda—it's too fine a morning to stay in the house!"

"Yes, indeed!" she replied instantly. "I've been wanting to ever since I first peeped out the window; but I was afraid you'd want to read your old papers."

Mr. Townbred smiled. "Now that's a funny thing, you know," he said. "In the city, on this kind of a morning, I admit that you couldn't drag me out and away from my papers and my pipe with a forty-foot pole. One look out the window and it would be indoors for mine! But here in the country—well, there's something in the air, isn't there, Frieda? Come on—put on old clothes and your high boots and we'll make a regular tramp of it!"

And presently the Townbreds were swinging off down the road kicking their toes in the snow-drifts and skipping along like two kids. Gene, their collie dog, came bounding after them barking loudly and insisting that he be allowed to go.

"Come on, Gene, come on, old fel-

low!" cried Mr. Townbred gaily. "I guess this is your first real snow, too!"

Down the winding road, almost unrecognizable in its new dress, they went, past their own boundary fence and that of their neighbor and then still on to where a "back road" branched off from the pike.

"Let's take this road," suggested Mrs. Townbred, her eyes sparkling and her cheeks aglow with a red that could never, never have come out of a box. "We can circle round past Mr. Cole's place, then on to the church at the cross-roads and then into Vienna and back to Five Oaks—it'll be about six miles in all. I've driven it often and—but maybe that'll be too long for you, Ruthvin?"

"Too long?" he exclaimed. "Well, where did you get that idea, Frieda? I admit that when we lived in the city a walk to the cigar-store at the corner was something of an undertaking on a morning like this; but out here—well—why, I feel that I could walk to the city and back!"

And then, hand in hand, they skipped along, laughing, while Gene kept pace barking and thrashing about in the snow as though he thoroughly understood and felt just that way him-

self. "I can beat you to the big stump down there!" cried Mr. Townbred suddenly, pointing down the road.

"You can not!" And, instantly, Mrs. Townbred was off.

Gene was the first to arrive, then Mrs. Townbred, and last came Mr. Townbred, just far enough behind to lose with honor. They paused for breath and laughter and then continued their tramp.

"You know, Frieda," said Mr. Townbred presently, "I'm beginning to think the people who say that the real time to live in the country is in the winter are right. Of course we haven't the many conveniences of the city, but there certainly are a lot of things that make up for them. The

fellows at the office delight in kidding me about being in the country at this time of the year—and ask me if a steam-heated—electric-lighted apartment doesn't look mighty good to me.

"But—well—we've certainly been warm and comfortable so far, haven't we? And I can just see people sloshing around in the slush this morning in the city and growling about the street-cleaning department not being on the job and—look, did you see that rabbit! He just flew across the road, right in front of us!"

Presently they met up with Mr. Cole who was plodding along on an old but sure-footed horse. He stopped and chatted a while and arranged to bring over another barrel of his best Winesaps by the middle of the week. And he told them of a "Neighborhood Social" which was to be held the following Friday evening at the School House for the benefit of the school fund to put in a furnace instead of the faithful old stoves. The Townbreds were interested and promised to come.

Then, a little farther down the road, they met the Wilkinsons, who were gliding merrily along in a double-sleigh, with bells jangling and their

After a while poor Gene found that while his spirit was perfectly willing his flesh was a little weak; so he, too, was piled into the sleigh where he stood with his feet on the dash-board looking down, fascinated, by the rhythmic up-and-down—plop-plop-plop of the old black horse's hind feet as they did their duty.

"Whew!" breathed Mr. Townbred. "Some ride, wasn't it! And I sure do feel great—how long before dinner, Frieda?"

Mrs. Townbred laughed. "Dinner? Why I don't believe it's more than half-past ten o'clock. And do you remember, Ruthvin, how in the city I had to almost drag you to the dinner table? No wonder, the way you used to loiter around the flat on a Sunday morning and smoke and read yourself into a trance!"

Mr. Townbred laughed. "Yes, I guess you're right," he said. "We ought to do this every Sunday morning. It sure is great!"

Mrs. Townbred looked at him a moment, a roguish twinkle in her eye.



While Gene kept pace barking and thrashing about in the snow.

LITTLE FABLES OF THE BUSINESS WORLD

HIS FINISH WAS CERTAIN

HERE was once a certain Young Man who, after a while, started a certain Something—and his Finish was Certain. But that didn't make him one bit Mad; on the contrary, if it hadn't have turned out that way he felt certain he would have Done Something Desperate.

To begin with, he was a Likable Chap and Popular with the Boys, though he didn't Weigh Much with Skirts. Stack him up with a Bunch of Good Fellows, however, and it was a Different Story. From Soup to Nuts he was there With the Punch. And he was At Home in any Sport, indoors or out. No Moss grew on him, and the Boys could always Count him in at billiards, a "sitting," or at a Talk-Fest where the phrase most frequently heard was "Make mine the same, Fritz."

Once in a while, when he just couldn't Dodge, he'd go to a Party. But he'd spend most of the Evening talking to the Chaperones. As a Fuser he was a fine Extra Man. He enjoyed the New Dances, when Other People were Doing Them. His idea of a Bum Theatre Party was to have a couple of Debutantes along—to have to Talk to between the Acts and so prevent his Going Out for a Drag at a Cigarette. And as for Calling upon a Damsel of an evening, why, he'd rather stay home and read last week's paper. Girls were just girls to him, and he'd heard of a guy named Cupid, but he'd never Met him.

Wherefor, when he was hit he was a regular Innocent Lamb about to be led to the Slaughter. He Fell For It Hard. Or, rather, for a certain Maid with eyes of Blue and hair of Gold and without any Red out of a box on her cheeks. Head over heels—and then all the way over again—was about the way in which he Tumbled into the pool of Romance.

His friends looked at him Anxiously. They couldn't Imagine what was Biting him. Billiards, a Seven-Handed Sitting, an evening at the Round Table with Fritz hovering about—nothing seemed to Entice him. They were Sure Puzzled, and they Begged him to see a Doctor.

He was—every night; though that Treatment seemed to make him Worse. Then, the Fellows Got Next. Also, they Got Sore. A shame! A Perfect Shame! To think such a Good Old Scout was Arguing with Slavery. So they Argued with him. But they might just as Well have been Tongue-Tied. Finally, they Gave him Up and began to Save Up for Presents.

Our Hero also Saved Up—for the wherewithal to purchase what was Symbol of Slavery. And when he had finally Corralled a hundred and fifty Plunks he stopped at a Fashionable Jewelry Counter and beamed like a Cherubim. The clerk was On the Job—and helped him pick the latest style in Symbols. Indeed, said clerk seemed to consider it almost as Good News as though he himself had inherited

the Store.

The Maid was delighted—and Stuck out her Finger for him to Do the Rest. He did it—all the way through without a Hitch, clear up to the Wedding March and Rice and Old Shoes and Luggage appropriately Marked. Then they returned and Settled Down to Wedded Bliss.

They found it, too.

But, also, Our Hero presently Discovered a Few Things he hadn't Reckoned in as part of his Finish. To-wit:

Two may live as Cheaply as One—but there's an Awful Difference in the Style of Living.

When a Fellow Has to be at home with a certain Damsel every evening, it's not near as Fascinating as Fearing she'll have Another Engagement for even One Evening out of the week.

Though Men Friends may be merely Make-Shifts or actually in the Way and Doodly Uninteresting before marriage, they begin to Look Mighty Good Company as the Honeymoon Wanes.

A married woman wants her Husband to have lots of Men Friends, but she insists on Looking them Over and letting him see them in her Own Home and not out where any Fritz wants to know "What'll you have, gentlemen?"

After marriage a Chap doesn't have any Harder life than he did before—it just Seems Harder. He's really Better Off and Happier, but he doesn't want to Admit It All the Time.

While he wouldn't be Single again for anything, it's a question whether Anything would induce him to, etc., if he Again were Single.

Though he is by no means Finished, there are a whole lot of things which Dan Cupid finishes for him!

Moral:—Not every marriage Turns Out this Way—sometimes they're Worse!



Helped Him Pick the Latest Style in Symbols.

REASONABLE FOOTINGS

THE pantalette which it was frequently predicted no sensible woman would wear is now patronized by all sorts and conditions of the fair sex, sensible and nonsensical. And sometimes when it is so arranged as to look like a narrow underskirt and is trimmed to harmonize with the gown with which it is worn, it is more attractive than you might think.

A regular blessing to women is the wash kid glove which not only really can be laundered but can be worn after that process has taken place. These hand-coverings once appeared only in the tan shades but now they may be had in white also, and better still in white with black stitching.

No matter how short the skirt to an evening gown may be in front, it is considered quite the height to wear a long, narrow, serpentine train with it.

Occasionally this train is made of a single width of sash ribbon, when it is more unique than beautiful.

But it gives that much-to-be-dreaded long back line.

To render it even higher than it is naturally, and even more difficult to see over, the fur collar of the day has a white frill edging it, a becoming touch and advantageous to the throat specialists.

Among the absurdities of the season is a gown the skirt of which is of chiffon, the jacket of ermine.

Who said that parti-colored boots would not be worn this winter? Why the combinations are more remarkable than ever before; as, boots of black kid with large white buttons, piping of white kid and white heels—a blackbird combination more startling than red and yellow.