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LOCAL NEWS.

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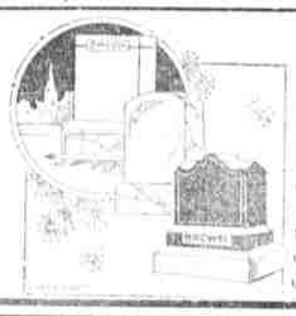

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SWAPPED WIVES

By MARY GANSEVOORT

Two family houses are very common nowadays. They are inexpensive, and everything inexpensive finds a ready demand. In a two family house in B. Mr. and Mrs. Kirby lived on the second floor and Mr. and Mrs. Axhalter on the first floor. Cheap things are apt to be expensive in the end, and it was so with this two family house. Mrs. Kirby became infatuated with Mr. Axhalter and Mr. Kirby with Mrs. Axhalter. Living under the same roof, there was plenty of chance for one of the men to meet the wife of the other clandestinely, and both couples were playing the same game.

There wasn't any trouble about the matter. Why should there be, since all were satisfied to swap partners? But the expense! Two single houses would have cost 50 per cent more, but the divorces cost 100 per cent more. Besides, there were two new trousseaux, two weddings involving carriages, wedding breakfasts and the parson's fees. Would it not have been better had each couple taken a single house?

Unfortunately the leases ran for two years, and the new weddings occurred within one. It would be a pity to lose one year's rent on account of an embarassing proximity between two couples who had swapped partners, especially when there was no embarrassment. So the first Mrs. Kirby, having become Mrs. Axhalter, went to live downstairs, and the first Mrs. Axhalter, having become Mrs. Kirby, went to live upstairs. Everybody in the neighborhood said: "How practical and how sensible! All has been done pleasantly. Of all quarrels family quarrels are the worst."

It so happened that Mr. and Mrs. Kirby went on a journey, and while they were gone Mr. Kirby died. Meanwhile Mr. Axhalter died too. The disconsolate widows met in the hall. That's a part of a two family house which persons who have never tried them don't consider. The occupants are always meeting in the hall.

"Well," said Mrs. Kirby—ante Axhalter—"Tom has gone, I hear."

"Yes," said Mrs. Axhalter—ante Kirby, "and Jim, too, poor man!" She wiped away a tear.

"They were two very good men."

"Very good. They were two very good husbands to me, both of 'em."

"And I have no complaint to make of either. My first husband was very obliging in some things and my second in other things."

"Both my husbands were good in all things," said Mrs. Axhalter, heaving a deep sigh.

"H'm! Did you find Axhalter always liberal with the cash?"

"Indeed I did! But it depends upon what you call liberal. Anyway, I didn't have to go through his pockets when he was asleep."

"Who told you that?"

"Told me what?"

"That to get money I had to go through his pockets when he was my husband. Anyway, I didn't give him any curtain lectures when he came home late nights."

"And who told you that?"

"A little bird whispered it into my ear."

"Did Kirby tell you I gave him curtain lectures?"

"Did Axhalter say I went through his pockets?"

The horns were locked; neither could move. So the only thing they could do was to unlock and begin over again.

"I'd like you to tell me, Mrs. Kirby," said Mrs. Axhalter, "which of your husbands you liked best."

"Well, as a man who had been influenced by some one else I think sometimes Kirby was the best man I ever knew. Then, again, I think Axhalter was even better than he."

"What do you mean by influenced by any one else?"

"Well, you know, Mrs. Axhalter, that a man after he has been married isn't the same as he was before."

"Do you mean that he has deteriorated?" asked Mrs. Axhalter, looking at her wife-in-law severely.

"I mean that if a man has lived with a woman who has nagged at him he grows irritable."

"I noticed that my second husband was sometimes a bit grouchy."

"You did, did you? Maybe it was getting used to new conditions."

Again the horns were locked. Again the two ladies backed away from each other. But only in an argumentative sense.

"Are you going to have your mourning dresses cut bobbie?" asked Mrs. Axhalter.

"Not to the extreme," replied Mrs. Kirby.

"I'm puzzled about my hats. I don't see how I can get a widow's cap to show under 'em, the brims are so big."

"And the veil? How are we to manage that?"

"They don't wear those long black veils any more."

"I'm so glad. What are you going to do about collars and cuffs?"

"I haven't decided. Come up to my floor and we'll talk it over."

"Come into mine."

"It doesn't make any difference now which door we go to—we're at home on both."

They stood in the hall and talked. Oh, happy day that they had found a topic on which they could converse with their former friendliness!

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