

JOHN'S WIFE.

Whatever possessed brother John to go up to the city and marry that little yellow-haired, blue-eyed bit of a school girl, when he could have just had his pick of girls nearer home, was something I never could understand. There was Lida Handscombe, just dead in love with him, as anybody could see, and the best bread-maker in the whole country, besides taking prizes at the State fair for pickles and jellies, and ever so much better looking, too, than Myra. No yellow bangs over her eyes; she just combed her hair back off her face and did it up in a hard knot that staid. She sent John a birthday cake, and knit him a comforter, and everybody thought it would be a match, but John said he didn't like her eyes; they were handsome eyes to my idea, and could look you through and through, they were that clear and bright; but did you ever know a man to take advice? "Marry that ferret," said John; "and never have any peace in my life; well I guess not!" and with that off he goes to town and telegraphs back, "expect me and my wife." Dear! such a shock as it gave me, and our spring cleaning not done, and the minister coming to board with us while his wife went home on a visit—it was a trial, you may be sure!

And when she did come, it was more like having a wax doll in the way than anything else, with her big wondering eyes, and childish ways and silly questions, and hanging on John's arm, and leaning over John's chair, with two little insignificant feet in the rung at the back; and her clothes! Such fallals, just like a doll's rigging; and I just set my foot down that if she was to live with us she must conform to our ways. I hadn't been 40 years in this world for nothing. If she wanted to wear fine white laces and ruffled aprons, she had to wash and iron them herself. I wouldn't be her slave. And such silly questions as she asked, they just made me sick!

"Were there any dear little yellow chicks?"

Dear little yellow chicks, indeed! they were dear enough before we raised them and got their heads off, and had them ready for market, and if that silly child didn't sit down and cry because they were killed; and she had named every one of them and watched them grow up. And she our John's wife! bah! Then she did the silliest thing of all; went and bought a book called, "What I Know About Farming," and used to sit out under a tree, studying it by the hour, and one night when she went down to the bars to meet John, I heard her ask: "John, why don't you get a washing machine and a wringer, and save your own flesh and blood? Look at the blisters on my hands!"

And the next thing it was the talk of the neighborhood that we Elliotts, who had set our faces against modern improvements, had given out before that little pale-faced thing, and not only got a wringer and washer in our kitchen, but several hundred dollars' worth of farm machinery at work. John said he could afford it, but I spoke my mind and told her what I thought of it after he went out to his work. She looked kind of frightened and pretended she was going to cry, and then she spoke up quick like and said:

"Sister Janet, it's a triumph of mind over matter. You can wash now and not be all tired out, and sick and nervous, and—and—then—John can afford it!"

Perhaps if I had known that she had paid for it all, and it hadn't cost John a cent, I might have been more forgiving, but I just straightened up and said:

"Mrs. Elliott, you may go on and ruin your husband with your boarding-school ideas, but, as for me, I'll never touch the things. I can work, thank goodness, while I've got my health. I wasn't brought up in idleness."

She never took it to heart a bit; the next thing I knew she was at a little parlor organ she had, singing and playing as if that was all there was in life.

And that silly old minister—men never do

have a bit of sense, but you expect more of a minister of the gospel—but he just sat and talked to her as if she was a companion for him, and they walked about the fields, and staid down where John was working, and all around 'em souls a perishing, for want of the bread of life; such a sinful waste of time I never saw!

"Janet, do you love the hills?" she said to me one day when I was scouring the knives outside the door. She had offered to do them for me, but law, her white hands were not fit for anything so useful.

"Love the hills! Well, I'd like to know what there is to love about them. I guess if you climbed them a spell you wouldn't love 'em much."

"They're so high and grand," she said, looking up at them; "They seem so near the cool, far-off heaven! I love to climb to the top and drink in the sweet, fresh air; it does me good here—here."

She laid her hand on her heart, and stood looking off with a strange expression on her face, and I thought maybe she was homesick and told her to go in and cut some carpet rags, and sew 'em together, and would you believe it, she up and refused.

"No!" she said, "I cannot cut any carpet rags. I hate them."

I never saw her so excited ever before. "A fine temper you have," was all the answer I made her, but I never felt so insulted in all my life.

For a week or two I didn't see much of her; she was either out with John, "sketching," as she called it, dabbling away with some bits of pasteboard with a lead pencil; or up in her room where I never went. She came down, singing away, with a large package in her hand, and soon John came up with the ponies, and they drove off to town together, laughing like two children. I hope none of the neighbors noticed them. Anyway, they never saw him conduct himself in that way with me.

When they came home she was all tired out, and they had a big roll of some stuff they dumped down in the entry.

"It's something for you, Janet," she said, laughing hysterical-like. "Its carpet-rags."

I unrolled it, and there were 20 yards of bright ingrain carpet!

"Myra," said I, "this is wicked extravagance," for I knew her money was all laid out.

"But it isn't," she said, laughing; "I earned it myself by drawing and painting those bits of sketches. I sold them all and can sell all I can do. That was my way of cutting carpet-rags."

Well, I put the carpet down, and it did look pretty—though I didn't say so. It isn't my way to spoil anybody with flattery, and I saw John's wife was getting the upper hand too fast. The neighbors were beginning to notice her, and that foolish old minister, when his wife came back, had been over there; and she led the singing in the church, and pretended she had got religion, and all the time she never scrubbed a floor, or washed a dish, or put her hand to the churn.

"John can afford to keep hired help," she said to me one day. "and I am not very strong, and my mother died of consumption." Then she began to cry like a baby, and John came in and looked at me as if it was my doing.

I must say she could succeed in doing all sorts of useless things—raising flowers in every nook and corner, making pets of all animals, and painting, or playing on the organ. She was real ornamental, and I suppose some folks thought her pretty. John did for one. I don't know that she made me much work, either. She did her own washing, as long as John would let her, and kept her room neat enough, though it was mostly littered up with flowers and birds and her sketches, and at first she sung from morning till night, and she did have a real lovely voice, I'll allow that, but after a while she didn't sing and didn't talk much, and then John began taking her meals up to her. The first time I saw him getting a tray ready, I said:

"It's a good thing you were brought up to be handy, John, seeing you've got an invalid

He didn't say anything then, but a few days afterward he came to me and said:

"Janet, get a girl as soon as you can, and let Aunt Betsy come over and stay with Myra, she is nervous and low-spirited, and needs company."

Well, I suppose you've guessed the upshot of it all; a little daughter was born to John and it seemed to me that a miracle was worked in the house. Perhaps I had never loved John's wife—she was so different in her ways from me—but when I heard that baby cry I felt thrilled to my very soul, and I just threw my work apron over my head and cried for the first time in years.

Myra didn't get strong, and the days went on and still she didn't get up, and I felt as if it was my duty to go and tell her that she mustn't favor herself that way, that she couldn't lie abed and let strangers take care of her child, and that she'd never get strong till she got out, but I made up my mind to speak in a gentler sort of a way. I had been thinking it over and about concluded to let Myra live her own way and not try to make her over, especially since John seemed well satisfied with her, and I went up-stairs and opened the door softly and stepped inside. John was standing at the window looking out at the setting sun—it was all red and gold, and the room was in a flame; he turned as I came in, and the tears were rolling down his cheeks. I never saw John cry before since he was a grown man!

"What is it?" I whispered, going up close to him.

He made a motion with the back of his head towards the bed. I went over there. Aunt Betsy was in a rocker by the side of it reading the bible. Myra was looking at the sun set, then at her baby's sleeping face. I'm not dull to see things, and I saw there what made my heart turn cold—it was the valley of the shadow of death!

That all happened years, years ago. There is a simple rustic cross up in the graveyard with "Myra" carved on it, and little Myra and I go up there every Sunday and carry flowers to decorate it, and the dear child sits in my lap and puts her blessed little arms about my neck and whispers: "Aunty, talk about my mamma in Heaven," and I tell how patient and gentle she was and how she sung and played, and how she shall do the very same thing some day—for I know now, that flowers are as necessary to God's creation as the wood and grain, and the least little thing that makes sunshine in the world is of great value in the dark places, and I feel sure, when I look up to the hills she loved, that Myra has reached far-off Heaven before me. Perhaps, she will intercede for me there.

WHAT WE EAT.—Prof. Leidy, in a communication to the *Philadelphia Ledger* of April 9th, on the subject of "Trichinae, Disease Germs," etc., gives, as appropriate to the subject, the following: "Some years ago, while in Charleston, S. C., at an entertainment, among other dishes served was one of the tail of a drum fish, in nicely browned slices. The writer was helped to a piece, said to be particularly gelatinous and delicate. These qualities seemed to depend on a jelly-like substance imbedded in the flesh. Curious to know its meaning, the next day a drum fish was procured from the market, and on dissection of the tail, it was found to be due to a huge parasitic worm, coiled into a mass nearly as large as a hen's egg." Prof. Leidy was the first to discover the trichinae parasite in the hog, which discovery he announced in 1846. He discovered it in some meat upon a portion of which he had dined. His attention was attracted to a curious looking minute spot which he saw upon a slice of meat upon his plate. He laid the meat one side, and a microscopic examination led to the important discovery. The discovery of the parasite in man was made by the English surgeon, Hilton, in 1833, and the worm was subsequently named by Owen.