

BETSEY REMINGTON'S QUILTING.

BY VIRGINIA T. SMITH.

The huge outside doors of the great Remington farm-house stood wide open to the morning sun. Motherly lilacs looked cheerfully in at the open windows, and armies of apple blossoms sent in the compliments of the season on the freshest breath of the day.

The woman element in the Remington household was the masterful one. There lived no one for miles around who did not know the Widow Remington. She was a woman guileless of poetry or idealty, but so rounded and compacted of thrift, forehandedness and faculty, that no one was more noted and quoted or commanded more esteem than she.

When Betsey, her only daughter, was "turned of three," she was started on the regular course of instruction at the "deestric" school hard by, said course including sewing, knitting, the marking of samplers, and the making of work pockets. At five years old, and when Miss Sally Nash, the teacher, had been twice invited to tea, in order that the matter should be fully considered, it was duly decided that Betsey should begin a bed quilt, and that the "butterfly fashion" was, on the whole, the pattern best adapted to her youth and her mother's materials.

Pretty Betsey Remington was now eighteen and mistress of her needle, as a squad of comforters and quilts gathered in her closet, as the result of her handwork, could attest. However, her baby attempt had lain in blocks, as she had left it, and had been shown to the Remington relations far and wide as "our Betsey's first work."

Now it had been put together, and to-morrow was to be quilted, and in the preparation of the festal supper that would follow the household were earnestly engaged.

To one unfamiliar with the thrifty simplicity and the toothsome dishes of the olden time, it is impossible to describe the results of those early morning hours, or the odors peculiar to them that rose up and made sweet savor before the makers of the feast.

Mother Remington, in short gown and stuff petticoat, with sleeves tucked well above the elbow, stood on the broad stone hearth, stirring the crisp potatoes in the long-handled frying pan and slowly turning the rotary gridiron on which a steak was broiling over the coals.

"Come, Jim, whip up yer forrard horses," said she to her son, who at that moment came in with a hat full of eggs, and two wet and discouraged little ducklings in an old tin pail, knocking each other down in their trembling efforts to stand on their feet.

"I'm on hand, mother, like a basket of chips," said the boy, setting down his load, and taking a hasty but severe scrub from the old tin basin at the back door. "A feller's got to ketch a bite as he can get it, when the women folks want anything in this house."

The food, being now securely harvested on dish and platter, was set before him, smoking hot. After a hearty meal, the boy arose from the table and slowly wiped his mouth on his jacket sleeve, and, leaning on the back of his chair, watched his mother, who swept with heavy tread from buttery to store-room, gathering a variety of things on one end of the kitchen table, which she was packing into a hamper.

"Run, Jim, and bring me that piece o' fresh meat in the little tin pail in the well, and haul up the butter-box quicker."

"Mother, who's goin' to git all them things, anyhow?" said Jim, as returning he placed the dripping pail and box before her on the table.

"Well, give ear now, for I hain't no time to talk twice. Stop to old Miss Buckley's and give her this roll o' butter, and tell her it's the rust real out-and-out grass churnin' I've had this Spring; then go on to Widder Jones's and leave this batch o' sparrow-grass and this piece o' roast and that rhubarb pie—and git away, for conscience' sake, afore she has time to think where it come from. I'd ruther be whipt than to hear her talk it all over to the Dorcas or the prayer meetin', with the hull kit and boodle on 'em hearin' on her. I 'low the Widder Jones is a good neighbor, but she does hang on like a no-easter, and her tongue runs like a mill clack. Come now, Jim, make tracks."

Jim shook the hay seed from his hat, grasped the hamper and started for the wagon-house, but was not destined to rest forth so easily.

"Jim! Jim Remin'ton! where be your ears?" Jim was tucking a well-worn buffalo over his ample load, and, without looking up, shouted:

"They're hitched on all right, mother. Go ahead!"

"There's a lot o' arrants I 'tended to send by yer. Go round by Jim Busley's and tell him he can hoop my barrels any day and bring me up six more bee hives; and ask Joe Slater to come after the fast rain and plough the Doole's lot, and then go on to the store. I'm usin' up purty close to-day. Tell Wells to send me two pounds of his best store candles—my last dippin' runs so they'd be sure to grease the quilt; a dozen sticks, well, maybe a matter of a pound of cinnamon, an ounce o' nutmeg, six good juicy lemons, half a pound of his best Hyson, and my yaller box full o' sugar."

"Good land a Goshen, mother, haul out yer quilt and figger 'em down."

"My hands ain't fit—no more be yer Aunt Polly's, she nussin' yer ducks—and Betsey's as busy as a bee in a punkin blow. Come home around by Squire Lyons' and ask Miss Viney, the housekeeper, to change that estin' o' eggs with me, and tell the squire—raisin' her voice—that

Betsey's quilting comes off to-morrow and she'll be desprit disappointed if he and Enoch don't come round to tea and help us to shake the quilt in the evenin'."

"Oh! Mother Remington," said Betsey, looking up with a disturbed face from the fine tablecloth she was ironing. "You know I don't want them, at least I don't care about their coming."

"Betsey, child, don't be a foolin' with good fortun'," said Mrs. Remington. "I've told yer pa a thousand times when he was a livin' that you was jest like him. Now that high-headed o' yours is a real Remin'ton streak. What in posset be you goin' to say to folks; that's as good as any other noticement fur'tino."

Betsey deposited her iron at the fire with a will, and, with her sweet face somewhat discomposed, ran to the door, and leaning far out and speaking in an under-tone, said:

"Jim, ask them at the store if the letters have come this week, and be sure to save a nippence to pay the postage, and then stop at Eliza Moses' and tell her I shall expect her real early, and ask her to wear her rob-roy shawl. I want mother to see it."

"Rob what?" shouted Jim. "I can't tackle all yer women's names and notions."

And the little old pony, obeying the word of command, started forward with good courage, and the rest of the sentence was lost in the crunching of clam shells under the wheels of the lumber wagon.

"Who under the sun be you expectin' a letter from?" said Mrs. Remington, reaching out to close a blind, and gazing steadily into the girl's face.

Betsey dropped her dark eyes on to her calico vandyke with most perceptible confusion.

"Aunt Becky might possibly write to say she is coming over with the girls to-morrow."

"Write! Your Aunt Becky write a letter? She might-a writ if she'd had a vision of the day o' demption, but nothin' less would 'r'ist her to that pitch. Betsey, be yer senses clean gone?"

"My senses are not at all bewildered, mother, and I am not going to be afraid to tell you that I hoped I might hear from Henry Creighton; and a gleam of honest defiance darted from the full brown eyes.

"Tee dimon, tee dee! I say for't, ain't you never goin' to git over the foolish nonsense you showed for that schoolmaster?" pursued her mother, with great asperity. "I've talked myself hoarse and blind about it. I should think you'd see—"

But at this instant Mother Remington's quick eye caught signs of over-rising in biscuits, doughnuts, loaf cake. Quickly conveying the two former to a cooler locality, she lifted a huge pan of cake, risen to overflowing, to the table, and both hands were quickly employed in its "working over."

"Betsey," she continued, "your contrariness will ruin you. Poverty, shiftlessness and book-larnin', it seems to me, are chains that cling closer than a brother to that meechin' kind of individual—a teachin' man. How ken you take up with such a chance and give Squire Lyons' son, Enoch, the go-by? I'll venture what you dare he'll make as good a provider as you'll find in all the country round. Why, you'd oughter seen what a husband his pa, the old squire, made his ma, she that was Mahaly Price. Why, she had a real peg and fillet for her forehead, and no other woman in the town wore the bunnit ribbon she did."

"I don't see how they could," said Betsey, mischievously.

Mrs. Remington, taking no notice of this remark, pursued the subject to its end.

"The squire made nothin' o' payin' two and sixpence, or even three and nippence a yard for 'em. I can't doubt it, for Harri's Eno tailored there year after year, and she told me. She had a real sale carpet for her front room, a hull chiny set o' 'flavin' blue' for her table, a poxy bed set out each side of her front door, and a chaise to ride out in, let alone her saddle and pillion."

"I shan't meddle with them, mother," said Betsey, provokingly. "I think Enoch will need them all to help him settle in life."

"Well, you mark my word, Betsey Remington. I wouldn't give a four-penny sappeney towards supporting any man that didn't pretend to know how to farm, and was cracked on grammar."

"I wouldn't argue no longer," said mild, peace-loving Aunt Polly, who had just given the finishing touch and polish to the pewter plates and dishes that had adorned the dresser, and now sat meekly rubbing the silver spoons.

It was easy to see, although she had remained silent during this entire episode, where her feelings were, from an occasional beaming and compassionate look directed over her spectacles at Betsey.

"You know, sister Hetty," she continued, "the good Book says the greatest of all virtues is charity."

"I don't want none of your blind passages throwed up to me. I never see nothin' in my Bible that sot a premium fair and square on shiftlessness, and I don't want my child brought up to think so, either; but you'll beat round the bush to make it right for her from now till doomsday. A saint would grow lawless with you to read his futur' for him. Betsey must know the real gine-wine truth of livin' and I shall see to it that she does," she added, as she set the cake tins, now filled with the delicious compound, on the broad mantel-piece in readiness for the oven, and, lighting a candle, went with emphasis in her tread down the cellar stairs.

Betsey had pressed the last fold into the handsome home-made damask, and opened a drawer near Aunt Polly to deposit the ironing sheet and holder, giving her the while such a woeful glance as greatly touched the old lady, who was fain to comfort her.

"Don't say too much," she murmured; "your ma's as sot as a stun boat and as quick as rate day. Only be patient, and it all may turn out better'n you think."

Betsey's determined little face grew scarlet even to her hair; and hearing her mother's returning footsteps, she fitted into the buttery to avoid her searching gaze.

Widow Remington's buttery was of the ideal New England order. Scoured shelves; spotless and white; rows of milk pans, in which the cream had set in rich yellow folds; a host of jugs and jars ranged under the lower shelf; the cookey crock; the artichoke and cucumber keg; the pickled peppers; the round of dried beef; the high shelf of cheeses, flanked at one end with honey and the other with jelly and preserves, and the handy and humble corner for cold victuals.

As Mrs. Remington came in and deposited the pitcher of currant wine for the pies in progress, Betsey stood at the cupboard at its far end, apparently absorbed in reviewing and wiping the china plates, while her thoughts went wandering out

into the unknown world in search of a beloved form and face.

And so the long morning went by in the pleasant, thrifty kitchen till the household affairs reached a most happy climax. The kitchen was sweet with straying odors, and the ease of the culinary compounding was something wonderful to witness. There was no touch in New England cookery unknown to Mother Remington, and she managed the situation like one to the manor born.

"Tury, Ketury," called Mrs. Remington, without stopping her beating of eggs, to a little girl sporting with Rover in the door-yard. "See if 'Ratio is out to the corn-house, and tell him to come and clear the oven out for me. By the time he's swept it out I shall be ready to set in. Tell him to bring along the oven broom. Pick up your sun-bonnet; don't let Rover chaw it into flinders. Here's a bunch o' raisins and a piece o' cake for ye. I'll hand it through the pantry winder."

"Certain it does beat all, how Hetty takes to that child," soliloquized Aunt Polly, as she hung the silver-cloths to dry on the stoop. "No wonder poor Roxy Harris died easy when she'd lodged her little gal with Hetty. She never humored one o' her'n so, nor thought o' lettin' anybody else. I can see that sister Remington falls every day."

"Betsey," called her mother, "I've sot in, and shall leave the cleanin' up for you to look after, while I watch the baking. Bring down my best gingham and get me my broad white linen apron, and bring 'em to my bed-room, while I'm slickin' up, and get my spectacles out of the stand drawer, and lay the weekly paper along with 'em. You'll find it under the pillar to the settle. I hev to hide it [apologetically]; if I don't it's all read to pieces afore I get to it."

Betsey dutifully supplied her mother's wants; and, as if to conciliate her, Mrs. Remington said: "You're a good girl, Betsey; but it's my bounden duty to keep yer from flyin' up into the face of Providence. Girls need a sight o' admonishin'."

In an incredibly short time after the dishes were all in place, and 'Ratio's wife, living near, came in to do her accustomed part, and the white pine floor was scoured and sanded to a high degree of excellence, when Betsey hung the kettle on for the restful cup of tea her mother so much enjoyed after her morning's work.

In her own little-room she made her simple toilet, smoothed her hair and fastened a clean white vandyke about her waist, its snowy ruffle circling her pretty throat, and tied on a clean apron, pausing as she did so to gaze for the twentieth time from the little south window down the road in the direction of store and post office.

At last the old horse came in sight. Well she knew his sober trotting and the faint rattle of the old one-horse wagon; but Jim was not alone, and whoever could be with him?

The old wagon rattled on into the yard past the window, and Betsey, with wide-open eyes and palpitating heart, realized who it was that had taken them so unawares. She came down stairs, rushed past Rover, who, stretched at length on the door-step, raised his head with a suspicious sniff, and in another moment found her hand clasped by Henry Creighton.

"Well," said Jim, as he threw the reins on the horse's back and stooped to unfasten the trace, "I hed so much business on hand I took in a pardner, but I be blowed, s' if I didn't forget about yer post office after all."

No need of apology. Jim could talk if he chose, but nobody heard him or cared what he said. They lingered a minute, and then walked slowly and in the most absorbed manner in the direction of the garden.

Jim's unpracticed eye followed them as he energetically stripped the harness from the horse and led him by the fore-top to the drinking trough. "I reckon that wasn't the kind o' mail she was worr'n over," he mused. "She seems tickled to death to see him. What do they want out there, I wonder? Nothin' there but lettis, rare ripes and green currants, and them not fit for pleekin'."

The low, swinging, blossomy boughs shut them from sight or sound. The little birds flitting about on the tree tops were too happy in their love and too busy in their life to notice them, and just exactly what he said, or how he said it, we can never know. Blissfully happy were their faces, however, as they turned back to the house, some half hour later, and sought Mother Remington in the kitchen. The wide swing-table was laden with the delicious cookery of the day, while the vacant oven and its open-door told the secret of the broken watch. The weekly had slipped from her hand, and Mother Remington was in the land of dream.

Very hurriedly she resumed her self-possession and listened to the young lover's full story, as with Betsey's hand in his he stood before her. There was a dignity and earnestness in his manner that compelled both attention and respect.

"Such good fortune has befallen me that I have come to talk it over with you," he said. "I have been offered a partnership in my Uncle Job's store, he to furnish capital, and I to relieve him in every way, by taking the care and responsibility of the business; in other words, he asks me to be a son to him. He is alone in the world, save me. I am now through studying, and Uncle Job wants a home in which we may live together. Now, I ask your gracious permission to take your daughter Betsey, whom I ardently do love, to make our home an earthly paradise. I have won her consent, and pray you will not refuse to make us happy."

Mother Remington wiped her eyes with one corner of her starched linen apron, rose from her chair, returned to it, and finally spoke.

"Young man, I owe you no ill will, and I know that Betsey loves you. I never ag'n in shall lay out to do this, or that, or t'other, 'cause in all human conceit it would not turn out as I 'tended to hev it. I give her to you fair and above board, knowin' that every hair in her blessed young hed is a honest one. She's been my little girl, and I give the heart out o' my body when I give her to you. Sorrier and loss comes fast enough in this world, and maybe it's the best way to scrape up and save what true love squeezes into it."

Aunt Polly's dear old eyes were dim with tears as she stroked her false front with one hand and gave Mrs. Remington the other, exclaiming:

"Now I'm proud of you, sister Hetty, for you speak the things which become sound doctrine."

"And now comes a hard point to settle," urged Henry. "My uncle is obliged to go out to his possessions in Holland Purchase, and will be absent some time. He is obliged to start from New York on Saturday of next week or wait the next conveyance, which will not leave in months. I must return to help him off and to assume his duties. The stage leaves to-morrow night at six. Must I go alone, or will you grant me my wife? Remember," he added, with quiet dignity, "that my courtship has been a long one."

No word was spoken to settle the matter, but Jim declared it a master stroke of economy that the quilting feast and the wedding supper should be one and the same.

When Betsey Remington sought her room that night, a glorious moon was silvering the silent earth, and as she sat by her window she tried to still the tumultuous beatings of her heart and to recall all the later events of the day. She went forecasting into the morrow, but could think of nothing with steadiness or quiet, in this first flush of her great rejoicing; but she smiled to herself and said:

"To think of our quilting being turned into our wedding day—Henry's and mine."—Egis and Gazette.

OBSTINACY VS. CHEEK.

The lightning-rod man has cheek infinite, as hath the Chicago drummer—so hath the brindle mule; but for cheek personified, glorified, magnificent, saith the rural editor, give us the patent medicine fiend— itinerating advertising agent.

For lo! he sendeth in a two-column advertisement, to run twelve months, with half-column local notices each week, and ten copies of paper mailed regularly each week to advertisers; and for all this, saith the agent, I will pay thee \$15, in chips and whet-stones. Now, the agent hath contracted to insert this advertisement in certain papers, at any price; but he maketh, in the fulness of his cheek, only this liberal offer. Now, the simple editor thinketh not of what the agent may have contracted, but groaneth in spirit, and sayeth fifteen dollars is better than nothing, and accepteth the offer. But the cunning editor is sharper, and sayeth, "I will wait and see," so he fleth away the offered contract in his waste basket, and answereth not unto it. And before many days the agent writeth the cunning editor again, and sayeth, "Behold! I will give thee \$25 00 for this service." But still the c. e. holdeth his peace.

And again the agent sendeth, and sayeth, "I will give thee even \$35 00;" for he must fulfill his agreement with his advertiser. Now understandeth the cunning editor the agent's little game, and sitteth down quickly and writeth unto the agent, "For \$150 00 cash, and no less, canst thou have the service of thy servant's newspaper." But cheek-regarded, not his communication, and offered again \$45 00, payable in Illinois mud ink. Now after many writings and much weariness the agent reacheth \$100 in his offering. And the cunning editor sayeth within himself, "It is enough, it is list rates," and accepteth quickly the contract. And he sayeth unto his friends, the simple editor, and unto the pilgrim drummer that tarryeth within his gates: "Behold how cunning hath conquered cheek, and hath received the reward of patient waiting!" Behold! Junkin, of Fairfield, hath said it, and so it is!—Printer's Register.

An unexplained objection to the electric light arises from its alleged evil effects on the eyes. European observers state that the frequent variations in intensity to which the light is subject give rise to sudden and frequent changes in the pupil, and, consequently, in the "accommodation" of the eye, by which is meant that alternate contraction and dilatation of the pupil by which it suits itself to the variations of light. Such a light, therefore, causes not only muscular fatigue, but also, a considerable degree of blurring and indistinctness in the retinal image. The eye suffers both when the light is too dim and when it is too bright. In the former case the object must be brought close to be clearly seen, and an increased accommodative effort is called for, which in most cases results in near-sightedness. In the latter case, the simple intensity of the light produces undue contraction of the pupil, and an increase of tension within the eye.

According to the Russian papers, a new sect has been formed at Ancyfroy, in the Government of Moscow. It already has some hundreds of members of both sexes, and its chief characteristic is that all religious ceremonies, such as christenings, marriages, funerals, etc., are performed by a woman, who is young and unmarried and has been elected by the members of the sect as their Pope. They have struck out of their religious service all the prayers for the Czar and the Bishops, and have introduced prayers for the United Greek Metropolitan in Galicia and for the Emperor of Austria instead, on the ground that "all religions are tolerated in Austria and enjoy entire freedom there, while in Russia every one is persecuted who does not profess the orthodox faith."

Where the sun sinks low 'neath the Indian Seas, by the flowery shores of the tropical isles, where the bulbul sings, and some other kind of a bird makes an infernal din in the solitudes of the forest (we shall polish this up at some future time)—there the Widow Butler cocks her star-board eye and suns herself to sleep 'neath the silvery moon, oblivious of courts or kings, divorce suits or Congress, Massachusetts or money, happy as a clam at the rising of the tide. Oh, rare Ben Butler!—Boston Advertiser.

The weight of the largest brain on record is said to be 67 ounces; the smallest—that of a woman—weighed but 2 ounces and 5 grains. Cuvier's brain has seldom been equaled in weight; it is noted at 64.5 ounces. The brain of Jas. Fisk, Jr., was considered unusually large; its weight slightly exceeding 54 ounces. Yet it was 10 ounces below that of Cuvier, and 13 ounces lighter than the heaviest known.

Lewis Hamilton, who lately died at Nelsonville, Ky., was eccentric. His daughters were named Avenue Belle, China Figure, and Hebrew Fashion, and his sons London Judge and Southern Soil. He had ample means, yet his children were reared in ignorance and isolation. He was excessively penurious, and his death was caused by a fall from a horse, while on his way to vote against a public improvement.

Cats have not been employed to reform young people so much as other animals, but they ought to be. You can rise with the lark, be strong as a bull, wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove, busy as a bee, and persevering as an ant, but you can't be first-class boys and girls unless you are faithful to a good home as a cat.

The Philadelphia Chronicle says that when a widow marries she simply takes an "e" out of her weeds. This is undoubtedly true, but it overlooks a much more important achievement, which is, that she frequently takes the conceit out of the bridegroom.