

Mr. Bowser's Simple Life

He Reads Charles Wagner's Book and Becomes an Immediate Convert.

CUTS OUT RICH FARE.

Dines on Sage Tea and Bread and Milk, Stops Smoking and Dons Old Clothes, to Wife's Dugout.

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MR. BOWSER had planned with the cook to get up an extra good dinner for Mr. Bowser and when he had eaten it to suggest the theater, and she was on the watch for him as he arrived home. She was hoping that nothing might have occurred during the day to put him out, but he had scarcely opened the door when she saw that he was "off" about something.

"Is your cough worse?" she asked as she helped him off with his overcoat.

"No, dear," was his gentle reply.

"And did you have any trouble with anybody on the street car?"

"Not the slightest."

"You—you—"

"I am perfectly all right, dear, but I will ask you to excuse me for a moment while I change my clothes. It won't take me long."

It wasn't snowing or raining, and she saw no reason for a change, but she said nothing and went down to the dining room to see that everything was cheerful there. In seven or eight



"TODAY I WAS HANDED 'THE SIMPLE LIFE,' BY CHARLES WAGNER."

minutes Mr. Bowser came down. He had changed into the oldest suit he could find—an old suit he put on now and then when he puttered about the cellar with hammer and saw. Before she could express her amazement he looked the table over, sniffed at the odor from the kitchen and said:

"My dear, if you will kindly remove what you have prepared for dinner I will tell you what I want and wait until it is prepared."

"But I've got fried Maryland chicken and you always love that."

"Yes, I have always thought it one of the best dishes, but kindly remove it."

"And I have baked sweet potatoes and corn fritters."

"It was thoughtful of you, and I thank you very much, but if you will set them aside I will be much obliged."

"You must be ill if you have lost your appetite," she said as she looked at him.

"I am not ill, and I have not lost my appetite. Having set the things aside and the coffee with them, you may have the cook prepare us some sage tea and two bowls of bread and milk."

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She will find a package of sage in my overcoat pocket."

Mrs. Bowser looked at him in wonder and perplexity, but she asked no further questions. The sage tea was prepared and the bread and milk placed on the table, but she did not touch either one. Mr. Bowser, however, ate and drank with seeming heartiness and enjoyment, speaking of the weather and other subjects in a very mild voice, and when he had concluded his meal he said:

"Mrs. Bowser, I do not wish to appear eccentric in your eyes, and if you will follow me up to the sitting room I shall be pleased to explain matters."

"I hope to gracious you will," she replied, "for I can't make out what has come over you. The idea of your preferring bread and milk to fried Maryland chicken!"

When they reached the sitting room he did not light his cigar, as usual, but in place of it chewed away at a piece of licorice for two or three minutes before saying:

"Today I was handed 'The Simple Life,' by Charles Wagner. Perhaps you have heard of it?"

"Yes."

"It made an immediate impression on me. I saw that we had been wrong all these years, and within an hour I had determined upon reform."

"How have we been wrong?" asked Mrs. Bowser.

"In a hundred different ways, but principally in our extravagant way of living and dressing. We could have taken far more comfort had we lived on pork and beans and dressed in homespun."

"That's all nonsense! We have lived just like any other family with our income. I was thinking it was about time you picked up another fad."

"My dear Mrs. Bowser, there is no call for strenuousness. We have made a mistake there as well. Heretofore, when you have referred to my fads, I have turned red in the face and flourished my arms and shouted. Do you observe anything of the sort now? I am cool. I am calm. I am not using up my nerve force. Let me recommend you to adopt the same programme. Nothing whatever that you can say will put me out of temper."

"But what are you going to do?"

"Simply follow Mr. Wagner and live a simple, healthy life. In other words, I am going to cut off all the frills and dainties."

"Are you going to give up smoking?"

"I have already done so. It is simply a waste of money and a pernicious habit. After this I shall chew on a piece of licorice root or hold a clove in my mouth."

"And you are going to live on bread and milk and drink sage tea?"

"Not altogether. Sometimes we will have pudding and milk and now and then potatoes and codfish. It will be simple, healthy fare, however, and we shall both live the longer and be the healthier for it. I hope you will be with me in this matter, my dear."

"But I shan't. If you want to live a simple life, go ahead, but don't drag me into it. I don't propose to starve myself to death for Charles Wagner or Charles anybody else."

Mr. Bowser started to turn red and open his mouth to shout "Woman!" at her, but caught himself in time and said:

"Kindly modulate your voice, darling. The tone you use grates on me. I do not ask you to go with me. If it is your desire to continue this mad and extravagant whirl go ahead in it. As for me, I have made a start and shall continue it."

"And you'll quit smoking?"

"I will!"

"And wear that old suit of clothes around?"

"The same. It is plenty good enough for a simple man."

"And you are going to live like a man earning a dollar a day?"

"My food will be simple, but nutritious."

"And you'll give up all your clubs and not make any more speeches, and you won't want to run for political office?"

"I shall be as unknown as John Doe."

"I—I did think of going to the play tonight," said Mrs. Bowser, after a pause. "Your simple life needn't stop our going to the theater, need it?"

"That is an extravagance to be curbed. It is not only an extravagance, but the play gives one a false impression of life. Instead of the theater we shall sit at home and take up and pursue some simple study. We know nothing whatever of botany and we are almost as bad in natural history. Here is a house fly flying around. What more interesting thing than to ascertain how he flies, what he eats, for what purpose he was created and all about him?"

"I say it's all nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowser as she rose up. "If I should play the idiot the way you do you'd have me pronounced crazy and locked up!"

It was a hard fling at Mr. Bowser and one intended to provoke him to anger and action, and the family cat came out from under the lounge and got ready to see the fur fly. The fur didn't fly, however. Mr. Bowser turned pale for a moment, but then got a new hold and smilingly said:

"Darling, this thing may seem all wrong to you now, but time will tell. Live your life as you will, but allow me to do the same. I have decided to drop the mad whirl for simplicity and peace. Will you kindly excuse me for a few minutes while I run out and get some cornmeal for breakfast? I shall eat nothing but a little cornmeal cooked in the plainest kind of water."

He put on his hat and overcoat and went out and left Mrs. Bowser and

the cat staring at each other and wondering if he could be in earnest. He certainly was. Even when a crowd of bad boys halted his advent on the street with a shower of snowballs he meekly and smilingly pursued his simple way in search of his simple breakfast. While he was purchasing it and explaining to the grocer that it was not food for hens or geese, but for a man who had dropped the mad whirl, Mrs. Bowser was saying to the cook: "Mr. Bowser wants some cornmeal cooked in water for his breakfast. You can use most any kind of water and cook in any old dish, and if you throw in a few buttons and clothsops he won't complain. He's going to live a simple life after this." M. QUAD.

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