

APRIL SHOWERS

By FRANK H. SWEET

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There was a swift turn with scarcely any slackening of speed, the two outer wheels an inch above the ground, as they swung the corner, then the automobile settled down to a long, straight run.

"Do you think we can make it, Mr. Townsend?" the girl asked anxiously.

"Make it"—lightly—"of course we can. It isn't over ten or twelve miles, and we can go at a snail's pace and do that in thirty minutes, and those clouds yonder are not halfway up the sky yet."

The girl's face showed relief. "I suppose it's foolish," she said, "but I do hate to get caught in a rain. And—and you know—or, rather, probably you don't know—it's a sort of life and death affair for a girl with a brand new hat and costume to get mixed up in a shower. Every true woman can



"OH, YOU DEAR BOY!"

sympathize with the girl who saved her hat at the expense of a month under a doctor's care."

"We'll save yours without the expense of so much as a hatpin," he responded.

But he reckoned without thought of the month.

Ten minutes, and the clouds had not rolled up appreciably higher. Then suddenly a rain drop splashed against the girl's face, followed by a dash of water that dripped an ostrich feather toward her eyes. The girl's hands flew to her hatpins, but before they could be withdrawn the rain was coming down in torrents, and the hands fell to her side with a tragic motion of helplessness. Both shot a quick glance behind. There were no dark clouds rolling up and above them. On all sides save where the clouds were creeping up in front the sky was blue, but overhead a slight patch of mist had obscured the sky, but not so thickly as entirely to shut out the blue. The man scowled understandingly.

"It's April," he said, "and a crack opened in the sky just wide enough for a cloud to pop out. Human foresight isn't proof against that. And your dress, too. I'm sorry, Miss Ellis."

"Yes, so am I," quizzingly, her good humor quickly returning. "The costume was only sent home this morning, and I counted on it helping me out at the house party next week. What shall we do?"

"Scorch for shelter. I have already doubled speed. There," as a white spot showed under some trees in the distance, "that's a house, I think. No," as they rushed nearer, "it's a small hotel. We'll stop there."

Another two minutes and they had swung from the road and across the lawn, up to the very door, without regard to path or grass, and Mr. Townsend threw himself from the car and lifted her almost bodily to the shelter of the little piazza. Then he started back toward the car.

"I'll run up to the city and get you a change of clothing," he called hurriedly. "I can go to your home and be back in half an hour. Meanwhile go in somewhere away from the air."

But she threw up a hand protestingly. "What nonsense!" she cried. "The shower'll be over in five minutes. See, it's already breaking away; and just as soon as the sun is out it will be warm again. I would rather go on with you." She glanced down at her wet garments ruefully. "It wouldn't be any satisfaction staying here," she added. "You may see if you can borrow me some kind of wrap, though."

He hesitated, then stepped with her into the hotel. Leaving her in the parlor, he went to the office. As he entered a young lady appeared at a side door. After a moment their eyes met, then both sprang forward.

"Edith!" he cried delightedly. "When did you arrive?"

"Last night. We didn't stop over at Washington, as planned. One of our party knew about this quiet little hotel, and we came straight here for a few days' rest. It's funny to meet you so soon, though, but it saves me sending a message into the city after you. My friend leaves tomorrow, and we're

planning a little home party tonight as a sort of farewell. No, never mind your clothes," as she saw him glance down at them significantly. "We can find a change for you in the hotel. You can't leave us now we've got you. Oh, you dear boy," bending forward suddenly and kissing him, regardless of the two or three men in the room, "I am glad to see you! Now stay here just a minute while I run up and get Jennie. She wants to meet you."

"Hold on; wait a minute!" called Mr. Townsend, suddenly recollecting himself. But the young lady was gone. He returned to the parlor, the wrap forgotten. His companion was not there.

"The lady you came in with has just left," said an attendant. "She asked about a train for the city, and I told her one was at the depot just ready to start. The depot's right behind the hotel. There," as the puffing of an engine came to them, "it's going now. She left this note."

Townsend snatched the note and read:

Mr. Townsend—I was standing by the door and saw the girl kiss you. For an instant I was surprised. Then I remembered I had known you only a month. Thank you for the auto ride. Sincerely, RUTH ELLIS.

Townsend smothered an exclamation and sprang down the steps to his automobile, not even stopping to pick up his hat. Three minutes later the young lady re-entered the office.

"Where's the gentleman I was talking with a few minutes ago?" she asked of the clerk.

"Gone off in his auto," the clerk replied politely. "Seemed in a hurry."

The young lady stared, then her eyes filled with tears, and she turned hurriedly and left the room.

Meanwhile Townsend was defying all consequences of speed in his mad rush to the city, forgetful that the train was being rapidly left behind. When he reached the residence of Miss Ellis it was stopping at a way station three miles away. He slipped into the vestibule, wet and miserable.

A half hour later her carriage drove up and stopped beside his automobile. He was at the carriage door when it opened. As she saw him Miss Ellis recoiled, her face darkening.

"You here," she began.

"It was my sister you saw," he broke in hurriedly and incoherently. "Just my sister Edith; and"—

"I thought she was in Mexico," coldly.

"She was, but they got back earlier than expected. And now I suppose she is cross, too, from the way I left."

Miss Ellis waived inquiringly, but as he explained her face cleared like the sky after the shower. When he finished she was smiling.

"I think we can make it all right, Harry," she said. She never had used that name before. "You run on to your hotel and put on dry clothing, and I will go in and do the same. He back here in half an hour or so, and we'll go out to the hotel and spend the evening. Your sister will laugh with us when she hears the explanation. Hurry!"

Harry Townsend did hurry, and now his own face was as clear as the unclouded sky.

"Blessed old April shower!" he cried as he sprang into his automobile. "It helped me out with Miss Ellis more than a year of ordinary acquaintance could have done."

THREE FACTS

For Sick Women To Consider

FIRST.—That almost every operation in our hospitals performed upon women becomes necessary through neglect of such symptoms as backache, irregular and painful periods, displacements of the female organs, pain in the side, burning sensation in the stomach, bearing-down pains, nervousness, dizziness and sleeplessness.

SECOND.—The medicine that holds the record for the largest number of absolute cures of female ills is Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. It regulates, strengthens and cures diseases of the female organism as nothing else can.

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THIRD.—The great volume of unsolicited and grateful testimonials on file at the Pinkham Laboratory at Lynn, Mass., many of which are from time to time published by permission, give absolute evidence of the value of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Mrs. Pinkham's advice.

Mrs. Pinkham's Standing Invitation to Women.—Women suffering from any form of female weakness are invited to promptly communicate with Mrs. Pinkham, at Lynn, Mass. All letters are received, opened, read and answered by women only. From symptoms given, your trouble may be located and the quickest and surest way of recovery advised. Mrs. Pinkham is daughter-in-law of Lydia E. Pinkham and for twenty-five years under her direction and since her decease she has been advising sick women free of charge. Out of the vast volume of experience in treating female ills Mrs. Pinkham probably has the very knowledge that will help your case. Surely, any woman, rich or poor, is very foolish if she does not take advantage of this generous offer of assistance.

A DINNER DECEPTION

By Kate M. Cleary

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The telegram dropped from the hand of Isola Ray.

"Now, what do you think of that, Funny?" she asked.

Funny, a big, tortoise shell cat, signified her sympathy by putting her purring head against the amber satin slipper of her young mistress. The latter picked up the yellow slip of paper and read it over.

"Will bring Edward Carden up to dinner this evening. Carte blanche is all things, of course, but do the best you can, dear girl."

Now, Isola Ray, but lately returned from college to make home for and with a wealthy bachelor brother, was ignorant of household lore and quite preposterously pretty. Thus suddenly confronted by an emergency under sin-



THE DINNER IN THE COZY DINING ROOM WENT OFF DELIGHTFULLY.

gularly exasperating domestic circumstances, the consciousness of her own inefficiency dismayed her.

"Funny" (she crumbled the yellow slip into a ball and aimed it at the wastebasket), "let us consider what we had better do."

Funny, not at all averse to being cuddled in lace draped, faintly fragrant arms, promptly lost herself in somnolence.

"If only Della had not gone to the funeral of that grandchild that expires with periodical regularity every three weeks!" Oblivious of the indifference of her auditor, Miss Ray kept murmuring on. "And—if Ellen Jane were not in bed with a jumping toothache—we might pull through, Funny. Dear, dear! All the years I was learning Latin, why could I not have learned how to cook something except fudge! Gracious! Who's that?" Funny was promptly and peremptorily dispossessed.

Miss Ray hurried in response to the brisk knock at the back door. "It's never you, my dear!" cried Isola Ray. She had flung open the door and was gathering a little sweet faced, apple cheeked countrified woman into the joyful embrace of her loving young arms. "I'd be glad to see you any time, Aunt Elvira, but just now—well, just now your coming seems providential!"

Aunt Elvira returned cordially the caress of the gracious arms and lips.

"Now, how does that happen, honey?" she asked.

She had entered the kitchen—all shining tiles, enamel and blue and white kitchen ware. She put her old brown, cracked, bulging bag down by the sink and with one dexterous twist had divested herself of bonnet and coat.

"Oh, Della—that's the cook—has gone to one of her periodical funerals. Her relatives are legion, and every few weeks one of them dies. And the other maid has toothache. And Victor telegraphed he was bringing his best friend—who has not before visited this city—up to dinner tonight. You know how my brother detests any cooking except what is done at home. And—beyond fudges or a good salad—I don't know how to make a thing!"

"Don't you worry. Just you do what old Aunt Elvira tells you." The small woman had fished a fresh apron, a pencil and the back of an envelope out of her bag.

"You get the things I write down—never mind the spelling—sent in quick, dear. Then go and get some flowers, show me where the linen and silver are kept and put on the prettiest dress you've got to your back. Sure! Go on, now! Didn't I have you all the time your mother—bless your dear heart—was in the north? And 'tis even prettier than she was—you are. And they called her the beauty of her day."

"Oh, you lovable old fatterer!" cried the girl. Then she kissed again the little red, wrinkled face and fled to the telephone.

She slipped on a discreet and envel-

oping sack of dark blue silk and went off to buy her flowers. And coming home she looked down upon the sheaf of long stemmed, dark red roses lying against her arm and the fanciful lines of Bessie Chandler recurred to her:

Oh, the fate of a man is past discerning! Little did Jacqueminot suppose At Austerlitz, or at Moscow's burning, His fame would rest in the heart of a rose.

The dinner in the cozy dining room, aglow with the softly tinted lights from Etruscan electricoliers, went off delightfully. Victor Ray beamed his approval. He had not imagined that this beloved young sister of his could attend so satisfactorily to things, especially with one maid ill and the other a dervish. And Edward Carden, brown, rugged, keen of glance—a man whose name was known for scholarship and brilliance on two continents—appeared to find in his girlish hostess much grace and charm.

And Isola Ray was charmed by this stalwart friend of her brother's. He had seen so much of the world. He had seen so many much frequented—and little frequented places. Without arrogance or ostentation, he talked about his travels.

She, in the softness of black lawns and laces, her hair shining like burnished gold and her sea blue eyes sparkling, listened to the tales told as perchance Desdemona listened—long ago.

She was recalled to herself quickly by the action of the Japanese lad who had been hired to wait on the table. He had given a slight start and was staring at the door through which he had just come. Isola turned hastily and glanced in that direction also. A little red, eager countenance was visible. Anxious to see that her carefully prepared dinner was being properly served, Mrs. Devlin was peering in at the door. But Edward Carden had also caught sight of her.

"Aunt Elvira!" he cried, and sprang to his feet. "Why—Aunt Elvira!"

Then he was across the room and had her by the shoulders and was cordially shaking her. She was laughing like a child with pleasure.

"I didn't know it was you was coming, souse. I never knewed it was you!"

"I did not know you were acquainted with Mr. Carden!" cried Isola in amazement.

"I minded him when he was little, honey—same as I did you."

"Tell him," laughed the girl, "that you cooked this dinner! I could no more do so than I could fly to Mars. If you had not come to my rescue!"

She made an expressive little gesture of despair.

Victor's gay voice rang out. "It was a rattling good dinner, all right! Supposing we finish it?"

And when he had gone upstairs to reply to a telephone ring it was just a few lines of a familiar poem that brought the rosy tide back to a girl's delicate face.

"I rather agree with Mrs. Browning," declared Edward Carden. And he quoted softly:

"A housemaid or cook One may hire with but little to pay, But a woman's heart and a woman's life Are not to be won that way."

Elvira heard—through the pantry window. She wiped her kind old eyes on her apron. "God bless 'em!" she said, while Funny purred acquiescence over her saucer of milk.

Our new minister to Japan, Luke Wright, complains that no two of his pictures in the papers are of the same man.

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