

POPULAR PLAYS FOR THE PEOPLE.

"THE OLD HOMESTEAD."

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Uncle Josh and "Happy Jack."

A FRIEND IN NEED.

BY EDITH DUNAWAY

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"I don't care, I'm perfectly happy," said Frank.

"I'm sure I don't care, I'm happy—perfectly happy. Don't see how I could be more so," said Nellie, in a hopeful tone of voice.

Nellie was looking at the other. Each tried to be absorbed in a book; but certainly neither was absorbed, for on the average, during the entire afternoon, they had made remarks similar to the foregoing at least every 10 minutes.

"Did you say, Nellie," continued Frank, just a trifle doubtful, "that there was enough in the house for supper and breakfast?"

"I'm quite sure, dear," said Nellie, "that there is enough for supper, and perhaps for breakfast. But we shall not want much for breakfast. You know that you have very often said that you did not care for much breakfast, and really I can get along on nothing at all."

"I don't see what we have to worry about then, do you?"

"Indeed, I do not. I think we have every reason to be perfectly happy," she answered.

"Sure of supper today and breakfast tomorrow. I should say we have every reason to be thankful," continued Frank.

"Yes, indeed," added Nellie. "Just think of the number of people in the world who are sure neither of supper today nor breakfast tomorrow. Take the case of a cannibal!"

"Just what I was thinking," broke in Frank. "He is dependent on the chance call of a missionary—surely a precarious existence."

"Oh, Frank, you are joking!" said Nellie.

"Proof that I am perfectly happy," responded Frank.

"While I am perfectly happy," said Nellie, "I do wish that the firm had not failed, and that you had not lost your position, and your good salary."

"Yes, and while I am perfectly happy," said Frank, "I do wish that our parents had not objected to our marriage."

"The idea that we, who are children, both of us, of rich parents, should be left to the disagreeable expedient of pawning the few wedding presents that we received!"

"Say rather the disagreeable expedient of pawning the last wedding present that we received. Now—now—now, little wife, you are going to cry!"

"Indeed, I am not," said Nellie, struggling bravely to suppress the tears. "I think we are very lucky to have any wedding presents to pawn. In fact, I think we are very lucky indeed."

"And so do I," added Frank. "Very, very lucky—just there he was interrupted."

There is no better time than an interruption to explain the condition of affairs in a romance, so I will take advantage of the present one, which may be the only interruption in my story. Frank and Nellie Hayward had married against their parents' wishes. Their parents, though rich, refused to help them in any way, or even to receive them in their homes. Frank was brave and manly, and Nellie was sensible and womanly. They determined to do for themselves, and at the very outset made a solemn compact with each other that come what might, they would consider their love for each other compensation for all the ills of life.

For a time things went very well. Frank obtained a position that enabled them to live very comfortably in a furnished flat. But, as in the life of every one else, the time came when luck turned against them. The firm that employed Frank failed, and he was unable to get another position. The little money that they had saved up from his salary was soon exhausted. They were forced to the disagreeable expedient of pawning such things of value as they possessed, and finally they had come to the end of even that resource.

Never during all their trouble had either acknowledged to the other that they were anything but happy. The crisis, however, had just about been reached. They were in a quandary. It was a question whether they would be forgiven by their parents under any circumstances, and they were not at all willing to acknowledge that they had made a mistake. They were obstinately proud.

But there was an interruption. It was a knock at the door. Nellie rose from her seat, and Frank was about to do so, when it occurred to him that the chances were that it was a creditor, and he thought it hardly worth while to go to the door. He was rather surprised, though, when, at the invitation of his wife, the door was opened by a queer old man, who looked at each of them over the rims of his eyeglasses for a full minute before he spoke.

"Mr. and Mrs. Hayward, I believe?" he said at length.

"Yes, sir," replied Nellie. "Will you take a chair?"

"Ought to have been named Wayward, I suppose," he said, chuckling to himself, as he took his proffered chair. "I suppose my visit is rather unexpected?"

"Occasionally," said Frank, curiously.

"Well, it is the unexpected that always happens," said the old gentleman. "I was rather surprised to hear you through the door, accidentally, of course, assuring yourselves that you were very lucky and very happy, and all that sort of thing."

"May I inquire what business it is of yours, sir?" asked Frank.

"None, except that it assured me that I had found the right place," answered the old gentleman.

"And what place were you looking for?" asked Frank.

"The house of a happy married couple," said the old gentleman.

"You have found it," said Frank and Nellie together.

"Ah!" said the old gentleman. "It is quite a curiosity. I suppose you will pardon an old gentleman like myself if he asks a few questions. I am a student of human nature, you know, and who knows? perhaps this visit may redound to your advantage."

"Fire away," said Frank, who was beginning to be interested.

"In the first place, what was the occasion of your saying just now that you were lucky?"

"Because we had some wedding presents to pawn," answered the ingenious Frank.

"No," corrected his wife, gently, "because we had had some wedding presents to pawn."

"Dear me!" said the old gentleman, "they are all pawned then?"

"Yes," answered Nellie, "but that does not make us unhappy."

"I suppose that you occupy a good position?" said the old gentleman to Frank.

"I have lost my position, sir," the latter answered.

"You have plenty of money in the bank?"

"None."

"Undoubtedly you have a well-stocked larder, though?"

"It is about exhausted."

"Of course, in the case of real distress you have your parents to rely on?"

"On the contrary, we would not wish to ask them to help us under any circumstances."

"Well, young man," said the old gentleman, excitedly, "will you tell me what in the world you are going to do?"

"I would much rather have you tell me what I am going to do," answered Frank.

"Nothing," answered the old gentleman, solemnly.

"That's what I have been doing quite a while."

"The fact is," continued the old gentleman, "you are precisely what you

were saying you were when I knocked on your door—you are lucky. I am a man of whimsicalities. I have been looking all my life for a happy married couple. Someone, never mind who, told me that you were the couple I was looking for. I did not believe it for a long time, but when I discovered that you were in hard luck, and still were not complaining, I began to believe it. My mission on earth is to assist happy couples who are in hard luck. This is the first time I have ever had chance to fulfill my mission. It is all the more to your advantage, though—there is more money in the fund than there would be if the world were stocked with happy couples. I propose to settle on you a little income of \$500 a year."

The old gentleman paused to see what effect this startling announcement would have on the happy couple. The effect was not marked. They looked at him very much as they would look at a curiosity.

"I suppose you think I am an insane man?" he said, angrily.

"No," answered Nellie, "but I think you are my father, with a wig and eyeglasses, and a very poor attempt at a disguised voice."

Saying which, she ran to him and threw her arms about his neck.

"Well, I am," said the old gentleman, laughingly, as he removed his disguise, "and I frankly confess that for a long time I have had a disguised heart. I didn't want to help you until I thought you needed it, so I waited. But I will tell you this—if you had acknowledged that you were not happy I would have given you double the allowance I have."

"I don't care," said Nellie. "I'm perfectly happy."

"And so am I," said Frank.

A RECORD FOR EGGS.

From the Corvallis Times.

Mrs. J. A. Smith of this city has 30 Brown Leghorn hens that are "breaking the record" for winter laying. From the first day of October, 1903, to the 29th day of March, inclusive, they have laid 160 dozen eggs, six settings of which were sold for \$3, and the market value of the balance was \$35.24, making a total value of their product \$52.24. During this time she expended for food \$12.55, so the net profit on the eggs was \$39.69. Their record by months was as follows:

Month	Doz.	Value.
October	12	\$ 2.51
November	21	6.22
December	34	9.71
January	22	4.84
February	29	5.86
Twenty days in March	42	5.90
Total	160	\$35.24
Six settings		3.00
		\$38.24

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Fell All Over Himself Again.

From the Chicago Tribune.

Mr. Makinbrakes was complimenting the preacher, whom he had happened to meet at a street corner.

"I liked that sermon of yours last Sunday first rate, Mr. Snow," he said. "It was right to the point. Reminded me—I didn't think of it till just now—of a sermon I heard in Missouri once. The preacher—by the way, he was a—er—colored man—I'd forgotten that, but the coincidence was—you know there are colored preachers that—that can preach like the old Harry sometimes—and—and, well, when you come to think of it, you know—there's a good deal of spiritual awakening on the part of your congregation now, isn't there, Mr. Snow?"

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