

## AN IRON DOG

By SUSANNE GLENN

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"I haven't lived next door to the Rumfords 25 years for nothing, Jennie!"

"Mrs. Grey emphasized her remark by an energetic placing of the tea kettle over the fire."

"Fred Rumford may be an improvement over some of them—I think myself he is some like his mother—and I don't know as we ought to blame him for being born a Rumford, but I do not want to see him lord it over my girls as every Rumford of them all has lorded it over his wife!"

"But Fred loves me, mother," expostulated Jennie, tearfully.

"I wish he had discovered it sooner," said keen-sighted Mrs. Grey. "He never showed you any attention until he needed a housekeeper. I'll say all I mean to say right now, Jennie, and then you must do as you think best."

"Fred is as hard and close as his father—why, they wouldn't keep a cat or dog two inches long on the place for fear one inch of it might be stomach. Fred's mother was always an awful coward, and was forever wanting a good watchdog. So one day her husband brought home the big iron dog. I happened to be over there when he came with it."

"There, Milly," he said, "is the dog you've been wanting. It didn't cost no more than a live one. It will last a lifetime and won't be eating off its own head every two or three months. And it will scare tramps and stray cats as well as any of them, I guess!"

"Poor Milly Rumford was mortified most to death. It gave her such an uncomfortable feeling that she never used the front porch again. But there at the corner of the house stands that ridiculous iron dog to this day, a monument to Rumford closeness!"

"Maybe if Fred has some capable, determined woman, he might make a

growing things you can work in the garden at something profitable."

"I suppose I am to be a sort of servant then, with no privileges or voice in the management of affairs?" said Jennie gently.

Her very gentleness disconcerted the young man, and he sat in bewildered silence.

"I suppose you thought a wife would be less expensive than a housekeeper, especially as she would some day bring you a good farm, also?"

"But understand one thing, Fred Rumford, I am not that wife! I can never call a place home where I cannot keep a pet or plant a flower or breathe a free breath."

With the utmost coolness she drew from her finger the inexpensive little ring and held it out to him.

"You must find some one else for the—position," she said, walking deliberately into the house.

If the girl felt any sorrow for the shattering of her dreams she concealed it admirably. She tended her flowers, petted the yellow cat ostentatiously, and watched to see Fred Rumford follow her advice.

But the utmost he did was to give the iron dog a new coat of shiny black paint that caused it to stand forth with increased conspicuousness. Never once in the months that followed did he acknowledge her existence by sign or word.

One beautiful spring day the cat Chris had failed to come to his dinner. Jennie, peering anxiously about the premises, heard a distressed cat voice from the Rumford front yard.

There, high up on a branch of the huge maple, sat Chris crying dismally.

What could be done? She was alone in the house; yet Chris must be rescued at any cost. He had recently been lamed in a trap, and some dog had evidently driven him up the tree.

With wildly beating heart, Jennie ventured into the neighboring yard.

"Come down, Kitty! Come down, Chris!" she coaxed cautiously, yet enticingly. But Chris, intimidated by his crippled state, glanced at his mistress and then at the fierce iron dog, and remained obdurate.

"Oh, you foolish creature. It is only an iron dog!" she laughed at last, half ready to cry.

"Can I help you?" asked a familiar voice so near it made her start.

"Oh, do you think you could get him?" questioned the girl, flushing furiously, and pressing her hands against the tree for support.

For answer, he silently procured a ladder, mounted to the tree, and gently lifted the frightened Chris to his shoulder. Being a cat of wide experience, Chris allowed himself to be returned to his mistress' arms without a struggle.

"Thank you very much," murmured Jennie, feeling exceedingly uncomfortable. "I am so sorry to have made you so much trouble."

But Rumford laid his hand on the gate detainingly as she would have passed through.

"See here, Jennie, I've—I've wanted to talk with you, but I did not quite dare to presume upon calling."

The girl raised her eyes for a moment to his embarrassed face, and dropped them again, hastily.

"When you gave this back to me," he went on, taking from an inner pocket the little ring she had once worn, "I meant to do exactly as you told me. I was terribly angry, for what you said was mostly true. I had thought much more about getting a housekeeper than I had about having you in particular. And I thought it manly for a man to manage his own home. But when it came to having some one else in your place—I could not do that, Jennie. I've learned a great deal these long winter months here alone, dear. I've learned—"

He paused as if unable to express what was in his heart.

"—better than to let a yellow cat and an iron dog come between me and the dearest girl in the world," he finished, with a tender little smile.

Jennie smiled too, with sudden understanding.

"Do you think you could trust me after the glimpse I gave you of what I can be like?" he asked, very humbly.

"Oh, oh!" she protested, holding out her hands.

He grasped them eagerly, looking deep into her eyes. Then with an exclamation of joy, he slipped the ring on her finger, and gathered her—Chris and all—into his arms.

Later in the afternoon, Mrs. Grey passing through her empty house, paused at the sitting room window.

"For the good land!" she ejaculated in utter astonishment, "if the iron dog ain't been moved! And if Fred Rumford ain't spading up a flower bed along the front of the house, with Jennie and Chris sitting on the end of the piazza bossing it!"

"I'd never have believed such a meek little thing could have done it! But I guess I don't need to worry about her, if she does marry a Rumford."

"And I wonder," added the good woman, turning back toward the pantry with a sudden realization of housewifely responsibility, "where under the canopy I could have put that recipe for wedding cake!"

In Hungry New York.

A horse harnessed to a wagon of the New York Poultry Market, loaded with a dozen crates containing six hundred chickens, ran away on the Williamsburg bridge and crashed into the runaway gate at the Brooklyn terminal.

The crates were smashed and the chickens set free. The chickens scattered in every direction and many were caught by men and boys who forgot to return them to the driver. Many others were killed or maimed by cars.

"Well, I'd just like to have you hear what father would say if that dog was to be moved! It is a valuable ornament, and deserves a conspicuous place. And there is going to be no dower bed littering up the front yard. If you have a desire to fuss with

growing things you can work in the garden at something profitable."

"I suppose I am to be a sort of servant then, with no privileges or voice in the management of affairs?" said Jennie gently.

Her very gentleness disconcerted the young man, and he sat in bewildered silence.

"I suppose you thought a wife would be less expensive than a housekeeper, especially as she would some day bring you a good farm, also?"

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With the utmost coolness she drew from her finger the inexpensive little ring and held it out to him.

"You must find some one else for the—position," she said, walking deliberately into the house.

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