

WINTER JOYS.

When the window pane is cracked
With a fairyland of snow,
And the wizard
Of the blizzard.
Has shut off his biting blow,
When the morning's gold has busted
Like a pillow on the swamp,
From my cozy.
Rosy, posy
Nest I fly with Persian pomp.
Oh, my spirit's bright and sunny,
And joy's echo: in me wake,
When I pour the shining honey
On the Buckwheat cake.

Oh, the frosty air is bitter,
And the poodle's eyeballs shine,
And the chicken,
Zero-stricken,
Roosts upon the horse's spine.
The snowdrifts gleam and glitter
With a gleaming, glaring glint,
And the sparrow,
To his marrow.
By old Boreas is hit,
Yet I listen to him chirrup
In the bramble and the brake,
While I pour the maple syrup
On the Buckwheat cake.

Oh, I watch the dumpy possum,
As he wags his tail in glee,
While he's rooting,
Or a-scooting.
To escape the tricasse.
With his nose the frozen blossom
Doth the small boy now appear
At the gateway,
And he straightway
Mounds of snow the deadly sphere
And I see the man who passes
On his ear that snowball take,
While I pour the rich molasses
On the Buckwheat cake.
—New York Journal.

THE COMEDY OF
MR. TUCKER.

"Ma?"
No answer. There was a gentle clatter of chimes in the kitchen and a smell of steaming soapsuds.

"Ma, I say?" The call came this time from the head of the stairs.

"Well, what is it?"

"I want my clean shirt."

"It's right there in your drawer, just where I put it."

"I can't find it."

Mrs. Tucker wiped her hands hastily on the towel as she crossed the room. The stairs were built in the wall and she laid her hand against it going up; it was the third time she had been upstairs that morning.

"There!" she exclaimed triumphantly in her good-hearted tone, drawing forth the desired article: "just where I said 'was'."

"I thought that was another one," answered her husband. "Ain't you 'most through? You'll be late."

"No, I guess not."

It was a sweet Sunday morning in June and the sunshine struck glints of gold from the surface of the grass blades. The sky was a clear, rain-washed blue; the fragrance of wild rose was abroad in the air. Mrs. Tucker looked out of the kitchen door at the old horse switching his tail at the gate. He, too, wore a Sunday aspect. "I'd like to sit down and take it all in," she thought to herself. "There'll be the ride to church, anyway."

Presently there came another call from above. "Hurry up! You'll make me late."

"Spouse so," said Mrs. Tucker silently, now resigned to her fate. It seemed to Almiry Tucker at times as if she had been "hurrying up" all her life.

When she went upstairs Mr. Tucker was standing in his shirt sleeves before the glass, chin out and mouth drawn to one side, as he wrestled with his collar button. She stopped to fasten it for him before sitting down to put on her shoes, then, standing behind him, she craned her neck over his shoulder to see how her back hair looked. He did not move and she did not seem to expect it.

"I wish you'd fix this tie, Almiry. I can't make it come right."

"Just a minute, Isr'el."

He shifted his position uneasily from one foot to the other. "I can't wait all day."

His wife dropped the just arranged waves of her front hair in disorder, and tied the necktie. There was not a nearer or more "particular" man in town than Israel Tucker, and she was proud of the fact. His stiff shirt bosoms never broke in the wrong place.

"I'll be all ready by the time you get unbuttoned," she said, breathlessly, darting here and there as she put on his Sun-coat and vest. "Yes, Isr'el, I'm comin'" she called a few moments later. "Oh, dear! I always get so frustrated. Well, I can put on my gloves 's we go along."

"Oh, my! Ain't it a pretty day?" she exclaimed, now quite serene again. "Don't those daisies look like a lot o' children havin' a party? See 'em bowin' an' an' dancin'. How pretty pink those roses are!"

"Well enough," said Mr. Tucker, indulgently. The patronizing toleration of the unimaginative temperament for what is beyond its grasp is a secret spring of glee to the humorous mind. Mrs. Tucker was not definitely conscious, however, of anything unsatisfying. She "took Isr'el just's she found him." After all, they had much in common.

After church they drove to their married daughter's to dinner. Emmeline lived in the village. Mrs. Tucker always felt this visit to be something of an event. It was the only day in the week when she could sit still in her best black silk and see someone else "fly around." Emmeline loved to fly around. She was young and plump and inexhaustible. She rushed up to her mother as soon as the buggy stopped, and switched her collar into shape. "I didn't want to tell you in church, but you got your collar on crooked again. Now,

come right in. Don't you do anything, ma—sit where you are. I'm going to have chicken for dinner."

It was pleasant to see her little air of position and hospitality. "Shall I cut up your lettuce for you, Henry?" she asked at table.

"I'd be pleased," answered Mrs. Tucker. "Mr. Tucker's busier' comon just now with the hayin'; but perhaps he could come along late in the afternoon and go home with me."

"If you want to," answered her husband, a thin, dark man with a rather discouraged expression. "I wish the peck stuff would grow cut up, for my part."

They all laughed. Later on in the meal reference was made to something in the weekly newspaper. Emmeline at once jumped up and brought it to him.

"Why didn't you let him go?" asked Mrs. Tucker afterward. She was thinking complacently. "Emmeline's got a good home."

"Well, I knew just where it was." "You don't want to do for him in every single thing. Let him wait on you some. It's just as well to begin right."

Emmeline came to a standstill opposite. Her eyes had a jocose light in them; her round, good-humored face was like her mother's.

"Now, ma, I'd just like to know how much more I do than you've been doing for pa as far back as I can remember?"

"Well, maybe so," said Mrs. Tucker, surprised. The master had never been so forcibly presented to her before. On their way home that afternoon she thought it over. She had the ability, rare in women who lead restricted lives, to face a situation and sum it up from an impersonal point of view. She was doing this now.

What Emmeline said was true. All her married life she had waited on her husband hand and foot until he had become so wonted to it as hardly to be able to get along without her help; and it had been a wonder to her, in the infrequent trips which he made to the city how he managed to dress himself unaided. She had found his belongings for him and put them away for years, and he expected it. Did he call she dropped everything, and ran to him; it had been so much easier to run to tell him what to do. She realized now that it was this that kept her always in a hurry. "The Tuckers always did take a sight of attention," she thought, with no sense of grievance. "Well, he is as he is, I suppose."

Nevertheless, when Mr. Tucker stopped on his way out to harness the horse next Sunday, to remark that he hoped she wasn't going to keep him waiting a whole half-hour again, she made a stand for herself.

"I'll be ready soon enough if you won't call me away from my work."

"It ain't that," said Mr. Tucker, in a tone of conscious superiority; "it's something else. I don't know how 'tis, but a woman never can get ready to go anywhere without fussin'."

"Well, you look after your own things today and I'll tend to mine—then we'll see."

Mr. Tucker came in and went upstairs. Presently his voice called:

"Is the water hot?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Tucker, rubbing her spoons with cheerful energy.

There was silence for two or three minutes, then the voice called again, a little imperatively: "I asked you if the water was hot?"

"Not enough for shavin'; better come an' get it right off."

"I can't—I ain't fixed to."

"You can fix yourself well enough to come down; there's nobody passin'."

Mr. Tucker didn't look exactly "fixed" as he limped crossly downstairs in heelless slippers, with his suspenders dangling and his old shirt bulging out at the back in an extraordinary manner. "I didn't know you was so put to it 't you couldn't hand up a dipper of water," he observed with sarcasm.

"Well, I ain't a goin' to have you tell me I'm late this time," said his wife.

Soon he called again: "Where'd you put those socks of mine, Almiry?"

"Just where I told you—right-hand corner of your drawer."

"I can't find 'em."

"Well, you look again an' I guess you will."

Strange sounds arose overhead; shoving sounds; squeaking, rattling sounds; a tramping back and forth. Over Mrs. Tucker's face stole an irresponsible smile of pure enjoyment. "Great doin's goin' on," she said, deftly turning over the dishpan and hanging the towels up to dry. "I declare, I'm about through!"

She entered her room. The bureau drawer that held Mr. Tucker's linen had been taken out bodily and dumped upon the bed; it looked as if a cyclone had whirled through it. Hanging over the edge were various nondescript bundles, partly unrolled; some even strewed the floor. Mrs. Tucker paid no outward attention, though her orderly mind was dismayed. She disported herself leisurely before the glass, smoothing her hair and pinning her collar with the utmost neatness. Behind her stood her husband, dodging his head from side to side.

"What is the matter?"

"I can't see anything while you take up the whole lookin' glass."

"You can see over my head just as well as I can over yours. Want anything?"

He would not answer until she looked up. Then he pointed to his tie.

"As soon as I've put on my bonnet, why, what makes you fidget so? Get your coat an' vest on if you want to be doing something."

"Well, I guess we won't starve," she said.

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