

PRUDENCE

of the PARSONAGE By ETHEL HUESTON

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Prudence and Fairy entertain the good ladies of the congregation and the result is rather disastrous for Prudence.

Mr. Starr, a widower Methodist minister, has been assigned to the congregation at Mount Mark, Iowa. He and his daughter Prudence—she is nineteen and the eldest of five girls—have come on ahead to get the new parsonage ready for the younger members of the family. The whole town, especially the Methodist element, is very curious about the strangers, and individually members of the church call at the parsonage and "pump" the girls for all they're worth. But the Starrs soon adjust themselves to their new surroundings—and after much preparation, Prudence and Fairy are going to entertain the Ladies' Aid society. Some of the members are arriving now.

CHAPTER III—Continued.

"Not on your life," said Carol promptly and emphatically; "he's worse than Prudence. Like as not he'd give me a good thrashing into the bargain. No—I'm strong for Prudence when it comes to punishment—in preference to father, I mean. I can't seem to be fond of any kind of punishment from anybody."

For a while Carol was much depressed, but by nature she was a buoyant soul, and her spirits were presently soaring again.

In the meantime, the Ladies of the Aid society continued to arrive. Prudence and Fairy, freshly gowned and smiling-faced, received them with cordiality and many merry words. It was not difficult for them; they had been reared in the hospitable atmosphere of Methodist parsonages, where, if you have but two dishes of oatmeal, the outsider is welcome to one. That is Carol's description of parsonage life.

But Prudence was concerned to observe that a big easy chair placed well back in a secluded corner, seemed to be giving dissatisfaction. It was Mrs. Adams who sat there first. She squirmed quite a little, and seemed to be gripping the arms of the chair with unnecessary fervor. Presently she stammered an excuse, and, rising, went into the other room. After that, Mrs. Miller, then Mrs. Jack, Mrs. Norey, and Mrs. Beed, in turn, sat there—and did not stay. Prudence was quite agonized. Had the awful twins filled it with needles for the reception of the poor Ladies? At first opportunity she hurried into the secluded corner, intent upon trying the chair for herself. She sat down anxiously. Then she gasped and clutched frantically at the arm of the chair. For she discovered at once to her dismay that the chair was bottomless, and that only by hanging on for her life could she keep from dropping through.

Up rose Prudence, conscientiously pulling after her the thin cushion which had concealed the chair's shortcomings. "Look, Fairy!" she cried. "Did you take the bottom out of this chair? It must have been horribly uncomfortable for those who have sat there! However did it happen?"

Fairy was frankly amazed, and a little inclined to be amused. "Ask the twins," she said tersely; "I know nothing about it."

At that moment, the luckless Carol went running through the hall. Prudence knew it was she, without seeing, because she had a peculiar skipping run that was quite characteristic and unmistakable.

"Carol!" she called. And Carol paused.

"Carol!" more imperatively. Then Carol slowly opened the door—she was a parsonage girl and rose to the occasion. She smiled winsomely—Carol was nearly always winsome.

"How do you do?" she said brightly. "Isn't it a lovely day? Did you call me, Prudence?"

"Yes. Do you know where the bottom of that chair has gone?"

"Why no, Prudence—gracious! That chair!—why, I didn't know you were going to bring that chair in here. Why—oh, I am so sorry! Why in the world didn't you tell us beforehand?"

Some of the Ladies smiled. Others lifted their brows and shoulders in a mildly suggestive way, that Prudence,

after nineteen years in the parsonage, had learned to know and dread.

"And where is the chair-bottom now?" she inquired. "And why did you take it?"

"Why, we wanted to make—"

"You and Lark?"

"Well, yes—but it was really all my fault, you know. We wanted to make a seat up high in the peach tree, and the bottom off the chair was just fine. It's a perfectly adorable seat," brightening, but sobering again as she realized the gravity of the occasion. "And we put the cushion in the chair so that it wouldn't be noticed. We never use that chair, you know. I'm so sorry about it."

Carol was really quite crushed, but true to her parsonage training, she struggled valiantly and presently brought forth a crumpled and sickly smile.

But Prudence smiled at her kindly. "That wasn't very naughty, Carol," she said frankly. "It's true that we seldom use that chair. And we ought to have looked." She glanced reproachfully at Fairy. "It is strange that in dusting it, Fairy—but never mind. You may go now, Carol. It is all right."

Then she apologized gently to the Ladies, and the conversation went on, but Prudence was uncomfortably conscious of keen and quizzical eyes turned her way. Evidently they thought she was too lenient.

"Well, it wasn't very naughty," she thought wretchedly. "How can I pretend it was terribly bad, when I feel in my heart that it wasn't!"

The meeting progressed, and the business was presently disposed of. So far, things were not too seriously bad, and Prudence sighed in great relief. Then the Ladies took out their sewing, and began industriously working at many articles, designed for the clothing of a lot of young Methodists confined in an orphan's home in Chicago. And they talked together pleasantly and gaily. And Prudence and Fairy felt that the cloud was lifted.

But soon it settled again, dark and lowering. Prudence heard Lark running through the hall and her soul gave her. Why was Lark going upstairs? To be sure, her mission might



"Isn't That a Handsome Venus?"

be innocent, but Prudence dared not run the risk. Fortunately she was sitting near the door.

"Lark!" she called softly. Lark stopped abruptly, and something fell to the floor.

"Lark!" The Ladies smiled, and Miss Carr, laughing lightly, said, "She is an attentive creature, isn't she?"

Prudence would gladly have flown out into the hall to settle this matter, but she realized that she was on exhibition. Had she done so, the Ladies would have set her down forever after as thoroughly incompetent—she could not go! But Lark must come to her.

"Lark!" This was Prudence's most awful voice, and Lark was bound to heed.

"Oh, Prue," she said plaintively, "I'll be there in a minute. Can't you wait just five minutes? Let me run upstairs first, won't you? Then I'll come gladly! Won't that do?"

Her voice was hopeful. But Prudence replied with dangerous calm: "Come at once, Lark."

"All right, then," and added threateningly, "but you'll wish I hadn't."

Then Lark opened the door—a woe-filled figure! In one hand she carried an empty shoe box. And her face was streaked with good rich Iowa mud. Her clothes were plastered with it. One shoe was caked from the sole to the very top button, and a great gash in her stocking revealed a generous portion of round, white leg.

Poor Prudence! At that moment she would have exchanged the whole parsonage, bathroom, electric lights and all, for a tiny log cabin in the heart of a great forest, where she and Lark might be alone together.

And Fairy laughed. Prudence looked at her with tears in her eyes, and then turned to the wretched girl.

"What have you been doing, Lark?"

The heartbreak expressed in the face of Lark would have made the angels weep. Beneath the smudges of mud on her cheeks she was pallid, and, try as she would, she could not keep her chin from trembling ominously. Her voice, when she was able to speak, was barely recognizable.

"We—we—we are making—mud images, Prudence. It—it was awfully messy, I know, but—they say—it is such a good—and useful thing to do. We—we didn't expect—the—the Ladies to see us."

"Mud images!" gasped Prudence, and even Fairy stared incredulously. "Where in the world did you get hold of an idea like that?"

"It—it was in that—that Mother's Home Friend paper you take, Prudence," Prudence blushed guiltily. "It was modeling in clay, but—we haven't any clay, and—the mud is very nice, but—oh, I know I look just—horrible. I—I—Connie pushed me in—the puddle—for fun." Another appealing glance into her sister's face, and Lark plunged on, bent on smoothing matters if she could. "Carol is—is just fine at it, really. She—she's making a Venus de Milo, and it's good. But we can't remember whether her arm is off at the elbow or below the shoulder—"

An enormous gulp, and by furious blinking Lark managed to crowd back the tears that would slip to the edge of her lashes. "I—I'm very sorry, Prudence."

"Very well, Lark, you may go. I do not really object to your modeling in mud, I am sure. I am sorry you look so disreputable. You must change your shoes and stockings at once, and then you can go on with your modeling. But there must be no more pushing and chasing. I'll see Connie about

REALLY NO TROUBLE AT ALL

Druggist Found It Easy to Decipher Handwriting That Had Proved Puzzle to Drummer.

John Carpathags was one of the most successful travelers on the road. On one occasion he was sent out by his people to try to get an order from a big firm which gave all its orders to a rival firm.

Such were his persuasive powers that within half an hour he had secured a big order in the handwriting of the senior partner.

Unfortunately, this gentleman possessed such an atrocious style of calligraphy that not a word was legible. However, Carpathags remembered that druggists can usually read anything in the way of handwriting, because of their wide experience with doctors' prescriptions. So he handed in the letter to the local druggist.

"I wonder if you can read that?" he asked.

The druggist took it and returned to the back of the shop. Ten minutes later he reappeared with a small bottle wrapped in paper and sealed.

"Oh, yes, sir! It was quite easy! Here's your medicine! Fifty cents, please!"

Shipping on the Ohio.

There are yet some persons, uninformed, of course, who believe it is folly to think of navigating the Mississippi river and its tributaries with anything larger than a scow of shallow draft. For the benefit of those persons the Cincinnati Enquirer printed recently an article about the many ships that were built along the Ohio river and loaded cargoes there for ports across the sea, and sailed down the Ohio and Mississippi and thence out upon the Gulf of Mexico and the broad Atlantic.

They were not small craft, either, but schooners, brigs, barkantines and full-rigged ships with square yards, big and seaworthy enough to voyage to any port in the world.

that tonight. Now go." And Lark was swift to avail herself of the permission.

Followed a quiet hour, and then the Ladies put aside their sewing and walked about the room, chatting in little groups. With a significant glance to Fairy, Prudence walked calmly to the double doors between the dining room and the sitting room. The eyes of the Ladies followed her with interest, and even enthusiasm. They were hungry. Prudence slowly opened wide the doors, and—stood amazed! The Ladies clustered about her, and stood amazed also. The dining room was there, and the table! But the appearance of the place was vastly different! The snowy cloth was draped artistically over a picture on the wall, the lowest edges well above the floor. The plates and trays, napkin-covered, were safely stowed away on the floor in distant corners. The kitchen scrub bucket had been brought in and turned upside down, to afford a fitting resting place for the borrowed punch bowl, full to overflowing with fragrant lemonade.

And at the table were three dirty, disheveled little figures, bending seriously over piles of mud. A not-unrecognizable Venus de Milo occupied the center of the table. Connie was painstakingly at work on some animal, a dog perhaps, or possibly an elephant. And—

The three young modelers looked up in exclamatory consternation as the doors opened.

"Oh, are you ready?" cried Carol. "How time has flown! We had no idea you'd be ready so soon. Oh, we are sorry, Prudence. We intended to have everything fixed properly for you again. We needed a flat place for our modeling. It's a shame, that's what it is. Isn't that a handsome Venus? I did that!—If you'll just shut the door one minute, Prudence, we'll have everything exactly as you left it. And we're as sorry as we can be. You can have my Venus for a centerpiece, if you like."

Prudence silently closed the doors, and the Ladies, laughing significantly, drew away.

"Don't you think, my dear," began Mrs. Prentiss so sweetly, "that they are a little more than you can manage? Don't you really think an older woman is needed?"

"I do not think so," cried Fairy, before her sister could speak, "no older woman could be kinder, or sweeter, or more patient and helpful than Prue."

"Undoubtedly true! But something more is needed, I am afraid! It appears that girls are a little more disorderly than in my own young days! Perhaps I do not judge advisedly, but it seems to me they are a little—unmanageable."

Don't you think that Mr. Starr would save Prudence much worry and responsibility if he gave a little less time to his personal duties and a little more to helping her manage the youngsters?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Dodging It.

"Austria, retreating before the Russians on one front and before the Italians on the other, reminds me of Red-face Leary."

The speaker was Lieutenant Marburg, the young Baltimorean who, as a volunteer in the English army, has distinguished himself.

"How did Red-face meet his death?" a visitor to Tin Can inquired.

"He didn't meet it at all, stranger," the mayor replied. "The boys had to chase him 17 miles before they could slip the noose around his neck."

Hops and Pork.

Hops and pigs go together in England, the reason being that all hop growers breed pigs for their manurial value, and it is pointed out that it is to the public interest to assist British hop production and thereby increase the home supply of pork. In 1899 there were 51,843 acres of hops in England and over 4,000,000 pigs, exclusive of those kept by cottagers. In 1916 there were only 31,350 acres of hops and 2,147,940 pigs, a decline in both cases of 10 per cent over the previous year.

Time for Silence.

The mother of little Jack remarked that she must write to grandma. Jack offered to do this for her. So mother said she would lie down and take a nap. Noticing how quiet Jack was, she asked him if he had finished his letter. His reply was, "Sh, sh, mother, you will wake yourself up."

Out of the Calculation.

"Do you think there are people up in Mars?"

"What difference does it make?" rejoined Senator Sorghum. "Even if there are they are too distant to vote or even drag us into diplomatic controversy."

Grasping Opportunity.

"Jane, there is a friend of mine who is very anxious to know if you will marry him."

"Tell him of course I will. Who is he?"

And Overdue Notes.

The train was late, even later than is usual on a Boston & Maine leased line, and as they crawled through one station a weary traveler was heard to exclaim:

"What a villainous station this is! They try to irritate one on purpose. Look at those girls in the refreshment room! Why do they dress them all in black?"

"Don't you know?" said a fellow passenger, in a most solemn tone of voice, and with a look of awe on his face.

"No," replied the curious and fretful traveler.

"Why," said the other, "because they are in mourning for the late trains."—Philadelphia Ledger.

A postal card to Garfield Tea Co., Brooklyn, N. Y., asking for sample will repay you.

Now Sister Stays Home.

The alleged young woman was out rowing with a possible suitor and had taken her little sister, who was exhibiting much fear at the waves.

"Why, Martha, if you are so nervous now, what will you be at my age?"

"Thirty-nine, I suppose," meekly replied the little sister.—San Francisco Chronicle.

Unangelic Appearance.

"You used to say that girl was an angel."

"Yes. And I'm sorry I said it. She got interested in flying and, after seeing her in her aviation costume, I must say she doesn't look the part."—Washington Star.

MOTHERHOOD WOMAN'S JOY

Suggestions to Childless Women.

Among the virtues of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound is the ability to correct sterility in the cases of many women. This fact is well established as evidenced by the following letter and hundreds of others we have published in these columns.

Poplar Bluff, Mo.—"I want other women to know what a blessing Lydia

E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has been to me. We had always wanted a baby in our home but I was in poor health and not able to do my work. My mother and husband both urged me to try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. I did so, my health improved and I am now the mother of a fine baby girl and do all my own house work."—Mrs. ALLIA B. TIMMONS, 216 Almond St., Poplar Bluff, Mo.

In many other homes, once childless, there are now children because of the fact that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound makes women normal, healthy and strong.

Write to the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co., Lynn, Mass., for advice—it will be confidential and helpful.



Got the Best of It.

Agnes—I hear that you and your fiance had a fight. How did it come out?

Edith (flashing her solitaire)—You will notice that I am still in the ring.—Boston Transcript.

What Can a Poor Girl Do?

Nell—Oh, dear! I'm in such a quandary.

Belle—What is it?

Nell—Jack promised to stop drinking if I marry him, and Tom threatens to begin if I don't.—Boston Transcript.

No Danger.

Fond Father—My son is taking algebra under you this term, is he not?

High School Teacher—He has been exposed to algebra, but I doubt if he will take it.—Life.

Constipation, indigestion, sick-headache and bilious conditions are overcome by a course of Garfield Tea. Drink on retiring.

Explained.

The Man—Jobs says he is a self-made man.

The Girl—Do you know, I often wondered why he bagged so at the knees.—Baltimore American.

To keep clean and healthy take Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets. They regulate liver, bowels and stomach.

Alcock PLASTERS
The World's Greatest External Remedy.
Rheumatism, Lame Back, Any Local Pain.
Insist on Having ALCOCK'S