Idle Island

By
ETHEL HUESTON

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STORY FROM THE START

On the verge of nervous collapse, due to overwork, Gay Delane, successful New York artist, seeks rest at Idle Island. She rents a cottage, the "Lone Pine," from an island character, the "Captain," and his sister, Alice Andover, "Administrator."

CHAPTER II

—2—

Returning to the island on the early morning steamer, Gay was the only passenger to leave the boat at Evergreen pier, where she found no line of cars, no group of unhurried drivers, to receive her. While with her two hands she carried her heavy bags through the orchard and up the long grass-green slope to the Lone Pine, Gay's heart sang a soft little song of contentment.

"I shall sleep," she thought, "Oh, Idle, Idle little Island, how I shall sleep!"

As she stood at last beneath the craggly pine, fumbling in her bag for the keys, it was the pride of possession which throbbed in her pulses. This was her summer heritage, the reward of ten years of constant labor; it was hers.

Even with her hand on the knob, Gay realized that it was not she who opened the door of the cottage; that it opened to her, instead, from within. And as she stepped back, startled, she was confronted suddenly by a woman, not Mrs. Andover, not one of the three quiet figures from the Captain's kitchen, but one she had never seen before.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she cried. "I didn't know there was anybody here."

The woman did not speak for a moment, but stood peering up, nearsightedly, into Gay's face—a small woman, short and slight, and a soft flush gave her face a pleasant girlish look, although as Gay learned later, she was very old, older even than Alice Andover. But for all her smallness and her pinkness, there was something impressively determined, something indomitable about her that was striking.

"Are you the Captain's wife?" Gay asked, as the woman stared at her, smiling faintly, puzzled.

"No, I'm not," she disclaimed quickly, half laughing. "I'm just Auntalmiry. Come in." She still stared, closely. "I— This light is bad," she added apologetically. "And my best glasses are broken. I can't seem to place you— 'Tain't Mary Grover, is it?"

"I am Gay Delane—the new tenant."

The soft little figure became rigid. "The new tenant," she repeated.

"Oh, they didn't tell you!"

"Tell me! Of course they didn't tell me. They were afraid to tell me. The cowards!" But she said this in the most amiable and cheerful tone imaginable. "I wish Alice Andover'd tell me. I'd like to hear her. I told her, with my own lips, that I wanted to stay here myself this summer."

"Oh, I beg your pardon. She must have forgotten it. I'll run right up and tell them—"

When Gay stooped to lift her bags, Auntalmiry insisted that she leave them. "You'll be right back," she said confidently. "They'll send me word. Alice Andover never misses a chance to send somebody word. Just leave the bags; you'll be right back."

Gay trudged rather crossly up the pleasant lane to the Captain's door. The disarray of her plans annoyed her, and her tired nerves resented the postponement of rest. She found the Captain in the kitchen in his favorite chair by the window, fondling the largest cat, while the dog sulked jealously beneath the table.

"Captain," Gay began curtly, "where is Mrs. Andover? The Lone Pine is not for rent. That woman—Auntalmiry—is going to stay there herself."

"You don't say so," he ejaculated. "Well, think of that now. What are you going to do about it?"

"What am I going to do about it?" she repeated, indignantly. "Nothing. What have I got to do about it? I will just take back my money—"

"I don't think you can do that," he said cautiously. "I don't think so."

"Well, I think so. Renting a cottage that isn't for rent! Whoever heard of such a thing? Of course I can take it back."

He shook his silvered head doubtfully. "You have rented the cottage," he said. "It is yours. If an outsider comes in on you—why, you'll have to take measures to get her out."

Gay stared at him. "But she was there first! I am the interloper."

"Then I don't think Alice will refund the rent. I don't think so."

"Oh, if she is like that!" Gay said scornfully. "She doesn't look so dishonest."

"Dishonest! My sister, Mis' Alice Andover? Dear, dear, what gave you such a notion as that? She's honest as the day—but she's a very good administrator, very good indeed."

"If she is like that," Gay said, "you will get the money back for me. You are her brother. You were a witness to the transaction. You go and get it for me."

He was deeply troubled. "I—I can't do that. Not to-day I can't. Maybe to-morrow. But I got to go right up now and fix Mrs. Willoughby's roof—leaky roof—'fraid of rain. Looks like rain think?"

"You fixed that roof yesterday," Gay said furiously.

"No, miss, I didn't get around to it." He sighed sadly. "Seems like I just can't get around to the things I got to do. There's Mrs. Willoughby's roof, and Miss Nixon's porch. Seems like I can't begin to get around to things any more. And I'd like to get a little work done on my boat if I could find time," he finished pathetically.

"Well then," she said kindly, unable to be very severe with one so lamblike, "just come along with me to get my money back from Mrs. Andover, and then you can hurry right along and get ever so many things done. It's early."

He sighed but put on his cap with disarming meekness, and they set out together.

"That's her cottage down there," he said, pointing off to the left. "It a'n't far. You go right down through that little gate, and see Mis' Andover. Be firm with her, miss, you be real firm. You hold out for your rights."

And with incredible celerity, before Gay could catch and hold him, he had shambled away out of sight around the cottage, and there was nothing for her to do but go on alone. Her indignation rose again as she cut down the pretty, green-bordered cinder path to Mrs. Andover's door, but she was met with great friendliness by that affable and efficient woman, who took both her hands in cordial greting.

"My dear, how sweet or you to be so neighborly. How charming! You are a real acquisition to our summer colony."

"Mrs. Andover, excuse me, but that cottage you rented me is not for rent. Auntalmiry is keeping it herself this summer. So if you will kindly refund—"

Mrs. Andover's affability froze upon her face. "My dear, do you mean to tell me that that creature had the brazen effrontery, the unmitigated

"I Don't Think You Can Do That," He Said Cautiously.

audacity, the—the—to stay there after John told her I had rented that cottage?"

"John didn't tell her. She didn't know it. The cottage was not ready for me as you promised—"

"John didn't—John—John Wallace— Didn't you hear me tell him to tell her to—"

"Oh, yes, you told him. And that was the end of it. And as she is the original tenant, I have had all my trouble and worry for nothing."

And then, with reluctance, with innate delicacy, sparing Auntalmiry in every way possible, Mrs. Andover explained the situation. The little old woman in the cottage was not a tenant. She just lived there. She paid no rent, she had no money, and the cottage stood idle all winter without her. Much better for the house to be occupied, much better for Auntalmiry who needed homing—

"Oh, please," interrupted Gay, "let her stay then. Don't turn the poor thing out on my account—"

And then Mrs. Andover grew really withering in her retaliation.

Turn her out! What kind of people do you think we are? Do we look like the sort to turn anybody out? We just want her to move down into her own house, the Apple Tree."

"Oh, then she isn't so poor, if she has a house of her own."

But Auntalmiry did not own the Apple Tree. Auntalmiry did not own anything. Mrs. Andover said it was the Estate, the Estate which owned the land, the Estate which had built the little Apple Tree exclusively for Auntalmiry, for her very own, furnished it for her, maintained it for her.

The Apple Tree was a dear little cottage, well built, charmingly located. Mrs. Andover said, rather petulantly, that it was the nicer of the two cottages, and the only reason Auntalmiry preferred the Lone Pine was simple and pure perversity. The Lone Pine was too big for her. It was more inaccessible away up on the bluffs, it was farther from the shops and from her friends, but she preferred it "for her Christmas party."

And then Alice Andover's voice sank to a whisper. "If she says anything about a Christmas party, you tell her John and I say she can't have a Christmas party this year. Tell her it is too expensive in the first place, and it wears her all out in the second place, and it's just nonsense anyhow. Tell her John and I say so."

But when Gay suggested that of course, she, herself, Mrs. Andover, was going down with her to give these explanations to Auntalmiry, the administrator was regretful, but firm.

"I can't," she said. "I wish I could, but I can't. I—I am expecting guests to dinner." She looked at her watch. "Good heavens, it is after eleven, and the potatoes not so much as peeled. You see how it is. I wish I could, but I can't. You tell her. She'll understand. Just tell her you have rented the cottage, and paid the rent, and tell her we insist—John and I both insist—that she give up the Lone Pine immediately. Tell her if she doesn't—we'll—we'll burn the Apple Tree to the ground, and sell the Lone Pine over her head."

So Gay Delane, alone, unaided by the lamblike Captain, unsupported by the efficient administrator, broke the news to the indomitable little old woman on the hill. As she repeated, very modestly, almost diffidently, the dire threats of Alice Andover, Auntalmiry broke into laughter so hearty it seemed impossible it could have emanated from so small a source.

"My dear," she gasped, wiping her eyes, "I wish they would. I'd like to see it. Why, I'd have the law on them." She fell into helpless laughter again. "I'm a sort of a common-law wife, my dear. If you keep me long enough, you can't get shut of me. Such talk. Alice Andover indeed! Why didn't they come and tell me all these high doings?"

"The Captain had to fix Miss Nixon's porch, and Mrs. Andover is peeling potatoes for a company dinner, and—"

"The Captain's been fixing that porch for four years, and never set foot on it yet. And as for Alice Andover, my dear, she never peeled a potato in her life. She's aristocratic. Peeling potatoes. My dear, Alice Andover wouldn't know a potato with the skin on if she saw it."

"But Mrs.—Miss—"

"Auntalmiry, dearie, just call me Auntalmiry. I'm not proud."

"Auntalmiry," Gay said appealingly, "see how I am fixed. I have paid fifty dollars rent—"

"Fifty dollars For this shack? My dear, they robbed you. They never got more than forty for it in the world. Last year, they only got thirty-five. Poor child, poor dear, they robbed you."

"And see They have my fifty dollars, you have my house. I have nothing."

"My dear, I'll go. I'll go right away. We'll show them they can't get away with this sort of thing with us. It won't take me long to pack up. I haven't got much."

While Auntalmiry bustled about, putting her things together, Gay, having removed her cap and gloves, set her bags in a corner out of the way and went to the wide couch. She was very tired. The window corner tempted her.

"I'll lie down, if you don't mind," she said. "It will keep me out of your way. I may go to sleep."

She stretched herself out on the couch, luxuriously, and closed her eyes The lids were dark, darkly veined. The lips, in relaxation, drooped with weariness.

For two hours Auntalmiry slipped softly about the house, gathering together her modest belongings, packing baskets, bags and bundles. And for two hours Gay slept without stirring, moaning faintly now and then. At one o'clock, Auntalmiry prepared dinner for two, with a great pot of strong hot tea, and set the little gate-leg table. Then, with a light touch, she wakened Gay.

"Come and eat, dearie," she said gently. "You can rest better on a full stomach."

Gay smiled at her, yawning, stretching luxuriously. "You are a darling," she said. "I wasn't a bit hungry, and now I am." She stood up shaking herself.

Auntalmiry watched her shrewdly.

"You didn't begin to rest any too soon," she said significantly.

"No. Almost too late, in fact. So far, I am too tired to enjoy resting, but after a while, a week, or a month, how I shall revel in it."

She curled the tips of her shoes, boyishly, about the legs of the chair at the table, and although she was not hungry, the tea she sipped with relish. And as they ate, Auntalmiry descanted at great length on the outrageousness of fifty dollars a month for that rock-pile, told her to look out for the draughty window on the ocean side, and enlarged on the condition of the kitchen woodwork.

She recommended Lumly Lane for lobsters, and promised to send him up for orders. And at Auntalmiry's suggestion Gay made out a grocery list to initiate her own light housekeeping, and gave it to that same small obliging person to leave at the Pier grocery store.

While they were still at the table, Gus, the taxi boy, came up for Auntalmiry's things, and trudged off down the hill, heavily laden and Auntalmiry, hastily catching up an armful of coats and dresses, tripped after him

Gay waved them away and turned back, yawning, into the pretty cottage, turned again, gratefully, to the wide couch in the shadowy corner, stretched herself out upon it, and closed her eyes.

The afternoon waned. A boy from the Pier grocery store brought her basket of groceries, and left it on the kitchen table without disturbing her.

Dusk crept out of the forest and darkened the windows. Once Gay stirred, restfully, sensed presence in her sleep, seemed to feel the gaze of human eyes upon her in the silence. Resentfully she forced the heavy lids to raise. In the shadowy, dying light she seemed to see a small figure crouching near her, and a small face, yellow and wrinkled like parchment, with pinched features and slanting almond-shaped eyes fastened hypnotically upon her eyes. Beneath one eye a small crescent-bowed scar shone in the yellow parchment. It was the scarred and wrinkled face of a little old Chinaman. Even in her sleep, Gay knew it could not be, and smiled faintly at her foolish fancy.

"It is a dream," she thought mistily. "Dream on."

She closed her eyes again.

The little yellow face receded into the dusk, the small figure faded noisely into the shadows, and there was not the slightest sound from the small, swift moving feet as he stepped over the sill of the window on the forest side, and padded away among the trees.

Hours after, when Gay wakened from her sleep, the house was still and dark. The greatness of her relaxation pleased her.

"I shall go on like this for weeks," she thought blissfully, "smelling sweet scents of sea and woods, hearing strange noises of ghostly breaths and phantom footsteps, feeling the touch of fairy fingers— Oh, good heavens. I wonder where the matches are!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Most men are willing to start something for the sake of an argument.

MILK HABIT BEST FOR ANY CHILD

Other Essential Foods Also Should Be Given.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

"Mother, can I have a glass of milk?" Very likely the child who stops his mid-morning play, or rushes in after school, if he is old enough to go to school, thinks of a glass of milk because he is thirsty. But he has the milk habit, and his mother, who thinks of milk as a good food for body-building, undoubtedly fills his glass without comment, and rejoices inwardly that the child wants it.

Children who have been accustomed to a normal amount of milk from babyhood like it and expect it several times a day, with their meals, and occasionally between them. Other essential foods should also be included in their diet, the bureau of home economics points out, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables, meat, eggs, whole-grain cereals, and butter or cream.

A Glass of Milk in the Midst of Morning Play.

But with the milk habit firmly established, the mother can give more attention to cultivating a taste for these other foods that make up the best diet for the child.

Children reveal in their food habits the training they have had, or the lack of it. The child who has been trained to take milk as a matter of course has a big advantage over the one who has been allowed so say, and to make himself believe, "I don't like it." For milk is one of the best foods to supply him with calcium for building strong bones and good teeth, as well as other important substances. There are ways of getting milk into the diet even in such cases, through milk soups, puddings, flavored drinks, and so on, but the wise mother prevents this problem from arising by her sensible training while the child is young and passing from the bottle to the solid-food stage.

Delicious Sweet Bread to Serve With Coffee

Here's a delicious sweet bread to serve with coffee or afternoon tea, whether hot or iced, or, indeed, at any time. The bureau of home economics furnishes the recipe.

Coffee Cake.

2 cups flour
4 tablespoons butter
½ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons sugar
½ cup milk
3 teaspoons baking powder
½ cup citron or other candied fruit cut in small pieces
½ cup seeded raisins, cut in small pieces

Sift together the dry ingredients, reserving two tablespoonfuls of the flour for the fruit. Cut in the butter and then add the milk and the fruit, which have been well mixed with the flour. Place the dough on a greased round or square pan and bake for 35 or 40 minutes in a medium oven. Mix together one-fourth cupful of finely chopped nuts, one teaspoonful cinnamon and two tablespoonfuls sugar. Butter the top of the cake and spread this mixture over the butter. Return to the oven and let it stay until the sugar has melted slightly.

Brown Betty Is Always Favorite With Family

Although the apple crop is not as large as usual this year, there is no reason why the family cannot be treated occasionally to one of its favorite desserts—"brown betty." The following directions for making it come from the bureau of home economics:

2 pints diced apples
4½ cups bread crumbs (toasted until crisp and light brown)
1¼ cups sugar
¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon or nutmeg
3 tablespoons melted butter
¼ teaspoon salt

Select tart, well-flavored cooking apples, pare and dice. Break the bread into small pieces and dry it out in the oven until it is crisp and delicately browned. Butter a medium-sized baking dish and place in it a layer of bread crumbs, then a layer of apples, add some of the spice, sugar, and salt. Repeat until all the ingredients are used, saving sufficient crumbs for the top. Cover and cook until the apples are soft. Serve hot with plain or whipped cream, or hard sauce.

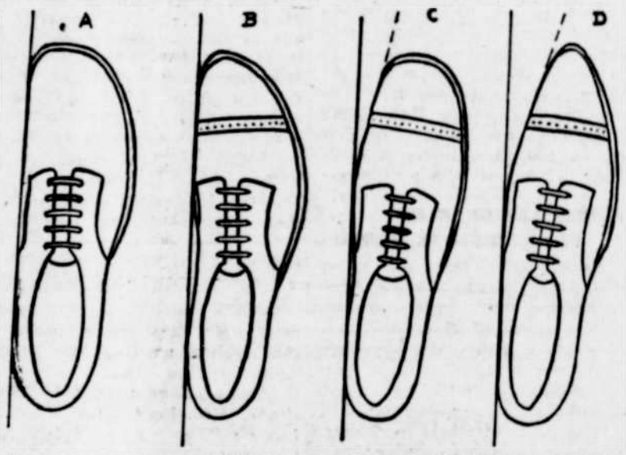
Baked Onions in Tomato Sauce Quite Delicious

When you are having an oven-cooked dinner you can utilize the heat to have a baked vegetable. The bureau of home economics gives the following suggestion:

6 medium sized onions
1 quart canned tomatoes
2 tablespoons sugar, if desired
1 bay leaf
2 teaspoons salt
¼ teaspoon celery seed
2 cloves
2 tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons butter
Dash of pepper

Cook the tomatoes with the seasonings for ten minutes. Mix the flour and butter, add to the tomatoes, and mix well. Cut the onions in half and put them in a large casserole. Strain the tomato sauce over them, adding more salt if needed. Cover and cook until the onions are tender, about one hour. Serve from the dish in which cooked.

CORRECTLY FITTED SHOES ARE ESSENTIAL



Shoes Made on Proper and Improper Lines—A and B, Satisfactory; Note the Straight Inner Line and Rounded Toe—C and D, Objectionable; Note the Curve Outward From the Naturally Straight Line of the Foot, Also the Pointed Toe, D.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

When you visit a shoe store it is a help to know exactly what sort of shoe you ought to wear, and not to accept any other type. No one but yourself can tell how your foot feels inside of the shoe you try on. If new shoes are correctly fitted they will be comfortable from the start. They will not need "breaking in." A good salesman can help you because of his knowledge of his available stock in your size, but you are the final judge of the comfort of the shoe.

Fitting Shoes.

Shoes should always be fitted with the entire weight of the body on the feet, as the feet are then at their largest, says the United States Department of Agriculture. The "swing" or general direction of the shoe should be the same as that of the foot. It should not tend to twist the foot out of its normal position. The illustration shows shoes of correct and incorrect lines. Correct shoes have a straight inner line and rounded toe characteristic of the normal foot. Toes that slope away from this naturally straight inner line, and toes that are too pointed, are certain to distort the foot. The one-sided appearance of a worn shoe is usually due to an incorect swing, which has caused the ball of the foot to rest at one side of the shoe, rather than straight in the middle.

Shoes that fit correctly permit standing, walking, and quick turning in comfort and safety. A normal erect position of the body can be kept in such shoes without undue strain or discomfort. The feet, while snugly supported, are not cramped or crowded, and a firm full tread is possible. Much depends also on the height and shape of the heels, which should be moderate, and nearly as broad throughout as the heel-seat of the shoe, tapering but little.

Misfit Shoes.

Shoes that are too large are also a misfit. With too much play in the shoe the foot is not snugly supported. Blisters are often formed, especially on the heel, by the rubbing of the foot against the inside of a shoe that is too large. Incidentally, neglect of foot blisters may result in serious infection.

Aside from any consideration of health and comfort, shoes for young and old alike are easier on the family budget if of correct design and fit. Such shoes do not soon lose their original attractiveness and shape and they wear longer.

HOUSEHOLD HINTS

A well-packed pint jar of crab apples makes one medium-size pie.

• • •

Sweet cucumber pickles will shrivel if the brine is too strong or if too much sugar is used.

• • •

Regular mid-morning and mid-afternoon lunches of bread and milk or fruit for the youngsters who get hungry are better than irregular snatches at any hour.

Hooks in the hall closet low enough for little boys or girls to reach, help develop the habit of neatness.

• • •

Be sure the new school shoes have room for feet to grow. One inch longer than the foot is a safe allowance.

• • •

A slow oven is one with a temperature from 250 degrees to 350 degrees F; a moderate oven is from 350 degrees to 400 degrees F; a hot oven is from 400 degrees to 450 degrees F.

Storms Directly Due to Forest Destruction

Trees are lightning rods, and the increasingly bad weather is due to the destruction of forests, says Edouard Branly, France's grand old man of wireless.

"If there are no longer seasons," he says, "deforestation is the principal, if indeed, also, not the sole cause.

"Trees on the heights, with their pointed tips toward heaven and their roots deep in the damp ground, are nothing less than so many lightning rods, constantly discharging into the earth the atmospheric electricity and thereby preventing its accumulation in the clouds, an accumulation that would cause terrible storms. In wooded districts there was calm, but now that the woods are being cut down there are constant hard storms."

The need for protecting trees is well recognized and the French government proposes to spend some money in that direction, but meantime owners of forests say heavy taxes oblige them to cut wood to get income.

Black Bear Gets His Annual "Honey Spree"

There is a famous black bear of the Rocky mountains that comes down out of his winter hibernating den on a "honey spree" every spring when he hears the caretakers getting ready to open Many Glacier hotel in Glacier National park for the summer tourists. Two years ago he went rampant on his annual "periodical," broke into the hotel and smashed dishes right and left in an eager kitchen rummage for sweets. Last spring the caretaker left a gallon of sirup on the door sill and that sated bruin. He went back up the mountain side peacefully licking his chops, and was satisfied to eat roots and herbs for dessert.

The offering will become a part of the caretaker's annual expense, since it is cheaper to end the "sweet tooth" craving at the doorstep than have this audacious "neighborhood" looter run amuck within the building.

Resourceful Pussy

A cat which is at home in the residence of Louis Marshall, Manhattan, saved itself from starvation by sounding a burglar alarm in a neighbor's house where it had gone visiting. Operatives answering the alarm with drawn revolvers found the house boarded up, the family being out of town. They made an entrance, saw no burglars, but did hear a plaintive feeble meowing that led them to the culprit. As soon as the outer door was opened, the cat made a hurried dash to the Marshall house for something to eat.

Bananas Grown in North

A full bunch of bananas has been grown successfully at a Salem (N. J.) flower shop. The tree from which the fruit was gathered stands more than ten feet in height and has been maturing in a greenhouse for several months. Banana plants are also curiosities in a few private gardens in Salem, but because of the short season cold weather always nips the fruit before it can ripen out of doors.

Many May Lose Titles

Dishonesty among the nobles of Japan is a cause of increasing worry in the imperial household. Many titled business men have been taking advantage of their exalted position to fleece the gullible. The police have been asked to assist in a sweeping investigation which may cause the loss of many titles.

Record Made by Few

Henry Kirby of Deal, England, has celebrated his second silver wedding anniversary. In 1871 he married Harret Scott at Newington, and with her celebrated his first quarter-century of married life in 1896. After the death of his first wife he was married to Jessie Elizabeth Taylor. Kirby is eighty-three and for 53 years has been employed by a railroad.

Headaches from Slight Colds

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