

MRS. TOPHAM'S INVENTION

A New Year's Resolution

By MILDRED JERNEGAN

The Tophams grew poorer every year. On the 1st day of January Samuel Topham registered a solemn vow that on the very next day he would set forth in quest of work for the ensuing year—work that would bring him in a steady income with which to support his growing family. On the 2d day of January Mr. Topham usually had a brilliant idea—a brain splitting conception of a patent dishwashing machine or a baby tender that might take the place of a paid nursemaid, or an automatic flapjack griddle which not only would grease itself, but would also tip a suspended pitcher of batter so that one could remove them from the self greasing, nonburning, self adjusting griddle. Anything in the way of a work saver or labor eliminator appealed to the inventive faculty of Samuel Topham.

As these ideas attacked Samuel on the second day of the new year, of course he then abandoned the idea of seeking manual labor and devoted himself exclusively to the perfecting of his latest patent. Under these circumstances it became necessary for Mrs. Topham to find some means of supplying her husband and seven little daughters with food and clothing. This she did by home baking. She did it cheerfully and without complaint, for the Tophams, great and small, had infinite faith in "pa's" inventions and contentedly scripped and saved so that one day all of them might live sumptuously on the proceeds of his success—when it should really come to pass.

On this particular New Year's morning Samuel had registered his customary vow with more than his accustomed vigor.

"There's no use talking, Sarah," he said, sinking heavily into a kitchen chair and looking appealingly at his plump little wife from his prominent light blue eyes. "I haven't got the heart to see you go through another year like the last. Tomorrow morning I shall set out and find a job, something that will at least bring us in bread and cheese."

"You've said that before, Sam," returned Sarah placidly. "You haven't got to worry about that. I'm making enough from my baking to pay the grocery and butcher, and we can wear our old clothes for a little while longer. I am sure the automatic griddle will be a money maker. Why, whenever I feel extra tired I just think how easy we will have it when that automatic griddle is on the market and you?"

Samuel lifted a fat hand and shook his head sadly. "I'm afraid that the automatic griddle is not a success," he announced in a hollow voice.

"Not a success?" Sarah Topham's voice showed more genuine dismay than it had done in the case of the failure of the dishwasher and the baby tender, which had been the last two inventions of her husband's restless brain. Now she removed her hands from a bowl of flour and surveyed Samuel's gloomy countenance with a severe look on her usually good natured face. "You have heard something new?" she asked.

"Yes, I had a letter—a most peculiarly worded letter—from Mr. Bowman," admitted Samuel, taking an envelope from his pocket and surveying the superscription resentfully.

"Well, what did he say, Samuel? You know you asked him for a candid opinion of its merits. He's your second cousin and ought not to be afraid to speak right out."

"He spoke right out," muttered Samuel bitterly.

"What did he say?"

"He said," returned Samuel reluctantly, "that no one except an unmitigated idiot and a constitutionally lazy and shiftless loafer would ever have spent a year of God's good time in perfecting such a fool's idea as my automatic griddle. I believe you might call that a candid opinion."

"Why—the idea?" gasped Sarah Topham angrily.

"I shall seek a job tomorrow," went on Samuel weakly.

He was surprised at his wife's prompt reply. "It's a good idea, Samuel," she said energetically. "I'm afraid that we haven't capital enough to wait until the griddle is a success."

"Of course, Sarah, when you lose faith in me I must go to the wall," said Samuel Topham with dignity, and so, folding the frankly written letter of his second cousin, the inventor left the kitchen and strolled into the parlor of the cottage, where his Morris chair was drawn before a glowing little air tight stove.

From the window he could see his seven diminutive daughters coasting down the hill that sloped from their cottage to the highroad. He sighed deeply. If his wonderful schemes had only carried out successfully these seven daughters would each be an heiress, wearing rich fur coats and ermine hoods instead of bright little red caps and cloaks fashioned by Sarah's busy hands.

"Ha—hum!" sighed Samuel, filling his pipe and reaching for the morning newspaper. It was necessary for Samuel to subscribe to a New York daily paper in order to keep track of the

latest inventions of other creative brains. "I must go out and look for a job of some kind tomorrow. If my eyes didn't trouble me so much I'd try bookkeeping, but what's the use? I believe Sarah has a boiled dinner today. Well, I'm glad of that. If there's one thing I enjoy it is an old fashioned boiled dinner."

Evidence of the dinner of corned beef and cabbage permeated the little house from front to back. Mr. Topham leaned back in his chair and smoked easily and read the paper from beginning to end, not even omitting the "want" columns, which were painfully suggestive of work.

In the kitchen Sarah Topham flew around from table to stove, to sink and pantry and back to table again. There was a high color in her cheeks, and her blue eyes flashed strangely as she went to and fro, preparing the good dinner, filling in gaps of time with the making of a cake or a batch of biscuits for the customers who were only too glad to buy her toothsome wares.

A knock came at the back door, followed by the anxious face of her nearest neighbor, Mrs. Morris.

"I'm in a heap of trouble, Mrs. Topham," began the visitor, sinking into a chair, "and when I smelled your boiled dinner I wondered if you wouldn't help me out."

"What is it?" asked Sarah practically.

"You know we never have dinner at noon on Saturday; I always wait and have it when William comes home at 7 o'clock. Today I only had a few sandwiches for lunch, because I'm going down to my sister's to dinner tonight, and William will meet me there. Not five minutes ago I had a telephone call from the depot saying that my aunt and her husband and their four children are passing through here on their way to Westlake and will be at my house at dinner time; that's fifteen minutes, and I haven't got a mouthful in the house to eat, and they are great providers and have regular farm appetites. Would you sell me your dinner?"

Sarah puckered her brow an instant and then it cleared. "Yes, of course," she said sensibly. "Shall I dish it up for you, or will you carry the pots over? I've got a pot of potatoes boiled separately."

"I'll take the pots over. Have you got a pie to spare?"

"Yes," said Sarah calmly, bringing the last pie in the house and folding it in a clean napkin. "Want any help?"

"No, indeed. I've got time to run back and forth. I'm a thousand times obliged to you, Mrs. Topham. I'll bring my pocketbook over next trip."

At 12:30 Sarah Topham called her seven little girls in to dinner, and, as this was the signal for Samuel to also appear at the table, they all gathered about the board together.

The little girls clapped their hands over a great dish of boiled rice and a huge pitcher of milk that formed the principal dishes on the table.

The face of Samuel Topham was a study in disappointment when he surveyed the plain meal. Sarah avoided his eyes and poured out two cups of tea.

"You've forgotten the boiled dinner," he ventured rather timidly.

"Oh, no; there isn't any boiled dinner," returned Sarah calmly. "I sold it to Mrs. Morris. She had unexpected company."

"Sold the dinner? Are we to eat this rice?" Mr. Topham's voice was eloquent of disgust.

"Of course. It's very nourishing, Samuel. You know the Japanese live almost entirely upon rice and fish. They whipped the Russians, you know."

"I know. But I'm hungry, Sarah."

"If you eat rice enough, Samuel, I'm sure you can get along. I've been thinking that we would live entirely on rice until the automatic griddle is a success. Rice is cheap, and we need all I can earn to—"

"Oh, very well, Sarah, you needn't explain any further," said Samuel, with great dignity, and forthwith attacked his rice and milk gloomily.

All the afternoon he spent in moody cogitation before the air tight stove in the parlor. He did not see his wife slip quietly out of the side door and hasten down the street and turn into the wide driveway of Moses Bowman's handsome home. He did not see her when she returned with flushed cheeks and resumed her work in the kitchen.

"Rice for supper, too?" he asked dimly at 6 o'clock that night.

"Yes, indeed. I'm greatly taken with the idea, Samuel," cried his wife enthusiastically. "Let us live upon rice and milk until one of your inventions is perfected. I'm sure the children are willing to do it."

Mr. Topham said nothing at all in reply, and when the meal was concluded he put on his hat and left the house. It was significant that he, too, turned into the Moses Bowman place.

At 9 he returned to find Sarah darning stockings before the fire.

"I've got a job, Sarah," he said in a heartbroken voice. "Moses Bowman says he will give me a life job in his office as assistant bookkeeper. I've taken it and go to work Monday morning. I can't live on rice and milk whether the world loses flapjack griddles or not. I don't suppose there ever will be an invention to equal that one."

"I don't know about that," said Sarah Topham to herself as she broiled a steak she had secreted to celebrate this anticipated event. "I don't know about that. I've an invention of my own that would make me a millionaire if I could get it on the market, but I guess I'll have to give it to my daughters for wedding gifts some day. I guess I'll call it 'Sarah Topham's Automatic Genius Cure,' for it certainly will make a man work when nothing else appeals to him. Starve 'em out, I say. That's my invention!"

THE OLD STUFF.

My son, when you go to a voodville show You'll notice that people will shrink At jokes they have heard since the long long ago.

And heard twenty times every week. The moral is plain if you'll read as you run:

A novelty adds to our zest. But when it comes down to extracting the "moo". The old stuff gets over the best.

It may be all right when you're courting a dame. To talk about Ibsen and such; But, take it from me—if you'd win at the game.

You won't stick to Ibsen so much. You'll tell her that she's of a beautiful mood. A stunner becomingly dressed. You'll tell all the lies that men always have told.

The old stuff gets over the best. In politics, business, society, art. However the world has progressed, It still remains true to the words I impart.

"The old stuff gets over the best." —Exchange

A Gun in the Hand.



"Yes, sir; with this weapon you are absolutely invincible."



"Very well, then, hand over your cash."—Pele Mele.

Thtolen the "Etheth."

One morning the Brownsville Scentorian published the following ludicrous announcement:

"It is with deep regret that we announce to our many friends and thub-thirberth in thith morningth edition that thith eththabthment with robbed lath night and all the 'etheth' in thitok were thtolen. It is evident that the motive for thith crime wath purely mallethouth, thupthoedly perpetrated by thome unknown and invithible enemy of thith institution.

Instead of embarraththithing thith thufficiently to prevent the Thentorian from going to prethth, ath wath intended, we have thurthmoued all thifficultieth and are pleathed to thupply our patronth with a largar and more interething Thentorian than ththal thith morningth. We withth to aththure our friendth that before the next thiththue goeth to prethth weth weth thupplith with three thitheth ath many 'etheth' ath the thhcondret ththiole!"

Why He Couldn't Go In.

A small but very black negro was standing very erect at one side of the door of a house where a colored man had just died. The services were about to begin, when the negro clergyman appeared at the door and said to the little fellow:

"The services are about to begin. Aren't you coming inside?"

"I would if I could," said the small boy, "but you see I's de crape."—Ladies' Home Journal.

Generosity.

A large, husky negro and a small Frenchman were sawing a large piece of timber for the Boston subway with a heavy crosscut saw, each in turn pulling it back and forth. A pugilistic man stopped to watch the operation. After a few moments he strolled up to the negro and dealt him a blow, saying:

"Give the saw to the little fellow if he wants it."—Harper's.

A Gallant Answer.

"You seem to be an abedioded man. You ought to be strong enough to work."

"I know, mum. And you seem to be beautiful enough to go on the stage, but evidently you prefer the simple life."

After that speech he got a square meal and no reference to the wood pile.—Meddier.

His Choice.

Blobbs—If you were going in for music which instrument would you choose?

Slobbs—Well, I've always thought I would like to be a soloist on a cash register.—Philadelphia Record.

Her Choice.

"Why should I marry you?" she asked superciliously.

"Well, of course," he replied viciously. "you can die an old maid if you want to."—Lippincott's.

Afterthoughts.

A—The best retorts are never uttered. B—No?

A—No. I think of 'em ten minutes after the other fellow has gone home. —Judge.

HE CAUGHT IT.

But Not in the Way He Had Expected or Desired.

The ferry dock was crowded with weary homegoers when through the crowd rushed a man—hot, excited, laden to the chin with bundles of every shape and size. He sprinted down the pier, his eyes fixed on a ferryboat only two or three feet out from the pier. He paused but an instant on the string-piece, and then, cheered on by the crowd, he made a flying leap across the intervening stretch of water and landed safely on the deck. A fat man happened to be standing on the exact spot on which he struck, and they both went down with a resounding crash. When the arriving man had somewhat recovered his breath he apologized to the fat man. "I hope I didn't hurt you," he said. "I am sorry. But, anyway, I caught the boat!"

"But, you idiot," said the fat man, "the boat was coming in!"

He Wished For Mer.

They were dining in a restaurant and he had ordered a whole roast chicken.

"You see," he explained as he showed her the wishbone, "you take hold here. Then we must both make a wish and pull, and when it breaks the one who has the bigger part of it will have his or her wish gratified."

"But I don't know what to wish for," she protested.

"Oh, you can think of something," he said.

"No, I can't," she replied. "I can't think of anything I want very much."

"Well, I'll wish for you!" he exclaimed.

"Will you, really?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Well, then, there's no use fooling with the old wishbone," she interrupted, with a glad smile, "you can have me!"—Fun Magazine.

To After Dinner Speakers.

If you are enthusiastic and ambitious, why not begin in the following manner?

I shall detain you only— As I look about me— Before I begin my remarks I should like—

We are confronted by a great—I had not intended this evening— The past is behind us, but the great future—

The new generation is even now—the vital problem of the day is— It is possible that there may be some in this audience who— It requires a great deal of courage to—

I have hesitated to mention this matter before, but— When we consider some of these new problems that press in upon us we— —Life.

Generosity.

"It's easy to be generous when our own demand is gratified," exclaimed Henry Miller, the actor. "There was once a little girl who invaded the drawing room where her sister's fiance was waiting."

"Here," said the child, "here is a candy for you." And she gave Hillary McMasters a hard, white lozenge.

"Oh, what a nice white lozenge!" said the young man, putting it in his mouth and beginning to suck vigorously.

"Yes, isn't it?" lisped the little girl. "It was striped wiv pink once."—Young's Magazine.

Weather Wise.

In a certain town the local forecaster of the weather was so often wrong that his predictions became a standing joke to his small annoyance, for he was very sensitive. At length, in despair of living down his reputation, he asked headquarters to transfer him to another station.

A brief correspondence ensued.

"Why," asked headquarters, "do you wish to be transferred?"

"Because," the forecaster promptly replied, "the climate doesn't agree with me."—Bellman.

What He Was Doing.

"What are you using that shovel for?"

"To dig with, you ninny."

"What are you digging for?"

"Oh, for about twenty minutes."—Pittsburgh Press.

All He Had.

Henry Augustus was learning to dress himself. He was not as big as the name sounds.

Mother, looking on, said, "Why, my son, you have your shoes on the wrong feet!"

"Well," screamed Henry Augustus, "they're the only feet I have to put 'em on!"—Judge.

Sport.

His Friend—Go in for any kind of sport, Mr. Specks?

Specks—Yes; I collect insects.—Sketch.

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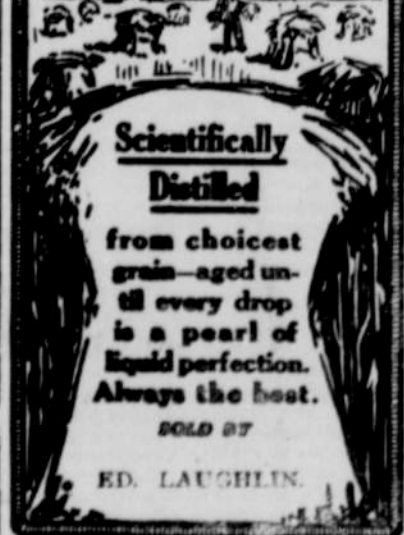


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