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THE GUARDIAN SHORT STORY

SPRING BEAUTIES.

By Margaret Richards.

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"Uncle John!" No answer. "Uncle John!" "Um-hm." He did not put down his paper, but you knew he was listening.

"Do you suppose any 'spring beauties' have blossomed yet, Uncle John?" Slowly he lifted his eyes and turned his head to the window. A ray of warm spring sunshine slanted across the bare branches of the old elm; already the lawn was tinted here and there with green. You waited expectantly, your hand on Guy's great black head.

"Too early!" and Uncle John disappeared again behind the folds of his paper. At no time was Uncle John's conversation likely to be adorned with any unnecessary words.

You sighed and stood looking out of the window, a wistful, disappointed little girl; looking while the huge Newfoundland dog beside you pushed his cold nose against your hand and licked your fingers with his great, rough tongue; looking while the budding maple bough beckoned and the million tiny little voices of spring called to you and a lovely little path bordered with sweet flower faces unfolded itself invitingly before your mind's eye.

"You'll get your feet wet!"

On you went, the spring echoes in your ears, the spring sunshine in your eyes, to find your way suddenly blocked by a figure in front. Wonderingly you took your eyes from the glory of a newly leaved maple to see why the figure so obstinately stood in one place.



"HELLO, LITTLE DAME!" A familiar face laughed down at you. "Oh, Cousin Grace!" you cried delightedly.

Cousin Grace did not stay with Uncle John and Aunt Martha as you did. She lived with her father and mother in a house quite at the other end of the town. Nor was she a little girl like you, but a beautiful young lady, with bright sunny hair and wonderful blue eyes, and when she smiled—the sleeping beauty, you thought, and Cinderella and the beautiful princess in the tower must all have looked like Cousin Grace.

"Where are you going?" she asked, and you joyfully explained. If she would come with you she, too, might pick "spring beauties," you suggested. And, although she laughingly shook her head over the flowers, she, too, must have heard the spring voices, for she turned and followed you along a path that wandered away from the road through clumps of young maples and silver birches.

"This time?" you queried, racing Guy to an elder bush, then scampering back again. A memory of past frolics enveloped you. "If only Mr. Ned were here," you mused regretfully. Cousin Grace said nothing, but the pretty smile faded suddenly from her lips. You regarded her in astonishment. Could it be possible that she did not want him too? Why, she and you and Mr. Ned had always had the greatest fun. Silently reproachful, you raised your eyes to her face, and two tears rolled slowly down your cheeks. "I wish you wouldn't look at me like that," she said almost sharply. "But it is your fault. Aunt Martha said so. She said she guessed you were sorry enough, now Mr. Ned has gone to New York, that you flirted so—so (you drew a long breath)—so outrageously," you finished, with conscious pride.

"Nonsense!" said Cousin Grace, and you saw that her eyes were very bright and her cheeks seemed uncommonly pink. "Nonsense, Aunt Martha should remember!" She never finished, for with a short bark Guy made for the little stream, his tail waving frantically as he disappeared behind the rows of alders skirting the bank. One look, and with a glad cry, you followed him, skipping

from stone to stone in short skirted freedom.

On a rock in the middle of the stream, tall, broad shouldered, his clothing wet, his heavy boots streaked with mud, stood Mr. Ned, his pipe in his mouth, peacefully fishing.

"Hello, little dame! How do you, old boy?" he called gayly, and then he dropped his line and landing net abruptly and, cap in hand, leaped quickly across the stepping stones and held out his hand to Cousin Grace. He had run up from New York for a couple of days' trout fishing, he said, and was so glad to see his old friends, and then they sat on the rocks and talked of such trifling things as game law and trout fishing and the goodness of the millstone, while you broke off alders twigs and threw them in the stream for Guy to catch.

Suddenly Cousin Grace looked straight up into Mr. Ned's eyes. "I hear you are very happy, in New York."

"Yes," said Mr. Ned. "Cherchez la femme?" she questioned.

"I see you have found me out," said Mr. Ned.

"Then there is somebody?"

"And you really are to be married?"

"In the fall," replied Mr. Ned promptly.

"Ned"—Cousin Grace put out her hand wistfully, her lips trembling—"I hope you will be happy."

"Thank you, I expect to be," said Mr. Ned. "We shall have a cottage in a pretty suburban town; nothing very elaborate, just a comfortable, homey little place with porches and a little ground. And we shall not be extravagant in the furnishing—just our books and pictures, a couple of good rugs and a few pieces of old mahogany," he ended, smiling dreamily.

"It is late," Cousin Grace spoke coldly—"and if we are to find 'spring beauties' we must go on." She rose as she spoke and gave him her hand.

So you went on, although the brightness of the spring day had departed—went on and left Mr. Ned throwing out his line and whistling cheerfully.

And then you came to the little path that had unfolded itself before your mind's eye, a path that pushed through the alders and willows and stretched over tiny threads of water that wandered away from the little stream.

It was there that you found them, clusters of "spring beauties," raising their delicate lower faces from the muddy ground. You dropped on your knees beside them! You laid your face softly against them, going from cluster to cluster in an ecstasy of delight. Not until you had plucked a handful of the frail stalks did you remember Cousin Grace.

"I've found them! I've found them!" you shouted. Still kneeling, you turned and looked back along the path, then you rose slowly to your feet.

In the middle of the path stood Cousin Grace and Mr. Ned. She had been crying, for her eyes were still wet, but she looked beautiful now and was smiling as Mr. Ned held her hands and looked down at her.

"You would not listen to me. I had to resort to desperate measures," he said, "and anyhow I wasn't so far out of the way, for I am going to be married in the fall, am I not, sweetheart?"

You know there has never been—can never be—any one but you," he added as his arms closed about her.

Your eyes grew big with wonder and delight. You did not understand how it had happened. You did not care. It was like a lovely fairy tale. Cousin Grace was the beautiful princess, and

the prince had, but claimed his own. Wide eyed and happy, you confronted them, while the pale "spring beauties" slipped from your fingers and lay upon the ground unheeded, a silvery, fragrant offering at love's shrine.

Honor the Old Time School. Never speak or write of old time schools in derision. We are in advance of them in many ways, it is true, and for that we are thankful, but our thankfulness should be largely mixed with humility. Those were the schools of our fathers and grandfathers, and really it must be admitted that they were not so very far behind us in our respect. They did their best in the light of that tallow candle. Are we doing as well in the brilliant blaze shed upon our path by electricity? They were slow in reaching an objective point in their ancient lumbering vehicles. Do we accomplish as much when we reach our journey's end by the limit? These are questions which the youth and middle-aged of our day should ponder.—Western School Journal.

Weighing as a Game of Chance. No one can live long in Bombay without observing the freedom from restraint that is evident among the users of scales and weights. Scales of all sorts may be seen, some with wooden beams, evidently homemade, others of recognized pattern, on which are used chunks of stone and odd pieces of iron by way of weights. Silver-smiths, according to the Indian Textile Journal, still use the red seed of the acacia or the wild licorice for weighing the precious metals, oblivious of the fact that the weight of seeds is not constant and that they may readily be exchanged for others of less or more weight.

"She isn't Me." A woman was waiting for her sister in a railway station when a gentleman, looking for his wife and misled by a general resemblance in figure and clothing, stepped up behind her and, laying his hand on her shoulder, exclaimed, "Thank goodness, Emma, it's you!" The name he used happened to be really hers, which made the sudden familiarity even more startling. She jumped nervously. "You're mistaken, sir!" she gasped. "I'm Emma, but she isn't me."—Youth's Companion.

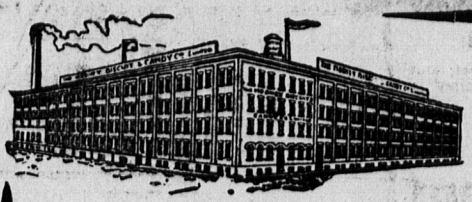
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From any person or persons willing to contract to supply "The Hospital for the Insane," Falconwood, for the year ending 31st December, 1908, with the following articles, the same to be delivered at the Institute at the cost of the contractor, in such quantity or quantities as shall from time to time be required, viz:—Flour, butter, (creamy) black tea, coffee, barley, beans, cheese, cornmeal, P. E. I oatmeal, salt, soap, washing soda, tobacco, molasses, beef (fresh) mutton, low peas, codfish, rice, kerosene oil, sugar, (brown and granulated) suits of homespun clothing, (no pockets) blankets grey and white 8x8 1/2 inches XXXX and weight, Island drugget.

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