

Memoirs of A Child

(Edith Fisher)

(Continued from page 2)

Mother's new find was called "Teenie". She was an old dilapidated specimen of over seventy. She had one tooth left but a ruddy face like an apple. She was very fat and loose looking and her clothes seemed to hang from her body. Either her clothes were too large, or her body too hilly, but they slipped all the time. She was all smiles and told Mother she had never travelled on a train and was so happy to go to Glasgow and live in a big town. She was very fond of children and loved work so much that she would rather work than sleep or eat. Mother asked her when she would care to come, but Teenie said she was ready to travel immediately. She had no clothes and Mother questioned her. Poor Teenie confessed that all she had was on her back; she carried a little round tin box in her hand. It must have been all her early possessions. She had not a relative in the world and just wanted a good home. Mother had to buy her a couple of aprons and house-dresses and underwear on their way home. Teenie begged for a white starched cap; she wanted to play the part of a "Widow" too. But Mother knew that her round face would look comical with a white starched cap perched on a head that boasted of a couple of hairs. Poor Teenie was anxious to make an impression; she was afraid we might not approve of her.

Teenie presented a real motherly appearance in our home although she was a confirmed spider and had been rigidly brought up to hate all men. At first eating was her religion. One had only to go into the kitchen at all hours of the day and often at night to see Teenie sitting over a cup 'O tea and bread and jam. As soon as the novelty of eating wore off, she confined herself to thirty cups of strong tea a day. Mother bought her a good sized mug and around ten o'clock at night, Teenie would be seen perched in bed, mug in hand and the Holy Bible in the other. The monotonous drone of her voice resounded through the house. She loved the phrase, "Verily I say unto Ye" and kept repeating it and repeating. She could not read well, and we had to help her pronounce many words which she soon forgot the following day.

Teenie never took me for a walk. In the first place she walked very slowly and told Mother she was afraid of catching cold and preferred to stay home and drink her Cup 'O Tea. The only time she ever got fresh air was when she had to hang the clothes out the window to dry. It took ten cups of tea afterwards to take away the "chill" as she called it.

She had a little tin box which contained all she had in this wide world. She never tired opening it and examining the contents very tenderly. There were a few old coins a lock of her mother's hair, a small worn Bible and a poem about Christ. This poem was read and re-read as it was in a newspaper clipping, it soon was yellow and wrinkled from constant handling.

Teenie never drank anything stronger than tea and we were very grateful for this virtue, but after a goodly portion of this fluid, she would stand in the middle of the kitchen floor and sing in a squeaky voice.

Britannia, Britannia, Britannia rules the waves.  
Britain never, never shall be slaves!"

The tea cup or rather mug was waved in the air, and she certainly looked very dramatic in this posture. Her favorite ditty after a day's heavy tea drinking was,

"I'll take the high road and you'll take the low road,  
And I'll be in Scotland before we are done!"

This often brought the tears to her eyes, and I always imagined that she was a real daughter of the McGregor Clan, and perhaps reincarnated from one of the Old Ironsides of Robert Bruce's time.

One night we were all awakened by a loud choking sound; it came from Teenie's room. We were all scared and feared the end had come. Father cautiously walked in and found our Teenie in a terrible fit of houghing. He quickly brought her a glass of water. When she felt better she explained just what had happened much to our amazement. She had put a good sized peppermint in her mouth and had fallen asleep before it melted. She swallowed it and that accounted for her nearly choking. Mother was furious and scolded her severely. She had no right eating sweets at night, especially in bed. Teenie was very angry now. It was the first time that she ever exhibited a temper. Her apple face puffed up, and then puffed out and got as red as a cranberry. "Mrs. Frank, I must break my fast at night. I can't wait all night without eating something and she pulled out a bag of peppermints which she said she always kept under her pillow at night in order to pass the night pleasantly. Mother felt sorry and gave her permission to eat her peppermints during the night, but she made her promise us she would never doze off to sleep until the peppermint had fully melted in her mouth.

Teenie was not much of an asset in our household. She was slow and slovenly, but very obedient and we learned to love her. I doubt however if mother could have kept her much longer as our house was very neglected during her apprenticeship.

Father's interest in business made it necessary for us to leave dear old Glasgow and of course we couldn't take our Teenie with us. When Teenie heard that her days with us were numbered, she was very sad but philosophical. She confided to me that as long as you walked the straight and narrow road, it did not matter where the good Lord sent you. She only hoped that she would be able to see us some day if not on this earth, then on the Golden Shore where she would be waiting for us.

When we helped us pack and refused to look for a situation until we were ready to leave.

or Teenie! When we consoled her and told her we felt sure she would meet nice people in her next position, she gravely shook her head and said that she hoped she could have her cup 'O tea, no matter what happened. I feel sorry that Mother did not have the foresight to buy her twenty pounds of tea before leaving. It would have been a real gift.

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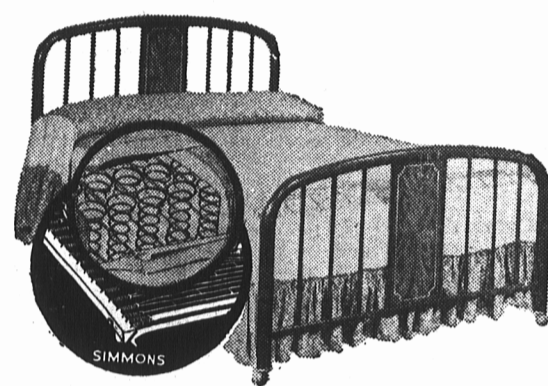
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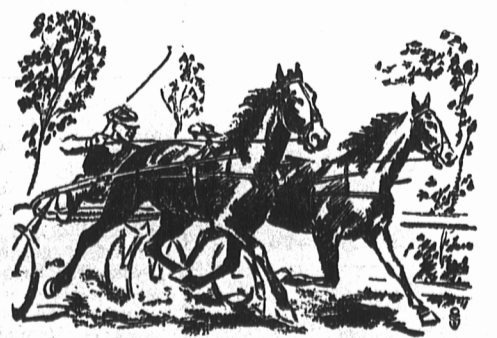
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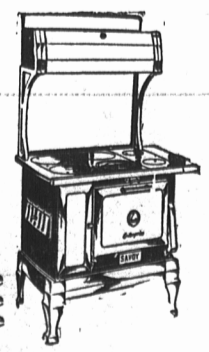
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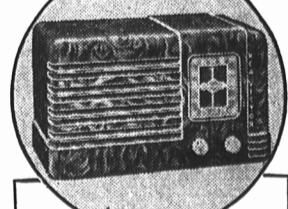
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