

**BANGS JOHN
KENDRICK**

PASTE JEWELS

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Paste Jewels

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John Kendrick Bangs

Paste Jewels

PREFACE

It may interest the readers of this collection of tales, if there should be any such, to know that the incidents upon which the stories are based are unfortunately wholly truthful. They have one and all come under the author's observation during the past ten years, and with the exception of "Mr. Bradley's Jewel," concerning whom it is expressly stated that she was employed through lack of other available material, not one of the servants herein made famous or infamous, as the case may be, was employed except upon presentation of references written by responsible persons that could properly have been given only to domestics of the most sterling character. It is this last fact that points the moral of the tales here presented, if it does not adorn them.

J. K. B.

Yonkers, N. Y., 1897

THE EMANCIPATION OF THADDEUS

They were very young, and possibly too amiable. Thaddeus was but twenty-four and Bessie twenty-two when they twain, made one, walked down the middle aisle of St. Peter's together.

Everybody remarked how amiable she looked even then; not that a bride on her way out of church should look unamiable, of course, but we all know how brides do look, as a rule, on such occasions—looks difficult of analysis, but strangely suggestive of determined timidity, if there can be such a quality expressed in the human face. It is the natural expression of one who knows that she has taken the most important step of her life, and, on turning to face those who have been bidden to witness the ceremony, observes that the sacredness of the occasion is somewhat marred by the presence in church of the unbidden curiosity-seekers, who have come for much the same reason as that which prompts them to go to the theatre—to enjoy the spectacle. But Bessie's face showed nothing but that intense amiability for which she had all her life long been noted; and as for Thaddeus, he never ceased to smile from the moment he turned and faced the congregation until the carriage door closed upon him and his bride, and then, of course, he had to, his lips being otherwise engaged.

Indeed, Thaddeus's amiability was his greatest vice. He had never been known to be ill-natured in his life but once, and that was during the week that Bessie had kept him in suspense while she was making up her mind not to say "No" to an important proposition he had made—a proposition, by-the-way, which resulted in this very ceremony, and was largely responsible for the trials and tribulations which followed.

Thaddeus was rich—that is, he had an income and a vocation; a charming little home was awaiting their coming, off in a convenient suburb; and, best of all, Bessie was an accomplished house-keeper, having studied under the best mistresses of that art to be found in the country. And even if she had not completely mastered the art of keeping house, Thaddeus was confident that all would go well with them, for their waitress was a jewel, inherited from Bessie's mother, and the cook, though somewhat advanced in years, was beyond cavil, having been known to the family of Thaddeus for a longer period than Thaddeus himself had been. The only uncertain quantity in the household was Norah, the up-stairs girl, who was not only new, but auburn-haired and of Celtic extraction.

Under such circumstances did the young couple start in life, and many there were who looked upon them with envy. At first, of course, the household did not run as smoothly as it might have done—meals were late, and served with less ceremony than either liked; but, as Bessie said, as she and Thaddeus were finishing their breakfast one morning, "What could you expect?"

To which Thaddeus, with his customary smile, replied "What, indeed! We get along much better than I really thought we should with old Ellen."

Old Ellen was the cook, and she had been known to Thaddeus as "Old Ellen" even before his lips were able to utter the words.

"Ellen has her ways, and Jane has hers," said Bessie. "After Jane has got accustomed to Ellen's way of getting breakfast ready, she will know better how to go about her own work. I think, perhaps, cook's manner is a little harsh. She made Jane cry about the omelet this morning; but Jane is teary, anyhow."

"It wouldn't do to have Ellen oily and Jane watery," Thaddeus answered. "They'd mix worse than ever then. We're in pretty good luck as it is."

"I think so, too, Teddy," Bessie replied; "but Jane is so foolish. She might have known better than to send the square platter down to Ellen for an omelet, when the omelet was five times as long as it was broad."

"You always had square omelets, though, at your house—that is, whenever I was there you had," said Thaddeus. "And I suppose Jane's notion is that as things happened under your mother's régime, so they ought to happen here."

“Possibly that was her notion,” replied Bessie; “but, then, in your family the omelets were oblong, and Ellen is too old to depart from her traditions. Old people get set in their ways, and as long as results are satisfactory, we ought not to be captious about methods.”

“No, indeed, we shouldn’t,” smiled Thaddeus; “but I don’t want you to give in to Ellen to too great an extent, my dear. This is your home, and not my mother’s, and your ways must be the ways of the house.”

“Ellen is all right,” returned Bessie, “and I am so delighted to have her, because, you know, Teddy dear, she knows what you like even better, perhaps, than I do—naturally so, having grown up in your family.”

“Reverse that, my dear. Our family grew up on Ellen. She set the culinary pace at home. Mother always let her have her own way, and it may be she is a little spoiled.”

“Do you know, Teddy, I wonder that, having had Ellen for so many years, your mother was willing to give her up.”

“Oh, I can explain that,” Thaddeus answered. “I’m the youngest, you know; the rest of the family were old enough to be weaned. Besides, father was getting old, and he had a notion that the comforts of a hotel were preferable to the discomforts of house-keeping. Father likes to eat meals at all hours, and the annunciator system of hotel life, by which you can summon anything in an instant, from a shower-bath to a feast of terrapin, was rather pleasing to him. He was always an admirer of the tales of the genii, and he regards the electric button in a well-appointed hotel as the nearest approach to the famous Aladdin lamp known to science. You press the button, and your genii do the rest.”

“But a hotel isn’t home,” said Bessie.

“A hotel isn’t this home,” answered Thaddeus. “Love in a cottage for me; but, Bessie, perhaps you—perhaps it wouldn’t be a bad idea for you to speak to Jane and Ellen this morning about their differences. I am an hour late now.”

Then Thaddeus kissed Bessie, and went down to business.

On Thaddeus’s departure Bessie’s cheerfulness also deserted her, and for the first time in her life she felt that it would do her good if she could fly out at somebody—somebody, however, who was not endeared to the heart of Thaddeus, or too intimately related to her own family, which left no one but Norah upon whom to vent the displeasure that she felt. Norah was, therefore, sought out, and requested rather peremptorily to say how long it had been since she had dusted the parlor; to which Norah was able truthfully to answer, “This mornin’, mim.” Whereupon Bessie’s desire to be disagreeable departed, and saying that Norah could now clean the second-story front-room windows, she withdrew to her own snug sewing-room until luncheon should be served. She was just a trifle put out with Norah for being so efficient. There is nothing so affronting to a young house-keeper as the discovery that the inherited family jewels, upon whom much reliance has been placed, are as paste alongside of the newly acquired bauble from whom little was expected. It was almost unkind in Norah, Bessie thought, to be so impeccably conscientious when Jane and Ellen were developing eccentricities; but there was the consoling thought that when they had all been together a month or two longer, their eccentricities would so shape themselves that they would fit into one another, and ultimately bind the little domestic structure more firmly together.

“Perhaps if I let them alone,” Bessie said to herself, “they’ll forget their differences more quickly. I guess, on the whole, I will say nothing about it.”

That night, when Thaddeus came home, the first thing he said to his wife was: “Well, I suppose you were awfully firm this morning, eh? Went down into the kitchen and roared like a little tyrant, eh? I really was afraid to read the paper on the way home. Didn’t know but what I’d read of a ‘Horrid Accident in High Life. Mrs. Thaddeus Perkins’s Endeavor to Maintain Discipline in the Household Results Fatally. Two Old Family Servants Instantly Killed, and Three of the Kitchen Table Legs Broken by a Domestic Explosion!’”

“Be serious, Thaddeus,” said Bessie.

And Thaddeus became instantly serious. “They—they haven’t left us, have they?” he whispered, in an awe-struck tone.

“No. I—I thought I’d let them fight it out between themselves,” replied Bessie. “You see, Thaddeus, servants are queer, and do not like to have their differences settled by others than themselves. It’ll work out all right, if we let them alone.”

“I don’t know but that you are right,” said Thaddeus, after a few moments of thought. “They’re both sensible girls, and capable of fighting their own battles. Let’s have dinner. I’m hungry as a bear.”

It was half-past six o’clock, and the usual hour for dinner. At 8.10 dinner was served. The intervening time was consumed by Jane and Ellen endeavoring to settle their differences by the silent, sniffy method—that is, Jane would sniff, and Ellen would be silent; and then Ellen would sniff, and Jane would be silent. As for Thaddeus and Bessie, they were amused rather than angry to have the dear little broiled chicken Bessie had provided served on the large beef-platter; and when the pease came up in a cut-glass salad-dish, Thaddeus laughed outright, but Bessie’s eyes grew moist. It was too evident that Jane and Ellen were not on speaking terms, and there was strong need for some one to break the ice. Fortunately, Bessie’s mother called that evening, and some of her time was spent below-stairs. What she said there only Ellen and Jane knew, but it had its effect, and for two or three weeks the jewels worked almost as satisfactorily as did Norah, the new girl, and quite harmoniously.

“Bessie,” said Thaddeus, one night as they ate their supper, “does it occur to you that the roast is a little overdone to-night?”

“Yes, Teddy, it is very much overdone. I must speak to Ellen about it. She is a little careless about some things. I’ve told her several times that you like your beef rare.”

“Well, I’d tell her again. Constant dropping of water on its surface will wear away a stone, and I think, perhaps, the constant dropping of an idea on a cook’s head may wear away some of the thickest parts of that—at least, until it is worn thin enough for the idea to get through to where her brain ought to be. You might say to her, too, that for several nights past dinner has been cold.”

“I’ll speak to her in the morning,” was Bessie’s reply; and the dear little woman was true to her purpose.

“She explained about the beef and the cold dinner, Ted,” she said, when Thaddeus came home that afternoon.

“Satisfactorily to all hands, I hope?” said Thaddeus, with his usual smile.

“Yes, perfectly. In fact, I wonder we hadn’t thought of it ourselves. In the old home, you know, the dinner-hour was six o’clock, while here it is half-past six.”

“What has that got to do with it?” asked Thaddeus.

“How obtuse of you, Teddy!” exclaimed Bessie. “Don’t you see, the poor old thing has been so used to six-o’clock dinners that she has everything ready for us at six? And if we are half an hour late, of course things get cold; or if they are kept in the oven, as was the case with the beef last night, they are apt to be overdone?”

“Why, of course. Ha! Ha! Wonder I didn’t think of that,” laughed Thaddeus, though his mirth did seem a little forced. “But—she’s—she’s going to change, I suppose?”

“She said she’d try,” Bessie replied. “She was really so very nice about it, I hadn’t the heart to scold her.”

“I’m glad,” was all Thaddeus said, and during the rest of the meal he was silent. Once or twice he seemed on the verge of saying something, but apparently changed his mind.

“Are you tired to-night, dear?” said Bessie, as the dessert was served.

“No. Why?” said Thaddeus, shortly.

“Oh, nothing. I thought you seemed a little so,” Bessie answered. “You mustn’t work too hard down-town.”

“No, my dear girl,” he said. “I won’t, and I don’t. I was thinking all through dinner about those girls down-stairs. Perhaps—perhaps I had better talk to them, eh? You are so awfully kind-

hearted, and it does seem to me as though they imposed a little on you, that's all. The salad to-night was atrocious. It should have been kept on the ice, instead of which it comes to the table looking like a last year's bouquet."

Bessie's eyes grew watery. "I'm afraid it was my fault," she said. "I ought to have looked after the salad myself. I always did at home. I suppose Jane got it out expecting me to prepare it."

"Oh, well, never mind," said Thaddeus, desirous of soothing the troubled soul of his wife.

"I wouldn't have mentioned it, only Jane does too much thinking, in a thoughtless way, anyhow. Servants aren't paid to think."

"I'll tell you what, Thaddeus," said Bessie, her spirits returning, "we are just as much to blame as they are; we've taken too much for granted, and so have they. Suppose we spend the evening putting together a set of rules for the management of the house? It will be lots of fun, and perhaps it will do the girls good. They ought to understand that while our parents have had their ways—and reasonable ways—there is no reason why we should not have our ways."

"In other words," said Thaddeus, "what we want to draw up is a sort of Declaration of Independence."

"That's it, exactly," Bessie replied.

"Better get a slate and write them on that," suggested Thaddeus, with a broad grin. "Then we can rub out whatever Jane and Ellen don't like."

"I hate you when you are sarcastic," said Bessie, with a pout, and then she ran for her pad and pencil.

The evening was passed as she had suggested, and when they retired that night the house of Perkins was provided with a constitution and by-laws.

"I don't suppose I shall recognize my surroundings when I get back home to-night," said Thaddeus, when he waked up in the morning.

"Why not?" asked Bessie. "What strange transformation is there to be?"

"The discipline will be so strict," answered Thaddeus. "I presume you will put those rules of ours into operation right away?"

"I have been thinking about that," said Bessie, after a moment. "You see, Thad, there are a great many things about running a house that neither you nor I are familiar with yet, and it seems to me that maybe we'd better wait a little while before we impose these rules on the girls; it would be awkward to have to make changes afterwards, you know."

"There is something in that," said Thaddeus; "but, after all, not so much as you seem to think. All rules have exceptions. I've no doubt that the cook will take exception to most of them."

"That's what I'm afraid of, and as she's so old I kind of feel as if I ought to respect her feelings a little more than we would Norah's, for instance. I can just tell you I shall make Norah stand around."

"I think it would be a good plan if you did," said Thaddeus. "I'm afraid Norah will die if you don't. She works too hard to be a real servant—real servants stand around so much, you know."

"Don't be flippant, Thaddeus. This is a very serious matter. Norah is a good girl, as you say.

She works so much and so quickly that she really makes me tired, and I'm constantly oppressed with the thought that she may get through with whatever she is doing before I can think of something else to occupy her time. But with her we need have none of the feeling that we have with Jane and Ellen. She is young, and susceptible to new impressions. She can fall in with new rules, while the other two might chafe under them. Now, I say we wait until we find out if we cannot let well enough alone, and not raise discord in our home."

"There never was an Eden without its serpent," sighed Thaddeus. "I don't exactly like the idea of fitting our rules to their idiosyncrasies."

"It isn't that, dear. I don't want that, either; but neither do we wish to unnecessarily hamper them in their work by demanding that they shall do it our way."

“Oh, well, you are the President of the Republic,” said Thaddeus. “You run matters to suit yourself, and I believe we’ll have the most prosperous institution in the world before we know it. If it were a business matter, I’d have those rules or die; but I suppose you can’t run a house as you would a business concern. I guess you are right. Keep the rules a week. Why not submit ’em to your mother first?”

“I thought of that,” said Bessie. “But then it occurred to me that as Ellen had served always under your mother, it would be better if we consulted her.”

“I don’t,” said Thaddeus. “She’d be sure to tell you not to have any rules, or, if she didn’t, she would advise you to consult with the cook in the matter, which would result in Ellen’s becoming President, and you and I taxpayers. She used to run our old house, and now see the consequences!”

“What are the consequences?” asked Bessie.

“Mother and father have been driven into a hotel, and the children have all been married.”

“That’s awful,” laughed Bessie.

And so the rules were filed away for future reference. That they would have remained on file for an indefinite period if Thaddeus had not asked a friend to spend a few weeks with him, I do not doubt. Bessie grew daily more mistrustful of their value, and Thaddeus himself preferred the comfort of a quiet though somewhat irregular mode of living to the turmoil likely to follow the imposition of obnoxious regulations upon the aristocrats below-stairs. But the coming of Thaddeus’s friend made a difference.

The friend was an elderly man, with a business and a system. He was a man, for instance, who all his life had breakfasted at seven, lunched at one, and dined at six-thirty, of which Thaddeus was aware when he invited him to make his suburban home his headquarters while his own house was being renovated and his family abroad. Thaddeus was also aware that the breakfast and dinner hours under Bessie’s régime were nominally those of his friend, and so he was able to assure Mr. Liscomb that his coming would in no way disturb the usual serenity of the domestic pond. The trusting friend came. Breakfast number one was served fifteen minutes after the hour, and for the first time in ten years Mr. Liscomb was late in arriving at his office. He had not quite recovered from the chagrin consequent upon his tardiness when that evening he sat down to dinner at Thaddeus’s house, served an hour and ten minutes late, Ellen having been summoned by wire to town to buy a pair of shoes for one of her sister’s children, the sister herself suffering from poverty and toothache.

“I hope you were not delayed seriously this morning, Mr. Liscomb,” said Bessie, after dinner.

“Oh no, not at all!” returned Liscomb, polite enough to tell an untruth, although its opposite was also a part of his system.

“Ellen must be more prompt with breakfast,” said Thaddeus. “Seven, sharp, is the hour. Did you speak to her about it?”

“No, but I intend to,” answered Bessie. “I’ll tell her the first thing after breakfast to-morrow. I meant to have spoken about it to-day, but when I got down-stairs she had gone out.”

“Was it her day out?”

“No; but her sister is sick, and she was sent for. It was all right. She left word where she was going with Jane.”

“That was very considerate of her,” said Liscomb, politely.

“Yes,” said Bessie. “Ellen’s a splendid woman.”

Later on in the evening, about half-past nine, when Mr. Liscomb, wearied with the excitement of the first irregular day he had known from boyhood, retired, Thaddeus took occasion to say:

“Bessie, I think you’d better tell Ellen about having breakfast promptly in the morning to-night, before we go to bed.”

“Very well,” returned Bessie, “I’ll go down now and do it;” and down she went. In a moment she was back. “The poor thing was so tired,” she said, “that she went to bed as soon as dinner was cooked, so I couldn’t tell her.”

“Why didn’t you send up word to her by Jane?”

“Oh, she *must* be asleep by this time!”

“Oh!” said Thaddeus.

It was nine o’clock the next morning when Ellen opened her eyes. Breakfast had been served a half-hour earlier, Jane and Bessie having cooked some eggs, which Bessie ate alone, since Thaddeus and Liscomb were compelled to take the eight-o’clock train to town, hungry and forlorn. Liscomb was very good-natured about it to Thaddeus, but his book-keeper had a woful tale to tell of his employer’s irritability when he returned home that night. As for Thaddeus, he spoke his mind very plainly—to Liscomb. Bessie never knew what he said, nor did any of the servants; but he said it to Liscomb, and, as Liscomb remarked later, he seemed like somebody else altogether while speaking, he was so fierce and determined about it all. That night a telegram came from Liscomb, saying that he had been unexpectedly delayed, and that, as there were several matters requiring his attention at his own home, he thought he would not be up again until Sunday.

Bessie was relieved, and Thaddeus was mad.

“We *must* have those rules,” he said.

And so they were brought out. Ellen received them with stolid indifference; Jane with indignation, if the slamming of doors in various parts of the house that day betokened anything.

Norah accepted them without a murmur. It made no difference to Norah on what day she swept the parlor, nor did she seem to care very much because her “days at home” were shifted, so that her day out was Friday instead of Thursday.

“Has Ellen said anything about the rules, my dear?” asked Thaddeus, a week or two later.

“Not a word,” returned Bessie.

“Has she ‘looked’ anything?”

“Volumes,” Bessie answered.

“Does she take exception to any of them?”

“No,” said Bessie, “and I’ve discovered why, too. She hasn’t read them.”

Thaddeus was silent for a minute. Then he said, quite firmly for him, “She must read them.”

“*Must* is a strong word, Teddy,” Bessie replied, “particularly since Ellen can’t read.”

“Then you ought to read them to her.”

“That’s what I think,” Bessie answered, amiably. “I’m going to do it very soon—day after tomorrow, I guess.”

“What has Jane said?” asked Thaddeus, biting his lip.

Bessie colored. Jane had expressed herself with considerable force, and Bessie had been a little afraid to tell Thaddeus what she had said and done.

“Oh, nothing much,” she answered. “She—she said she’d never worn caps like a common servant, and wasn’t going to begin now; and then she didn’t like having to clean the silver on Saturday afternoons, because the silver-powder got into her finger-nails; and that really is too bad, Teddy, because Saturday night is the night her friends come to call, and silver-powder is awfully hard to get out of your nails, you know; and, of course, a girl wants to appear neat and clean when she has callers.”

“Of course,” said Thaddeus. “And I judge by the appearance of the brass fenders that she doesn’t like to polish them up on Wednesday because it gives her a backache on Thursday, which is her day out.”

Bessie’s eyes took on their watery aspect again.

“Do the fenders look so very badly, Ted?” she asked.

“They’re atrocious,” said Thaddeus.

“I’m sorry, dear; but I did my best. I polished them myself this afternoon; Jane had to go to a funeral.”

“Oh, my!” cried Thaddeus. “This subject’s too much for me. Let’s go out—somewhere, anywhere—to a concert. Music hath its charms to soothe a savage breast, and my breast is simply the very essence of wildness to-night. Put on your things, Bess, and hurry, or I’ll suffocate.”

Bessie did as she was told, and before ten o’clock the happy pair had forgotten their woes, nor do I think they would have remembered them again that night had they not found on their return home that they were locked out.

At this even the too amiable Bessie was angry—very angry—unjustly, as it turned out afterwards.

“They weren’t to blame, after all,” she explained to Thaddeus, when he came home the next night. “I spoke to them about it, and they all thought we’d spend the night with your mother and father at the Oxford.”

“They’re a thoughtful lot,” said Thaddeus.

And so time passed. The “treasures” did as they pleased; the dubious auburn-haired Norah continued her aggravating efficiency. Bessie’s days were spent in anticipation of an interview of an unpleasant nature with Jane or Ellen “to-morrow.” Thaddeus’s former smile grew less perpetual—that is, it was always visible when Bessie was before him, but when Bessie was elsewhere, so also was the token of Thaddeus’s amiability. He chafed under the tyranny, but it never occurred to him but once that it would be well for him to interview Ellen and Jane; and then, summoning them fiercely, he addressed them mildly, ended the audience with a smile, and felt himself beneath their sway more than ever.

Then something happened. A day came and went, and the morrow thereof found Thaddeus dethroned from even his nominal position of head of the house. There was a young Thaddeus, an eight-pound Thaddeus, a round, red-cheeked, bald-headed Thaddeus that looked more like the Thaddeus of old than Thaddeus did himself; and then, at a period in which man feels himself the least among the insignificant, did our hero find happiness unalloyed once more, for to the pride of being a father was added the satisfaction of seeing Jane and Ellen acknowledge a superior. Make no mistake, you who read. It was not to Thaddeus junior that these gems bowed down. It was to the good woman who came in to care for the little one and his mother that they humbled themselves.

“She’s great,” said Thaddeus to himself, as he watched Jane bustling about to obey the command of the temporary mistress of the situation as she had never bustled before.

“She’s a second Elizabeth,” chuckled Thaddeus, as he listened to an order passed down the dumb-waiter shaft from the stout empress of the moment to the trembling queen of the kitchen.

“She’s a little dictatorial,” whispered Thaddeus to his newspaper, when the monarch of all she surveyed gave him *his* orders. “But there are times, even in a Republic like this, when a dictator is an advantage. I hate to see a woman cry, but the way Jane wept at the routing Mrs. Brown gave her this morning was a finer sight than Niagara.”

But, alas! this happy state of affairs could not last forever. Thaddeus was just beginning to get on easy terms with Mrs. Brown when she was summoned elsewhere.

“Change of heir is necessary for one in her profession,” sighed Thaddeus; and then, when he thought of resuming the reins himself, he sighed again, and wished that Mrs. Brown might have remained a fixture in the household forever. “Still,” he added, more to comfort himself than because he had any decided convictions to express—“still, a baby in the house will make a difference, and Ellen and Jane will behave better now that Bessie’s added responsibilities put them more upon their honor.”

For a time Thaddeus’s prophecy was correct. Ellen and Jane did do better for nearly two months, and then—but why repeat the old story? Then they lapsed, that is all, and became more tyrannical than ever. Bessie was so busy with little Ted that the household affairs outside of the nursery came under their exclusive control. Thaddeus stood it—I was going to say nobly, but I think it were better put ignobly—but he had a good excuse for so doing.

“A baby is an awful care to its mother,” he said; “a responsibility that takes up her whole time and attention. I don’t think I’d better complicate matters by getting into a row with the servants.”

And so it went. A year and another year passed. The pretty home was beginning to look old. The bloom of its youth had most improperly faded—for surely a home should never fade—but there was the boy, a growing delight to his father, so why complain? Better this easy-going life than one of domestic contention.

Then on a sudden the boy fell ill. The doctor came—shook his head gravely.

“You must take him to the sea-shore,” he said. “It is his only chance.”

And to the sea-shore they went, leaving the house in charge of the treasures.

“I have confidence in you,” said Thaddeus to Jane and Ellen on the morning of the departure, “so I have decided to leave the house open in your care. Mrs. Perkins wants you to keep it as you would if she were here. Whatever you need to make yourselves comfortable, you may get. Good-bye.”

“What a comfort it is,” said Bessie, when they had reached the sea-shore, and were indulging in their first bit of that woful luxury, homesickness—“what a comfort it is to feel that the girls are there to look after things! An empty house is such a temptation to thieves.”

“Yes,” said Thaddeus. “I hope they won’t entertain too much, though.”

“Ellen and Jane are too old for that sort of thing,” Bessie answered.

“How about Norah?”

“Oh, I forgot to tell you. There was nothing really for Norah to do, so I told her she could go off and stay with her mother on board-wages.”

“Good!” said Thaddeus, with a pleased smile. “It isn’t a bad idea to save, particularly when you are staying at the sea-shore.”

In this contented frame of mind they lived for several weeks. The boy grew stronger every day, and finally Thaddeus felt that the child was well enough to warrant his running back home for a night, “just to see how things were going.” That the girls were faithful, of course, he did not doubt; the regularity with which letters addressed to him at home—and they were numerous—reached him convinced him of that; but the hamper containing the week’s wash, which Ellen and Jane were to send, and which had been expected on Thursday of the preceding week, had failed for once to arrive; the boy had worn one dress four days, Thaddeus’s collars were getting low, and altogether he was just a little uneasy about things. So he availed himself of his opportunity and went home, taking with him a friend, in consideration of whom he telegraphed ahead to Ellen to prepare a good breakfast, not caring for dinner, since he and his companion expected to dine at the club and go to the theatre before going out to his home.

The result would have been fatal to Bessie’s peace of mind had she heard of it during her absence from home. But Thaddeus never told her, until it was a matter of ancient history, that when he arrived at home, a little after midnight, he found the place deserted, and was compelled to usher his friend in through the parlor window; that from top to bottom the mansion gave evidence of not having seen a broom or a dust-brush since the departure of the family; that Jane had not been seen in the neighborhood for one full week—this came from those living on adjoining property; that Ellen had been absent since early that morning, and was not expected to return for three days; and, crowning act of infamy, that he, Thaddeus, and his friend were compelled to breakfast next morning upon a half of a custard pie, a bit mouldy, found by the lord of the manor on the fast-melting remains of a cake of ice in the refrigerator. Whether it would have happened if Thaddeus had not been accompanied by a friend, whose laughter incited him to great deeds, or not I am not prepared to say, but something important did happen. Thaddeus rose to the occasion, and committed an act, and committed it thoroughly. The Thaddeus of old, the meek, long-suffering, too amiable Thaddeus, disappeared. The famous smile was given no chance to play. His wife was absent, and the smile was far away with her. Thaddeus, with one fell blow, burst his fetters and became free.

That afternoon, when he had returned to the seaboard, Bessie asked him, “How was the house?”

“Beautiful,” said Thaddeus, quite truthfully; for it was.

“Did Ellen say anything about the hamper?”

“Not a word.”

“Did you speak to her about it?”

“Nope.”

“Oh, Teddy! How could you forget it?”

To the lasting honor of Thaddeus be it said that he bore up under this unflinchingly.

“Did you have a good breakfast, Ted?” Bessie asked, returning to the subject later.

“Very,” said Thaddeus, thinking of the hearty meal he and his fellow-sufferer had eaten at the club after getting back to town. “We had a tomato omelet, coffee, toast, rice cakes, tenderloin steak, and grits.”

“Dear me!” smiled Bessie; she was so glad her Teddy had been so well treated. “All that? Ellen must have laid herself out.”

“Yes,” said Thaddeus; “I think she did.”

All the following week Thaddeus seemed to have a load on his mind—a load which he resolutely refused to share with his wife—and on Friday he found it necessary to go up to town.

“I thought this was your vacation,” remonstrated Bessie.

“Well, so it is,” said Thaddeus. “But—but I’ve got one or two matters to attend to—matters of very great importance—so that I think I’ll have to go.”

“If you must, you must,” said Bessie. “But I think it’s horrid of your partner to make you go back to town this hot weather.”

“Don’t be cross with my partner,” said Thaddeus; “especially my partner in this matter.”

“Have you different partners for different matters?” queried Bessie.

“Never mind about that, my dear; you’ll know all about it in time, so don’t worry.”

“All right, Teddy. But I don’t like to have you running away from me when I’m at a hotel. I’d rather be home, anyhow. Can’t I go with you? Little Ted is well enough now to go home.”

“Not this time; but you can go up next Wednesday if you wish,” returned Thaddeus, with a slight show of embarrassment.

And so it was settled, and Thaddeus went to town. On Wednesday they all left the sea-shore to return to Phillipseburg.

“Oh, how lovely it looks!” ejaculated Bessie, as she entered the house, Norah having opened the door. “But—er—where’s Jane, Norah?”

“Cookin’ the dinner, mim.”

“Why, Jane can’t cook.”

“If you please, mim, this is a new Jane.”

Bessie’s parasol fell to the floor. “A wha-a-at?” she cried.

“A new Jane. Mither Perkins has dispensed with old Jane and Ellen, mim.”

Bessie rushed up-stairs to her room and cried. The shock was too sudden. She longed for Thaddeus, who had remained at the station collecting the bath-tubs and other luxuries of the baby from the luggage-van, to come. What did it all mean? Jane and Ellen gone! New girls in their places!

And then Thaddeus came, and made all plain to the little woman, and when he was all through she was satisfied. He had discharged the tyrants, and had supplied their places. The latter was the important business which had taken him to town.

“But, Teddy,” Bessie said, with a smile, when she had heard all, “how did poor mild little you ever have the courage to face those two women and give them their discharge?”

Teddy blushed. “I didn’t,” he answered, meekly; “I wrote it.”

Five years have passed since then, and all has gone well. Thaddeus has remained free, and, as he proudly observes, domestics now tremble at his approach—that is, all except Norah, who remembers him as of old. Ellen and Jane are living together in affluence, having saved their wages for nearly the

whole of their term of “service.” Bessie is happy in the possession of two fine boys, to whom all her attention—all save a little reserved for Thaddeus—is given; and, as for the dubious, auburn-haired, and distinctly Celtic Norah, Thaddeus is afraid that she is developing into a “treasure.”

“Why do you think so?” Bessie asked him, when he first expressed that fear.

“Oh, she has the symptoms,” returned Thaddeus. “She has taken three nights off this week.”

MR. BRADLEY'S JEWEL

Thaddeus was tired, and, therefore, Thaddeus was grumpy. One premise only was necessary for the conclusion—in fact, it was the only premise upon which a conclusion involving Thaddeus's grumpiness could find a foothold. If Thaddeus felt rested, everything in the world could go wrong and he would smile as sweetly as ever; but with the slightest trace of weariness in his system the smile would fade, wrinkles would gather on his forehead, and grumpiness set in whether things were right or wrong. On this special occasion to which I refer, things were just wrong enough to give him a decent excuse—outside of his weariness—for his irritation. Norah, the housemaid, had officiously undertaken to cover up the shortcomings of John, who should have blacked Thaddeus's boots, and who had taken his day off without preparing the extra pair which the lord of the manor had expected to wear that evening. It was nice of the housemaid, of course, to try to black the extra pair to keep John out of trouble, but she might have been more discriminating. It was not necessary for her to polish, until they shone like Claude Lorraine glasses, two right boots, one of which, paradoxical as it may seem, was consequently the wrong boot; so that when Thaddeus came to dress for the evening's diversion there was nowhere to be found in his shoe-box a bit of leathern gear in which his left foot might appear in polite society to advantage. Possibly Thaddeus might have endured the pain of a right boot on a left foot, had not Norah unfortunately chosen for that member a box-toed boot, while for the right she had selected one with a very decided acute angle at its toe-end.

“Just like a woman!” ejaculated Thaddeus, angrily.

“Yes,” returned Bessie, missing Thaddeus's point slightly. “It was very thoughtful of Norah to look after John's work, knowing how important it was to you.”

Fortunately Thaddeus was out of breath trying to shine up the other pointed-toe shoe, so that his only reply to this was a look, which Bessie, absorbed as she was in putting the studs in Thaddeus's shirt, did not see. If she had seen it, I doubt if she would have been so entirely happy as the tender little song she was humming softly to herself seemed to indicate that she was.

“Some people are born lucky!” growled Thaddeus, as he finished rubbing up the left boot, giving it a satin finish which hardly matched the luminous brilliance of its mate, though he said it would do. “There's Bradley, now; he never has any domestic woes of this sort, and he pays just half what we do for his servants.”

“Oh, Mr. Bradley. I don't like him!” ejaculated Bessie. “You are always talking about Mr. Bradley, as if he had an automaton for a servant.”

“No, I don't say he has an automaton,” returned Thaddeus. “Automatons don't often work, and Bradley's jewel does. Her name is Mary, but Bradley always calls her his jewel.”

“I've heard of jewels,” said Bessie, thinking of the two Thaddeus and she had begun their married life with, “but they've always seemed to me to be paste emeralds—awfully green, and not worth much.”

“There's no paste emerald about Bradley's girl,” said Thaddeus. “Why, he says that woman has been in Mrs. Bradley's employ for seven weeks now, and she hasn't broken a bit of china; never sweeps dust under the beds or bureaus; keeps the silver polished so that it looks as if it were solid; gets up at six every morning; cooks well; is civil, sober, industrious; has no hangers-on—”

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