Butler Ellis Parker

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Содержание

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I
THE FENELBY TARIFF

Bobberts was the baby, and ever since Bobberts was born – and that was nine months next Wednesday, and just look what a big, fat boy he is now! – his parents had been putting all their pennies into a little pottery pig, so that when Bobberts reached the proper age he could go to college. The money in the little pig bank was officially known as "Bobberts' Education Fund," and next to Bobberts himself was the thing in the house most talked about. It was "Tom, dear, have you put your pennies in the bank this evening?" or "I say, Laura, how about Bobberts' pennies today. Are you holding out on him?" And then, when they came to count the contents of the bank, there were only twenty-three dollars and thirty-eight cents in it after nine months of faithful penny contributions.

That was how Fenelby, who had a great mind for such things, came to think of the Fenelby tariff. It was evident that the penny system could not be counted on to pile up a sum large enough to see Bobberts through Yale and leave a margin big enough

for him to live on while he was getting firmly established in his profession, whatever that profession might be. What was needed in the Fenelby family was a system that would save money for Bobberts gently and easily, and that would not be easy to forget nor be too palpable a strain on the Fenelby income. Something that would make them save in spite of themselves; not a direct tax, but what you might call an indirect tax – and right there was where and how the idea came to Fenelby.

"That's the idea!" he said to Mrs. Fenelby. "That is the very thing we want! An indirect tax, just as this nation pays its taxes, and the tariff is the very thing! It's as simple as A B C. The nation charges a duty on everything that comes into the country; *we* will charge a duty on everything that comes into the house, and the money goes into Bobberts' education fund. We won't miss the money that way. That's the beauty of an indirect tax: you don't know you are paying it. The government collects a little on one thing that is imported, and a little on another, and no one cares, because the amount is so small on each thing, and yet look at the total – hundreds of millions of dollars!"

"Goodness!" exclaimed Mrs. Fenelby. "Can we save that much for Bobberts? Of course, not hundreds of millions; but if we could save even one hundred thousand dollars – "

"Laura," said Mr. Fenelby, "I don't believe you understand what I mean. If you would pay a little closer attention when I am explaining things you would understand better. A tariff doesn't make money out of nothing. How could we save a hundred

thousand dollars out of my salary, when the whole salary is only twenty-five hundred dollars a year, and we spend every cent of it?"

"But, Tom dear," said Mrs. Fenelby, "how can I help spending it? You know I am just as economical as I can be. You said yourself that we couldn't live on a cent less than we are spending. You know I would be only *too* glad to save, if I could, and I didn't get that new dress until you just begged and begged me to get it, and – "

"I know," said Mr. Fenelby, kindly. "I think you do wonders with that twenty-five hundred. I don't see how you do it; I couldn't. And that is just why I say we ought to have a domestic tariff. I don't see how we can ever save enough to send Bobberts to college unless we have some system. We spend every cent of my twenty-five hundred dollars every year, and we could never in the world take two hundred and fifty dollars out of it at one time and put it in the bank for Bobberts, could we? We never have two hundred and fifty dollars at one time. And yet two hundred and fifty dollars is only ten per cent. of my yearly salary. But if I buy a cigar for ten cents it would be no hardship for me to put a cent in the bank for Bobberts, would it? Not a bit! And if you buy an ice cream soda; it would not cramp our finances to put a cent in the bank for each soda, would it? And yet a cent is ten per cent. of a dime."

"That is very simple and very easy," said Mrs. Fenelby, "and I think it would be a very good plan. I think we ought to begin

at once."

"So do I," said Mr. Fenelby. "But we don't want to begin a thing like this and then let it slip from our minds after a day or two. If the government did that the nation's revenue would all fade away. We ought to go at it in a business-like way, just as the United States would do it. We ought to write it down, and then live up to it. Now, I'll write it down."

Mr. Fenelby went to his desk and took a seat before it. He opened the desk and pulled from beneath the pile of loose papers and tissue patterns with which it was littered the large blankbook in which Mrs. Fenelby, in one of her spurts of economical system, had once begun a record of household expenditures – a bothersome business that lasted until she had to foot up the first week's figures, and then stopped. There were plenty of blank leaves in the book. Mr. Fenelby dipped his pen in the ink. Mrs. Fenelby took up her sewing, and began to stitch a seam. Bobberts lay asleep on the lounge at the other side of the room.

Mr. Fenelby was not over thirty. His chubby, smiling face radiated enthusiasm, and if he was not very tall he had a noble forehead that rounded up to meet the baldness that began so far back that his hat showed a little half-moon of baldness at the back. He looked cheerfully at the world through rather strong spectacles, and everyone said how much he looked like Bobberts. Mrs. Fenelby was younger, but she took a much more matter-of-fact view of life and things, and Mr. Fenelby never ceased congratulating himself on having married her. "My wife Laura,"

he would say to his friends, "has great executive ability. She is a wonder. I let her attend to the little details." The truth was that she managed him, and managed the house, and managed all their affairs. She took to the management naturally and Mr. Fenelby did not know that he was being managed. They were very happy.

Mr. Fenelby turned toward his wife suddenly, still holding his pen in his hand. He had not written a word, but his face glowed.

"I tell you, Laura!" he exclaimed. "This is the best idea we have had since we were married! It is a big idea! What we ought to do – what we *will* do – is to have a family congress and adopt this tariff in the right way, and write it down. That is what we will do – and then, any time we want to change the tariff we will have a session of the family congress, and vote on it."

"That will be nice, Tom," said Mrs. Fenelby, biting off her thread, but not looking up. Mr. Fenelby turned back to his blankbook. He dipped his pen in the ink again, and hesitated.

"How would it do," he asked, turning to Laura again, "to call it the 'United States of Fenelby?' Or the 'Commonwealth of Fenelby?' No!" he exclaimed, "I'll tell you what we will call it – we will call it the 'Commonwealth of Bobberts,' for that is what it is. 'The Domestic Tariff of the Commonwealth of Bobberts!'"

"Yes," said Mrs. Fenelby, holding up her sewing and looking at it with her head tilted to one side, "that will be nice."

Mr. Fenelby wrote it in his blankbook, at the top of the first blank page.

"Fine!" said Mr. Fenelby, growing more enthusiastic as the

idea expanded in his mind. "And the congress will be composed of everyone in the family. No taxation without representation, you know – that is the American way of doing things. Everything that comes into the house has to pay a duty, so everyone in the family has a vote, and every so often the congress will meet in the parlor here – "

"Does Bobberts have a vote?" asked Mrs. Fenelby.

"Ah – well, Bobberts is hardly old enough, you know," said Mr. Fenelby hesitatingly. "We will – No," he said with sudden inspiration, "Bobberts will not have a vote. Bobberts will be a Territory! That is it. Grown-ups will be States and infants will be Territories. Bobberts can't vote, but he can attend the meetings of congress and he can have a voice in the debates. He can oppose any measure with his voice – "

"I should think he could!" said Mrs. Fenelby.

Mr. Fenelby turned to his desk and wrote in the book a brief outline of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Bobberts. Mrs. Fenelby creased a tuck into the little dress she was making. She did it by pinning one end of the sheer linen to her knee and then running her thumb up and down the folded tuck. Suddenly the door opened and Bridget entered with aggressive quietness. She was a plain faced Irishwoman, and the way she wore her hair, straight back from her brow, had in itself an air of constant readiness to do battle for her rights. When she was noisy her noise was a challenge, and when she was quiet her quietness was full of mute assertiveness. It was as if, when she wished to enter a room

quietly, she was not content to enter it quietly and be satisfied with that, but first prepared for it by draping herself in strings of cow-bells and sleigh-bells, and then entered on tip-toe with painful care.

"Missus Fenelby, ma'am," said Bridget, in a loud whisper, "would ye be havin' th' milkman lave wan or two quarts ov milk in th' mornin'?"

"Why, Bridget," said Mrs. Fenelby, "haven't I told you we *always* want two quarts?"

"Yis, ma'am," said Bridget. "An' ye can't say that ye haven't got thim iv'ry mornin', either. If ye can, an' wish t' say it, ma'am, ye may as well say it now as another toime. I may have me faults, ma'am – "

"You have always attended to the milkman just as I wished," said Mrs. Fenelby, cheerfully. "Exactly as I wanted you to," she added, for Bridget still waited. "And we will continue to get two quarts a day."

"Very well, ma'am," whispered Bridget. "I was just thinkin' mebby ye had changed yer moind about how much t' git. It is all th' same t' me, Missus Fenelby, ma'am, how much ye git. I am not wan of thim that don't allow th' lady ov th' house t' change her moind if she wants to. I take no offince if she changes her moind. I am used t' sich goin's on, ma'am, an' I know my place an' don't wish t' dictate. Wan quart or two quarts or three quarts is all th' same t' me."

"Bridget," said Mrs. Fenelby, laying down her sewing, "do we

need three quarts of milk?"

"No, ma'am," said Bridget.

"Well," asked Mrs. Fenelby, "are two quarts too much?"

"No, ma'am," said Bridget. "But if ye wanted t' change yer moind – "

"Not at all!" said Mrs. Fenelby, kindly but firmly. "Good-night, Bridget."

Bridget backed out of the door, and Mr. Fenelby, who had kept his head close to his book, turned to his wife with a frown on his brow.

"What is it, dear?" asked Mrs. Fenelby, after a fleeting glance at his face.

"Laura," he said, "what shall we do with Bridget?"

Mrs. Fenelby looked up quickly. She quite forgot her sewing.

"Do with Bridget?" she asked. "What *do* you mean, Tom? Has Bridget said anything about leaving? And I was only this afternoon congratulating myself on how good she was! I declare I don't know what this world is going to do for servants – we pay Bridget more than anyone in this town, I know we do, and treat her like one of the family, almost, and now she is going to leave! It's discouraging! When did she tell you she was going to leave?"

"Leave?" exclaimed Mr. Fenelby. "I never thought of such a thing. I was only wondering what to do with her in – in the Commonwealth of Bobberts."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Fenelby, with a sigh of profound relief. She took up her sewing again, and bent her head over it. "Is that all!

Of course Bridget expects to be treated like one of the family. I told her when she came that I always treated my maids as part of the family."

"But we can't have Bridget come in and sit with us whenever we have a session of congress," said Mr. Fenelby.

"Certainly not!" said Mrs. Fenelby, very decidedly. "I wouldn't think of such a thing!"

"So she can't be a State," said Mr. Fenelby, "and if we made her a Territory it would be as bad. She could come in and talk. She would insist on talking."

"And if we did not let her," said Mrs. Fenelby, "she would leave, and I know we could never get another girl as good as Bridget."

"Now you get some idea of the hard work our forefathers had when they made the United States," said Mr. Fenelby, rising and walking up and down the room. "But of course they had no case like Bridget. Bridget is more like a – more like the Philippines. Well!" he exclaimed, "it is a wonder I didn't think of that in the first place!"

"What, dear?" asked his wife.

"That Bridget is a colony," said Mr. Fenelby. "That is just what she is! She is a foreign possession, controlled by the nation, but having no voice in its affairs. She can pay taxes, but she can't vote."

He hurriedly wrote the final words of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Bobberts in his book and drew a line

underneath it, for Bobberts was showing signs of awakening. Under the line Mr. Fenelby wrote "First Session of Congress."

Bobberts awoke in a good humor, ready for his evening meal, and Mrs. Fenelby put aside her sewing and took him.

"I am glad Bobberts is awake," said Mr. Fenelby, "because now we can go ahead and vote on the tariff. I wouldn't like to do it if he was not present, because he has a right to take part in the debate, and it would not be fair to hold the first session without a full representation. Now, suppose we make the duty on all goods and things brought into the house an even ten per cent.?"

"That would be nice," said Mrs. Fenelby, absently, for she was busy with Bobberts. "How much is ten per cent. of twenty-five hundred dollars, Tom?"

"Two hundred and fifty," said Mr. Fenelby, "and that is what we ought to save for Bobberts every year. Ten per cent. will just do it."

He had his pen ready to write it in the book, when a new difficulty came to mind.

"Laura!" he exclaimed. "Ten per cent. will not do it! What about the rent? We spend fifty dollars a month for rent, and that is nothing we bring into the house. And theater tickets, when you go to town and buy them there and use them before you come home. And my lunches. And my club dues. And your pew rent. And ice cream sodas. And all that sort of thing. We couldn't collect a cent of duty on any of those things, because we don't bring them into the house. Ten per cent. is not enough. We ought

to make it at least – ”

He figured roughly on a sheet of paper, while the other State and the Territory attended strictly to their occupation of feeding the Territory.

“I should say, roughly speaking,” said Mr. Fenelby, “that to raise two hundred and fifty dollars a year we ought to make the duty sixteen and three-quarters per cent., but I don’t think that is advisable. It would be too hard to figure. I might be able to do it, Laura, but if you bought a waist for one dollar and ninety-eight cents, and had to figure sixteen and three-quarters per cent. on it, I don’t believe you could do it.”

“The idea!” said Mrs. Fenelby. “I would never think of buying a waist for one dollar and ninety-eight cents. I try to be economical, Tom, but you know you always like me to look well, and those cheap waists do not look well, and they are really dearer in the long run, because they get out of shape in a few days, and never wear well, anyway. The very cheapest waist I have bought for years was that one I got for three dollars and forty-seven cents, and I could have done much better if I had bought the goods and made it up myself.”

“Ah – yes,” said Mr. Fenelby, hesitatingly. “I am afraid you did not just catch my meaning, Laura. It does not make any difference whether the waist costs one dollar and ninety-eight cents or twelve dollars and sixty-three cents. I mean that it would be a hard job to figure sixteen and three-quarters per cent. of it. Suppose we leave the duty at ten per cent. on necessities, and

make it thirty per cent. on luxuries? That ought to make it come out about two hundred and fifty dollars a year, and if it does not we can have a meeting of congress any time and raise the duty."

"That would be very nice," said Mrs. Fenelby.

So it was decided that the tariff duty on necessities was to be ten per cent., and that on luxuries it should be thirty per cent., and Mr. Fenelby wrote down in the book these facts, and the Fenelby Tariff was in effect.

II
THE BOX OF BON-BONS

The financial arrangements of the Fenelbys were extremely simple. Every week Mr. Fenelby received his salary and brought every cent of it home to Laura. Out of this she handed him back a sum that was unvaryingly the same, and with this Mr. Fenelby paid his car-fares, bought his evening papers, his cigars, and such other little things as a man finds necessary. It was a very small sum, and Mr. Fenelby could not have afforded the pleasures of a club, nor many other things he did afford, had he not been able to add to his purse by writing occasional bits of fiction and jokes for the lighter magazines. Some months this additional money amounted to quite a sum, and when it more than paid his expenses, he would make Laura a little present, but it was understood that this money was his, and that it was something quite outside the regular income of the family, and not to be counted on for household expenses. The result was that sometimes Mr. Fenelby had quite a sum in his pockets, and sometimes he had hard work to make his car-fare money last through the week.

But one thing he never neglected was to bring home to his wife a box of bon-bons every Saturday evening, and one of the things that Mrs. Fenelby flaunted before her female friends was the fact

that although she had been married for five years Tom never missed the box of candy. This was the visible sign that his love had not declined, and that he still had a lover's thoughtfulness.

On the Friday after the Fenelby Tariff had been adopted, Mr. Fenelby came home with a box of cigars under his arm. It was his usual box of twenty-five, and the usual brand, for which he paid ten cents each, and after he had kissed Laura he gaily deposited twenty-five cents in Bobberts' bank. This was the first money he had put in the bank under the new tariff laws, and he took an especial pleasure in depositing it. Mrs. Fenelby had put many pennies and nickels in the bank during the week, because she had had to buy a number of things from the vegetable man, and others.

"How much did you put in, dear?" asked Mrs. Fenelby, as she heard the coin rattle down among its fellows.

"A quarter," said Mr. Fenelby, gaily. "I tell you, Laura, that boy will soon have a lot of money if it keeps coming in at that rate. A quarter here, and a quarter there! It is amazing how it mounts up."

"Yes," she answered. "But shouldn't you put in seventy-five cents, Tom? Cigars are a luxury, aren't they? And you know you said luxuries were thirty per cent."

Mr. Fenelby turned quickly.

"Nonsense!" he said. "Any man will tell you that cigars are an absolute necessity. Just as much so as food or drink or clothing. Every one knows that, Laura."

"Why, Tom," said Mrs. Fenelby, "you told me, only last night, when I merely hinted that you were smoking too much, that you could quit any minute you chose, and that it had no hold on you whatever. You said you only smoked a little for the pleasure it gave you, and that there was no danger at all of its ever becoming a necessity to you. Of course, I don't care, for myself, what you put in the bank, but I should not think you would want to rob poor little Bobberts of what he really should have, just because you can twist out of it by claiming – "

There were signs of tears, and Mr. Fenelby cheerfully stepped up and dropped fifty cents more into the bank. It was one of his periods of plenty, and he would have been willing to put dollars into the bank, instead of quarters, rather than have Laura think he was trying to defraud Bobberts. He explained to Laura that all he wanted to know was what he really ought to pay, and then he would pay it cheerfully. Probably all men are like that. They only want to have their taxes assessed fairly, and they will pay them joyfully. One of the prettiest sights imaginable is to see the tax-payers gleefully crowding to pay their taxes. I say imaginable, because it is one of the sights that has to be imagined.

The next evening was warm, and Bobberts was sleeping nicely, so Mrs. Fenelby walked part of the way to the station to meet Tom when he came home, and her eyes brightened when she saw the square parcel that she knew to be the box of candy, in his hand. He kissed her, right there on the street, as suburban husbands are not ashamed to do, and put the box of candy in her

hand.

"And what do you think my news is?" he asked, after he had asked about Bobberts. "Brother Bill is coming to make us that visit that he has been promising for ever so long – "

"Tom!" cried Laura. "And what do you think my news is? Kitty is coming to spend two weeks with us! Isn't that the jolliest thing you ever heard of? Both coming at the same time! I wonder if they – "

"Well," said Tom, who generally had a pretty clear idea of what Laura meant to say next, "if they did fall in love with each other, it would not be such a bad match. Your cousin Kitty is as nice as any girl I know, and I rather think Billy isn't such a bad sort. Anyway, they will make it pleasant for each other."

"It will brighten us up all around to have them here," said Mrs. Fenelby. "I wonder whether we ought to make them pay tariff on things. That was the first thing I thought of, when I read that Kitty meant to visit us. It does seem a little like inhospitality, to make them pay tariff."

"Not a bit!" said Tom. "They will like it. It will be a lot of fun for them, and you know it will, Laura. Would we like to be left out of anything of that kind if we were visiting any one? Of course not. I don't know Kitty as well as you do, but speaking for Billy I can say that he would be mighty hurt if we did not treat him just as we treat the rest of the family. He will think it is a jolly game."

"I am not afraid of how Kitty will take it, when I tell her it is

all for the benefit of Bobberts. She will be wild about the tariff. The only thing I am afraid of is that she will go and buy things she doesn't need or want, just in order that she can put money in Bobberts' bank," said Mrs. Fenelby. "I told Bridget about the tariff to-day, and she was so interested! Every one I tell about it thinks it is a splendid idea, and wonders how you could think of it."

"I do think of some things that other people do not think of," said Mr. Fenelby, rather proudly; "but that is because I accustom myself to use my brains."

"But it is surprising how a little thing like this tariff counts up!" said Mrs. Fenelby. "My bills this week were fourteen dollars, and I had to put a dollar and forty cents into Bobberts' bank, and then I had to pay Bridget's month's wages to-day, but I didn't have to pay any tariff on that, and I had to pay the gas bill, too; but I didn't have to pay any tariff on that, thank goodness – "

"Of course you have to pay tariff on the gas bill!" exclaimed Mr. Fenelby. "The gas came into the house, didn't it?"

"But you said I didn't have to pay tariff on the rent bill," argued Laura; "and the rent bill is just as much a bill as the gas bill is. You know very well, Tom, that we always figure on those three things as if they were just alike – the rent, and the gas, and Bridget, – and I don't see why, if there is a tariff on gas why there should not be one on rent."

"Rent isn't a thing that comes into the house," explained Mr. Fenelby. "You can't *see* rent."

"You can't see gas," said Mrs. Fenelby.

"You can see it if it is lighted," said Mr. Fenelby, "and you can smell it any time you want to. Gas is a real object, or thing, and we buy it, and it pays a duty."

"Very well," said Mrs. Fenelby. "Then I ought to pay duty on Bridget, too. She is a real thing, and we pay money for her, just as much as we do for gas, and she is a thing that comes into the house. If I don't pay on Bridget, I don't see why I should pay on the gas. The next thing you will be saying that Bridget is a luxury, and that I ought to pay thirty per cent. on her! Probably I ought to pay a duty on Bobberts! I don't think it is fair that I should pay on everything. I will not pay ten per cent. on the gas bill. Everything seems to come the same day."

"Laura!" exclaimed Mr. Fenelby, with sudden joy, "you don't have to pay on the gas bill this month! I wonder I hadn't thought of it. That gas bill is for gas used before the tariff was adopted! And now that you know about it, you will expect to pay next month."

"I shall warn Bridget again about using so much in the range," said Laura. "We shall have to economize very carefully, Tom. I can see that. The tariff is going to make our living very expensive."

They had reached the house, and had lingered a minute on the porch, and now they went inside, for they heard the dinner-bell tinkle.

"You had better drop eight cents in the bank before you forget

it," said Mrs. Fenelby.

"Eight cents?" inquired Tom, quite at a loss to remember what he was to pay eight cents for.

"Eight cents," repeated his wife. "For the candy. It is eighty cents a pound, isn't it? But it is a luxury, isn't it? That would be twenty-four cents!"

"Yes, twenty-four cents," said Tom, smiling. "Twenty-four cents; but I don't pay it. You pay it."

"*I* pay it!" cried Mrs. Fenelby. "The idea! I didn't buy the candy. I didn't even ask you to buy it, Tom, although I am very glad to have it, and you are a dear to bring it to me. But you are the one to pay for it. You bought it."

"My dear," said Mr. Fenelby, "whoever brings a thing into the house pays the duty on it. I gave you the box of candy when we were a full block from the house, and you accepted it, and it was your property after that, and you brought it into the house, and you must pay the duty on it."

For a moment Mrs. Fenelby was inclined to be hurt, and then she laughed.

"What is it?" her husband asked, as he seated himself at his end of the table, and unfolded his napkin.

"I'll pay the twenty-four cents; but please don't bring me any more candy," she said. "I can't afford presents. But that wasn't what I was laughing about. I just happened to think of Will and Kitty. Will they have to pay duty on their trunks and all the things they have in them? Kitty has the most *luxurious* dresses,

and luxuries pay thirty per cent. If she will have to pay on them perhaps I had better telegraph her to come with only a dress suit-case."

They did not telegraph Kitty. About a week later Kitty arrived, and the next day Billy came, and to each the Fenelbys explained the Fenelby Tariff, on the way up from the station. Both thought it was a splendid idea, and agreed to uphold the tariff law and abide by it and be governed by it, and when Mrs. Fenelby handed Kitty's baggage-checks to Tom and asked him to see that the three trunks were sent over from the city and delivered at the house, Mr. Fenelby had no idea what was in store for him.

III
KITTY'S TRUNKS

When Mr. Fenelby went to the city in the morning he gave Kitty's trunk checks to the expressman. When he returned to his home in the evening he found Kitty and Mrs. Fenelby on the porch, and Mrs. Fenelby was explaining to her visitor, for about the tenth time, the workings of the Fenelby Domestic Tariff. She had explained to Kitty how the tariff had come to be adopted, how it was to supply an education fund for Bobberts – who was at that moment asleep in his crib, upstairs – and how every necessity brought into the house had to pay into Bobberts' bank ten per cent., and every luxury thirty per cent. Kitty was a dear, as was Mrs. Fenelby, but they were as different as cousins could well be, for while Mrs. Fenelby was the man's ideal of a gentle domestic person, Kitty was the man's ideal of a forceful, jolly girl, and as full of liveliness as a well behaved young lady could be. She was properly interested in Bobberts and admired him loudly, but in her heart she was not sorry that Mr. Fenelby's brother Will was to be a visitor at the house during her stay.

She did not show any unmaidenly curiosity in regard to Brother Will, but between doses of Bobberts and Tariff she managed to learn about all Mrs. Fenelby knew regarding Brother Will's past, present and future, including a pretty minute

description of his appearance, habits and beliefs.

Brother Will had arrived that very day, and on the way up from the station the Fenelbys had explained to him all about the Domestic Tariff, and also that until a bed could be sent out from the city he would have to find a bed wherever he could, and so it happened that he went right back to the city with Mr. Fenelby, and had not met Kitty, as he preferred to sleep in the city, rather than in the hammock on the porch.

There is an admirable natural honesty in women that prevents them from claiming that their husbands are perfection. In some this is so abnormally developed that, to be on the safe side, I suppose, they will not allow that their husbands have any virtues whatever; in others the trace of this type of honesty is so slight that they will claim to every one, except their dearest friends, that their husbands are the best in the world. The normal wife first announces that her husband is as near perfect as any man can be, and then proceeds to enumerate all his imperfections, bad humors, and annoying habits, under the impression, perhaps, that she is praising him. Mrs. Fenelby had been proceeding in somewhat this way in her conversation with Kitty, under the impression that she was showing Kitty how lovely and domestically perfect was her life, but Kitty gained from it only the impression that Mrs. Fenelby had become the slave of Mr. Fenelby and Bobberts.

The more Mrs. Fenelby explained the workings of the Domestic Tariff the more positive of this did Kitty become. It

was Laura who paid all the household bills, and so Laura had to pay the tariff duty on whatever came into the house; it was Laura who had to give up her weekly box of candy because if she received it she had to pay twenty-four cents duty. To Kitty the Fenelby Domestic Tariff seemed to be a scheme concocted by Mr. Fenelby to make Laura provide an education fund for Bobberts. Poor Laura was evidently being misused and did not know it. Poor Laura must be rescued, and given that womanly freedom that women are supposed to long for, even when they don't want it. Poor meek Laura needed some one to put a foot down, and Kitty felt that she had an admirable foot for that or any other purpose. She proposed to put it down.

When Mr. Fenelby entered his yard on his return from the city he stopped short, and then looked up to where the two young women were sitting on the porch.

"Hello!" he said, "What is the matter with these trunks? Wouldn't that expressman carry them upstairs? I declare, those fellows are getting too independent for comfort. Unless you hold a dollar tip out before them they won't so much as turn around. Now, I distinctly told this fellow to carry these three trunks upstairs, and I said I would make it all right with him, and here he leaves them on the lawn. I hope, dear, you were at home when he came."

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Fenelby, "I was, and you should not blame the poor man. I am sure he tried hard enough to carry them up. He actually insisted on carrying them up whether we

wanted them up or not. He was quite rude about it. He said you had told him to carry them up and that he meant to do it whether we let him or not, and – and at last I had to give him a dollar to leave them down here."

"You – you gave him a dollar *not* to carry these trunks upstairs!" exclaimed Mr. Fenelby. "Did you say you *paid* the man a dollar *not* to carry them upstairs?"

"I had to," said Mrs. Fenelby. "It was the only way I could prevent him from doing it. He said you told him to carry them up, and that up they must go, if he had to break down the front door to do it. I think he must have been drinking, Tom, he used such awful language, and at last he got quite maudlin about it and sat down on one of the trunks and cried, actually cried! He said that for years and years he had refused to carry trunks upstairs, and that now, just when he had joined the Salvation Army, and was trying to lead a better life, and be kind and helpful and earn an extra dollar for his family by carrying trunks upstairs when gentlemen asked him to, I had to step in and refuse to let him carry trunks upstairs, and that this was the sort of thing that discouraged a poor man who was trying to make up for his past errors. So I gave him a dollar to leave them down here."

Mr. Fenelby looked at the three big trunks ruefully, and shook his head at them.

"Well," he said, "I suppose it is all right, Laura, but I can't see why you wouldn't let him take them up. You know I don't enjoy that kind of work, and that I don't think it is good for me."

"Kitty didn't want them taken up," said Mrs. Fenelby, gently. "She – she wanted them left down here."

"Down here?" asked Mr. Fenelby, as if dazed. "Down here on the grass?"

"Yes," said Kitty, lightly. "It was my idea. Laura had nothing to do with it at all. I thought it would be nice to have the trunks down here on the lawn. Everywhere I visit they always take my trunks up to my room, and it gets so tiresome always having the same thing happen, so I thought that this time I would have a variety and leave my trunks on the lawn. I never in my life left my trunks on a front lawn, and I wanted to see how it would be. You don't think they will hurt the grass do you, Mr. Fenelby?"

Kitty asked this with such an air of sincerity that Mr. Fenelby seated himself on one of the trunks and looked up at her anxiously. He could not recall that he had ever heard of any weakness of mind in Kitty or in her family, but he could not doubt his ears.

"But – but – " he said, "but you don't mean to leave them here, do you?"

Kitty smiled down at him reassuringly.

"Of course, if it is going to harm the grass at all, Mr. Fenelby, I sha'n't think of it," she said. "I know that sometimes when a board or anything lies on the grass a long time the grass under the board gets all white, and if the trunks are going to make white spots on your lawn, I'll have them removed, but I thought that if we moved the trunks around to different places every day it

would avoid that. But you know more about that than I do. Do you think they will make white places on the lawn, Mr. Fenelby?"

"I don't know," he said, abstractedly. "I mean, yes, of course they will. But they will get rained on. You don't want your trunks rained on, you know. Trunks aren't meant to be rained on. It isn't good for them." A thought came to him suddenly. "You and Laura haven't quarreled, have you?" he asked, for he thought that perhaps that was why Kitty would not have her trunks carried up.

"Indeed not!" cried Kitty, putting her arm affectionately around Laura's waist.

"I – I thought perhaps you had," faltered Mr. Fenelby. "I thought – that is to say – I was afraid perhaps you were going away again. I thought you were going to make us a good, long visit – "

"Indeed I am," said Kitty, cheerfully. "I am going to stay weeks, and weeks, and weeks. I am going to stay until you are all tired to death of me, and beg me to begone."

"That is good," said Mr. Fenelby, with an attempt at pleasure. "But don't you think, since you are going to do what we want you to do, and stay for weeks, and weeks, and weeks, that you had better let your trunks be taken up to your room? Or – I'll tell you what we'll do! Suppose we just take the trunks into the lower hall?"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.