Bangs John Kendrick

Mollie and the Unwiseman

John Bangs

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Bangs J.

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Содержание

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I
Bopeep
In which Mollie Meets the Unwiseman

Mollie had been romping in the hay all the afternoon. With her were Flaxilocks, the French doll, and young Whistlebinkie, the rubber boy, who had got his name from the fact that he had a whistle set in the top of his beaver hat. Flaxilocks and Whistlebinkie could stand a great deal of romping, and so also could Mollie, but, on the whole, the little girl was not so strong as the dolls were, and in consequence along above five o'clock, having settled herself down comfortably on the shaded side of the hay-stack, a great pillow of sweet-scented clover grass under her head, it is not to be wondered at that Mollie should begin to ponder. Now it is a curious thing, but Mollie always has singular adventures when she ponders. Things happen to her then which happen at no other times, and which also, as far as I have been able to find out, never happen to other little girls.

It was this way upon this particular afternoon, as you will see when you read on. She had been pondering for three or four minutes when almost directly at her side she heard a sob.

"Who's that?" she asked, sleepily, gazing around her.

"Who's what?" said Flaxilocks, sitting up and opening her great blue eyes so suddenly that something inside of her head seemed to click.

"Somebody's sobbing," said Mollie.

"I guess not," returned Flaxilocks. "We are all alone here. Nobody could have sobbed unless it was Whistlebinkie. Whistlebinkie, did you sob?"

"No," said Whistlebinkie, "'twasn't me. I can't sob because I haven't got a sobber to sob with. I've only got a whistle."

"Maybe I dreamed it," said Mollie, apparently satisfied for the moment, and then the three threw themselves back on the hay once more and began their pondering anew.

They did not ponder very long, however, for in a few moments Flaxilocks rose up again and observed:

"I heard a sob myself just now, Mollie."

"So-*di*," whistled Whistlebinkie, through the top of his hat.

"Whistlebinkie," said Mollie, severely, "how often must I tell you not to talk through your hat, but through your mouth? So-*di* doesn't mean anything. It isn't English. If you will only remember to use your hat to whistle through and your mouth for conversation every one will be able to understand. What do you mean by So-*di*?"

"So – did – I," said Whistlebinkie, meekly, this time using his mouth as Mollie had instructed him to do.

"Then you heard the sob?"

"Yes – ma'am – plain – as – can – be," returned Whistlebinkie.

"And no wonder," observed Flaxilocks, pointing one of her kid fingers off to her left. "Why shouldn't we all hear a sob when there is a poor little maid weeping so near at hand?"

"So there is," said Mollie, looking toward the spot at which Flaxilocks was pointing, where there sat a pretty little shepherdess with tears streaming down her cheeks. "Isn't it queer?"

"Very," said Whistlebinkie. "Shall I give a whistle of surprise, ma'am?"

"No," said Mollie. "I'm not surprised enough for that."

Then she got up and walked over to the strange little girl's side, and taking her hand in hers asked her softly why she wept.

"I'm little Bopeep," said the stranger. "And I've lost my sheep, and I don't know where to find them."

"Oh, is that all?" asked Mollie.

"Isn't it enough?" returned Bopeep, gazing with surprise at Mollie through her tears. "They were all spring lambs and I'm very much afraid some hungry man may have stolen them away and drowned them in the mint sauce pond."

"Dear me, how dreadful!" cried Mollie.

"Shall I give a whistle of terror, ma'am?" asked Whistlebinkie.

"No, don't," said Flaxilocks. "Save your breath. We ought to help Bopeep to find her flock."

"That's so," said Mollie. "Would you like to have us do that, Bopeep?"

"Oh, it would be very sweet of you if you would," sobbed the little shepherdess. "I can't tell you how glad I'd be."

"I'll whistle it for you if you want me to," said the obliging Whistlebinkie, which, as no one objected, he immediately proceeded to do. When he had finished Bopeep thanked him, and asked him if he were any relation to her old friend Flutiboy who was the only person she knew who could whistle as charmingly as he, which pleased Whistlebinkie very much because he had heard of the famous Flutiboy, and was well aware that he was the champion whistler of the world.

"Now let us be off to find the sheep," said Mollie. "Which way did they go, Bopeep?"

"They went every way," said Bopeep, her eyes filling with tears again.

"I don't see how that could be," said Flaxilocks, "unless one quarter of lamb went one way, and another another, and so on."

"Oh, it was easy enough for them," said Bopeep. "There were four of them, and one went north, one south, one east, and one west. If they had all run off together I could have run away with them, but as it was all I could do was stand still and let them go. I love them all equally, and since I couldn't favor any special one, or divide myself up into four parts, I had to let them go."

"Perflyawfle," whistled Whistlebinkie through his hat.

"Whistlebinkie!" cried Mollie, reprovingly.

"Puf-fick-ly or-full," said Whistlebinkie distinctly through his little red rubber teeth.

"Well, I say we keep together in looking for them, anyhow," said Flaxilocks. "Because it's bad enough to lose the sheep without losing ourselves, and it seems to me there being four of us we can find the first sheep four times as quickly if we stick together as we could if we went alone; and that of course means that we'll find the four sheep sixteen times as quickly as we would if we went alone."

"I don't quite see that," said Bopeep.

"It's plain enough," observed Flaxilocks. "Four times four is sixteen."

"Oh, yes," said Bopeep. "I see."

"Sodwi," whistled Whistlebinkie. "I mean so – do – I," he added quickly, as he noted Mollie's frown.

So the four little folk started off in search of the missing sheep, Whistlebinkie and Flaxilocks running on ahead, and Mollie and Bopeep with their arms lovingly about each other bringing up in the rear.

"Did you ever lose the sheep before, Bopeep?" asked Mollie, after they had walked a little way in silence.

"Oh my, yes," returned Bopeep. "I'm losing them all the time. It is a part of my duty to lose them. If I didn't, you know, the nursery rhyme couldn't go on."

"And you always find them again?" Mollie put in.

"Always. That's got to happen, too. If they didn't come back and bring their tails behind them the nursery rhyme would be spoiled again."

"Then I don't see why you feel so badly about it," said Mollie.

"I have to," replied Bopeep. "That's part of my business, too. I sometimes wish old Mother Goose hadn't employed me to look after the sheep at all, because it keeps me crying all the time, and I don't find crying very pleasant. Why, do you know, I have been in this sheep-losing business for nearly two hundred years now, and I've cried about seventy gallons of tears every year. Just think of that. That means fourteen thousand gallons of tears, and I only get five cents a quart, which doesn't more than pay my dressmaker's bills. I asked my employers some years ago to let me have an assistant to do the crying for me, but they wouldn't do it, which I think was very mean, don't you?"

"Yes, I do," said Mollie. "I should think just losing the sheep was hard enough work for a little girl like you to attend to."

"That's what I think – but dear me, where are Whistlebinkie and Flaxilocks going?" said Bopeep. "They mustn't go that way. The first place we must go to is the home of the Unwiseman."

"The what?" demanded Mollie.

"The Unwiseman. He's an unwiseman who doesn't know anything," explained Bopeep. "The rules require that we go to him first and ask him if he knows where the sheep are. He'll say he doesn't know, and then we'll go on to the little old woman who lives under the hill. She'll know where they are, but she'll tell us wrong. Hi! Whistlebinkie and Flaxilocks! Turn off to the left, and stop at that little red house under the oak tree."

"There isn't any little red house under the oak tree," said Mollie.

"Oh, yes, there is," said Bopeep. "Only you've got to know it's there before you can see it. The Unwiseman lives there."

Whistlebinkie and Flaxilocks did as they were told, and, sure enough, in a minute there appeared a little red house under the oak tree just as Bopeep had said. Mollie was delighted, it was such a dainty little house, with its funny gables and a roof made of strawberry icing. The window-panes were shining like silver, and if Bopeep was not mistaken were made of sugar. But funnier still was the Unwiseman himself, a queer-looking, wrinkled-up little old man who sat in the doorway trying to smoke a pipe filled with soapsuds.

"Good-afternoon, O Unwiseman," said Bopeep.

"Hoh!" sneered the Unwiseman. "Good-afternoon! This isn't afternoon. It's day before yesterday morning."

Mollie giggled.

"Hush!" whispered Bopeep. "He doesn't know any better. You can see that he doesn't know anything by looking at his pipe. He's been trying to smoke those soapsuds now for a week. The week before he was trying to blow bubbles with it, only he had corn-silk in it then instead of soapsuds. That shows what kind of a man he is."

"What can I do for you to-day, Bopeep?" asked the Unwiseman as he touched a lighted match to the suds, which immediately sputtered and went out.

"I wanted to know if you had seen anything of my sheep," said Bopeep.

"Let's see," said the Unwiseman. "Let's see. Sheep are what? They aren't anything like telegraph poles or wheelbarrows, are they?"

"No," said Bopeep, "they are not."

"Then maybe I have seen them," said the Unwiseman, with a smile of satisfaction. "Maybe I have. Several things went by here day after to-morrow that weren't a bit like wheelbarrows or telegraph poles. They may have been your sheep. One of the things had four red wheels on it – have any of your sheep got four red wheels on them?"

Whistlebinkie nearly exploded as the Unwiseman said this, but the queer old gentleman was not learned enough to know mirth when he saw it, so that no harm was done.

"No," said Bopeep. "My sheep had no wheels."

"Then I must have seen them," said the Unwiseman. "There was a thing went by here a week from next Tuesday noon that hadn't any wheels. It had two legs and carried a fan, or a fish-pole – I couldn't tell which it was – and it was whistling. Maybe that was one of the sheep."

"No," said Bopeep again, shaking her head. "My sheep don't whistle and they have four legs."

"Nonsense," said the Unwiseman, with a wink. "You can't fool me that way. I know a horse when I hear one described, and when any one tells me that the thing with four legs and no whistle is a sheep I know better. And so my dear, since you've tried to trifle with me you can go along. I won't tell you another thing about your old sheep. I don't know anything about 'em anyhow."

Whereupon the old man got up from his chair and climbed the oak tree to look for apples, while the searching party went on to the little old woman who lived under the hill, and Bopeep asked her if she knew anything about the sheep.

"Yes," said the little old woman, with a frown which frightened poor Whistlebinkie so that he gasped and whistled softly in spite of his efforts to keep quiet. "Yes, I've seen your sheep. I know just where they are, too. One of 'em's gone to the moon. Another has been adopted by a girl named Mary, who is going to take it to school and make the children laugh. Another has sold his wool to a city merchant, and the fourth has accepted an invitation to dinner from a member of Congress. He will reach the dinner at half-past seven to-night on a silver platter. He will be decorated with green peas and mint sauce. Now get along with you."

Mollie felt very sorry for poor Bopeep as she listened to this dreadful statement, and she was very much surprised to see Bopeep smiling through it all.

"Why did you smile?" she asked the little shepherdess as they wended their way home again.

"Because I knew from what she said that she knew the sheep were safe – but she lives on ink, and that makes her disagreeable. She just wanted to make me feel as disagreeable as she does, and she told me all that nonsense to accomplish that purpose."

"The horrid thing!" said Mollie.

"No," said Bopeep. "She isn't really horrid. It's only because she lives on ink that she seems so. Suppose you had to live on ink?"

"I'd be horrid, too," said Mollie.

"There they are!" cried Bopeep joyfully, and sure enough there were the sheep, and they had brought their tails behind them, too. They were grazing close beside the hay-stack on which Mollie had been pondering.

"I am very much obliged to you for your help and company," said Bopeep, "and now as it is six o'clock, I must drive my sheep home. Good-by."

"Good-by," said Mollie, kissing the little shepherdess affectionately.

"Good-by," said Flaxilocks, sinking back on the clover pillow, and closing her great blue eyes again.

"Gubby," whistled Whistlebinkie through his hat.

"Wasn't it queer?" said Mollie later as they wended their way home again.

"Very," said Flaxilocks.

"Queeresperiensieverad," whistled Whistlebinkie.

"What's that?" cried Mollie.

"Queerest – experience – I – ever – had," said Whistlebinkie.

"Ah!" said Mollie. "I didn't care much for the little old woman under the hill, but that funny old Unwiseman – I'd like to meet him again."

And the others agreed that it would indeed be pleasant to do so.

II
A Visit to the Unwiseman
In which Mollie Renews an Acquaintance

Whistlebinkie, said Mollie, one afternoon, as she and he were swaying gently to and fro in the hammock, "do you remember the little red house under the oak tree?"

"Yessum," whistled Whistlebinkie, "I mean yes – ma'am," he added hurriedly.

"And the Unwiseman who lived there?"

"Yes, I remember him puffickly," said Whistlebinkie. "I think he knows less than any person I ever sawed."

"Not sawed but saw, Whistlebinkie," said Mollie, who was very anxious that her rubber doll should speak correctly.

"Oh, yes!" cried Whistlebinkie. "I think he sawed less than any man I ever knew – or rather – well – I guess you know what I mean, don't you?"

"Yes, I do," said Mollie, with a smile. "But tell me, Whistlebinkie dear, wouldn't you like to go with me, and pay the Unwiseman a visit?"

"Has he sent you a bill?" asked Whistlebinkie.

"What for, pray?" queried Mollie, with a glance of surprise at Whistlebinkie.

"To tell you that you owed him a visit, of course," said Whistlebinkie. "There isn't any use of our paying him anything unless we owe him something, is there?"

"Oh, I see!" said Mollie. "No, we don't owe him one, but I think we'd enjoy ourselves very much if we made him one."

"All right, let's," said Whistlebinkie.

"What'll we make it of, worsted or pasteboard?"

"Whistlebinkie," observed Mollie, severely, "you are almost as absurd as the old man himself. The idea of making a visit out of worsted or pasteboard! Come along. Stop your joking and let us start."

The rubber doll was quite willing to agree to this, and off they started. In a very little while they were down under the spreading branches of the great oak tree, but, singular to relate, the little red house that had stood there the last time they had called was not to be seen.

"Dear me!" cried Mollie, "what can have become of it, do you suppose, Whistlebinkie?"

"I give it up," said the rubber doll, scratching his hat so that he could think more easily. "Haven't an idea – unless the old man discovered that its roof was made of strawberry icing, and ate it up."

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" laughed some one from behind them.

Mollie and Whistlebinkie turned quickly, and lo and behold, directly behind them stood the little Unwiseman himself, trying to dig the oak tree up by the roots with a small teaspoon he held in his hand.

"The idea of my eating up my house! Hoh! What nonsense. Hoh!" he said, as the visitors turned.

"Well, what has become of it, then?" asked Mollie.

"I've moved it, that's what," said the Unwiseman. "I couldn't get any apples on this oak tree, so I moved my house over under the willow tree down by the brook."

"But you can't get apples on a willow tree, either, can you?" asked Mollie.

"I don't know yet," said the Unwiseman. "I haven't lived there long enough to find out, but I can try, and that's all anybody can do."

"And what are you doing with that teaspoon?" asked Whistlebinkie.

"I'm digging up this oak tree," said the Unwiseman. "I want to get the acorn it grew out of. I'm very fond of acorns, but I'm afraid to eat them, unless the tree that's in 'em has grown out. You

see, I don't want to swallow an acorn, and have a great big tree like that grow up in me. It wouldn't be comfortable."

Whistlebinkie said he thought that was a very good idea, because there could not be any doubt that it would be extremely awkward for any man, wise or unwise, to have an oak tree sprouting up inside of him.

"What are you so anxious to know about my house for?" asked the Unwiseman, suddenly stopping short in his work with the teaspoon. "You don't want to rent it for the summer, do you?"

"Whistlebinkie and I have come down to call upon you, that's all," explained Mollie.

"Well now, really?" said the Unwiseman, rising, and dropping the teaspoon. "That's too bad, isn't it? Here you've come all this way to see me and I am out. I shall be so disappointed when I get home and find that you have been there and I not there to see you. Dear! Dear! How full of disappointments this world is. You couldn't come again last night, could you? I was home then."

"Not very well," said Whistlebinkie. "Mollie's father doesn't like it if we turn the clock back."

"Dear me! That's too bad, too! My!" said the old fellow, with a look of real sadness on his face. "What a disappointment, to be sure. You call and find me out! I *do* wish there was some way to arrange it, so that I might be at home when you call. You can't think of any, can you, Miss Whistlebinkie?"

"Perhaps now that you know we are coming," said Mollie, who, while her last name was *not* Whistlebinkie, did not think it necessary to pay any attention to the old man's mistake, which amused her very much, "perhaps now that you know we are coming you might run ahead and be there when we arrive."

"That's the scheme!" said Whistlebinkie.

"Yes, that's a first-rate plan," said the old man, nodding his head. "There's only one thing against it, perhaps."

"What's that?" asked Whistlebinkie.

"That I don't know," replied the Unwiseman, "which is very unfortunate, because it may be serious. For instance, suppose the objection should turn out to be in the shape of a policeman, who had a warrant to arrest me for throwing stones at somebody's pet tiger. What could I do?"

"But you haven't been throwing stones at anybody's pet tiger, have you?" asked Mollie.

"Not while I was awake," said the Unwiseman. "But I may have done it in my sleep, you know. People do lots of things in their sleep that they never do while awake. They snore, for instance; and one man I know, who always rides when he is awake, walks in his sleep."

"Let's try it, anyway," said Whistlebinkie. "It may be that there won't be any trouble, after all."

"Very well," assented the Unwiseman. "I'm willing if you are, only if I am arrested it will be all your fault, and you must promise to tell the policeman that it was you who threw the stones at the tiger and not I."

Mollie and Whistlebinkie feeling sure that nothing of the kind would happen, readily made the promise, and the queer little old man started off for his house as fast as his legs could carry him.

The two small visitors followed slowly, and in a few minutes had reached the Unwiseman's door down by the willow tree. The door was tightly closed, so they knocked. For a while there was no answer, and then they knocked again. In response to this they heard a shuffling step within, and a voice which they recognized as that of the Unwiseman called out:

"Is that a policeman? Because if it is, I'm not at home. I went out three weeks ago and won't be back again for six years, and, furthermore, I never threw stones at a pet tiger in my life unless I was asleep, and that don't count."

"We aren't policemen," said Mollie. "We're Mollie and Whistlebinkie come to see you."

"Oh, indeed!" cried the Unwiseman from within, as he threw the door open wide. "Why, what a pleasant surprise! I had no idea you were coming. Walk right in. So glad to see you."

Whistlebinkie giggled slightly through his beaver hat as he and Mollie, accepting the invitation, walked in and seated themselves in a droll little parlor that opened on the left-hand side of the hall.

"So this is your house, is it?" said Mollie, glancing about her with much interest.

"Yes," said the Unwiseman; "but, Miss Whistlebinkie, won't you kindly sit on the table instead of on that chair? So many people have been hurt by chairs breaking under them – many times more than are hurt from sitting on tables – that I have to be very careful. I have no doubt the chairs are strong enough to hold you, but I don't want to take any chances. I think it will rain next year, don't you?" he added. "And you haven't brought any umbrellas! Too bad, too bad. If you should get wet, you'd find it very damp. Really, you ought never to go out without an umbrella. I always do, but then I know enough to go in when it rains, so of course don't need one."

"I see you have a piano," said Whistlebinkie, taking in the furniture of the parlor.

"Yes," replied the Unwiseman. "It's a very fine one, too. It has lots of tunes locked up in it."

"Are you fond of music?" asked Mollie.

"No, I hate it," said the Unwiseman. "That's why I have the piano. There's just so much less music in the world. Nobody can get at the keys of that piano, so you see it's never played, which pleases me very much. If I were rich enough, I'd buy all the pianos, and organs, and fiddles, and horns, and drums in the world, and I'd keep 'em all locked up so that there never would be any more music at all."

"I am sorry to hear that," said Mollie. "I love music."

"Well," said the old man, generously, "you can have my share. Whenever anybody brings any music around where I am hereafter, I'll do it up in a package, and send it to you."

"Thank you very much," said Mollie. "It's very good of you."

"Oh, it's no favor to you, I am sure!" put in the Unwiseman, hastily. "In fact, it's the other way. I'm obliged to you for taking it off my hands. If you want to you can open the piano right away, and take out all the tunes there are in it. I'll go off on the mountains while you are doing it, so that it won't annoy me any."

"Oh, no!" said Mollie. "I'd a great deal rather have you to talk to than all the tunes in the piano."

"Very well," said the old man, with a smile of pleasure. "What shall we talk about, frogs?"

"I don't know anything about frogs," said Mollie.

"Neither do I," returned the Unwiseman. "I don't know the difference between a frog and a watch-chain, except that one chains watches and the other doesn't, but which does and which doesn't I haven't a notion."

"I see you have all your pictures with their faces turned to the wall," said Mollie, looking about the room again so as to avoid laughing in the Unwiseman's face. "What is that for?"

"That's to make them more interesting," replied the Unwiseman. "They're a very uninteresting lot of pictures, and I never could get anybody to look at 'em until I turned them hind side before, that way. Now everybody wants to see them."

Mollie rose up, and turned one of them about so that she could see it.

"It's very pretty," she said. "What is it a picture of – a meadow?"

"No. It's a picture of me," said the Unwiseman. "And it's one of the best I ever had taken."

"But I don't see you in it," said Mollie. "All I can see is a great field of grass and a big bowlder down in one corner."

"I know it," said the Unwiseman. "I'm lying on my back behind the bowlder asleep. If you could move the bowlder you could see me, but you can't. It's too heavy, and, besides, I think the paint is glued on."

"I hope you don't lie on the ground asleep very much," said Mollie, gravely, for she had taken a great liking to this strange old man who didn't know anything. "You might catch your death of cold."

"I didn't say I was lying on the ground," said the Unwiseman. "I said I was lying on my back. People ought not to catch cold lying on a nice warm back like mine."

"And do you live here all alone?" asked Mollie.

"Yes, I don't need anybody to live with. Other people know things, and it always makes them proud, and I don't like proud people."

"I hope you like me," said Mollie, softly.

"Yes, indeed, I do," cried the Unwiseman. "I like you and Whistlebinkie very much, because you don't either of you know anything either, and so, of course, you aren't stuck up like some people I meet who think just because they know the difference between a polar bear and a fog horn while I don't that they're so much better than I am. I like you, and I hope you will come and see me again."

"I will, truly," said Mollie.

"Very well – and that you may get back sooner you'd better run right home now. It is getting late, and, besides, I have an engagement."

"You?" asked Mollie. "What with?"

"Well, don't you tell anybody," said the Unwiseman; "but I'm going up to the village to the drug store. I promised to meet myself up there at six o'clock, and it's quarter past now, so I must hurry."

"But what on earth are you going to do there?" asked Mollie.

"I'm going to buy myself a beaver hat just like Whistlebinkie's," returned the Unwiseman, gleefully, "I've got to have something to keep my tablecloth in, and a beaver hat strikes me as just the thing."

Saying which the Unwiseman bowed Mollie and Whistlebinkie out, and sped off like lightning in the direction of the village drug store, but whether or not he succeeded in getting a beaver hat there I don't know, for he never told me.

III
In the House of the Unwiseman
In which Mollie Reads Some Strange Rules

A Few days later Mollie and Whistlebinkie were strolling together through the meadows when most unexpectedly they came upon the little red house of the Unwiseman.

"Why, I thought this house was under the willow tree," said Mollie.

"Sotwuz," whistled Whistlebinkie through his hat.

"What are you trying to say, Whistlebinkie?" asked Mollie.

"So – it – was," replied Whistlebinkie. "He must have moved it."

"But this isn't half as nice a place for it as the old one," said Mollie. "There isn't any shade here at all. Let's knock at the door, and see if he is at home. Maybe he will tell us why he has moved again."

Mollie tapped gently on the door, but received no response. Then she tried the knob, but the door was fastened.

"Nobody's home, I guess," she said.

"The back door is open," cried Whistlebinkie, running around to the rear of the house. "Come around this way, Mollie, and we can get in."

So around Mollie went, and sure enough there was the kitchen door standing wide open. A chicken was being grilled on the fire, and three eggs were in the pot boiling away so actively that they would undoubtedly have been broken had they not been boiling so long that they had become as hard as rocks.

"Isn't he the foolishest old man that ever was," said Mollie, as she caught sight of the chicken and the eggs. "That chicken will be burned to a crisp, and the eggs won't be fit to eat."

"I don't understand him at all," said Whistlebinkie. "Look at this notice to burglars he has pinned upon the wall."

Mollie looked and saw the following, printed in very awkward letters, hanging where Whistlebinkie had indicated:

Notiss to Burgylers.

> If you have come to robb mi house you'd better save yourselfs the trouble. My silver spoons are all made of led, and my diamonds are only window glass. If you must steel something steel the boyled eggs, because I don't like boyled eggs anyhow. Also plese if you get overcome with remoss for having robbed a poor old man like me and want to give yourselfs upp to the poleese, you can ring up the poleese over the tellyfone in Miss Mollie Wisslebinkie's house up on Broadway.
> *Yoors trooly,*
> *The Unwiseman.*
>
> P. S. If you here me coming while you are robbing me plese run, because I'm afraid of burgylers, and doo not want to mete enny.
>
> N. G. If you can't rede my handwriting you'd better get someboddy who can to tell you what I have ritten, because it is very important. Wishing you a plesant time I am egen as I sed befour
> *Yoors tooly,*
> *The Unwiseman.*

"What nonsense," said Mollie, as she read this extraordinary production. "As if the burglars would pay any attention to a notice like that."

"Oh, they might!" said Whistlebinkie. "It might make 'em laugh so they'd have fits, and then they couldn't burgle. But what is that other placard he has pinned on the wall?"

"That," said Mollie, as she investigated the second placard, "that seems to be a lot of rules for the kitchen. He's a queer old man for placards, isn't he?"

"Indeed he is," said Whistlebinkie. "What do the rules say?"

"I'll get 'em down," said Mollie, mounting a chair and removing the second placard from the wall. Then she and Whistlebinkie read the following words:

Kitching Rules

1. No cook under two years of age unaccompanied by nurse or parent aloud in this kitching.

3. Boyled eggs must never be cooked in the frying pan, and when fried eggs are ordered the cook must remember not to scramble them. This rule is printed ahed of number too, because it is more important than it.

2. Butcher boys are warned not to sit on the ranje while the fiyer is going because all the heat in the fiyer is needed for cooking. Butcher boys who violate this rule will be charged for the cole consumed in burning them.

7. The fiyer must not be aloud to go out without some boddy with it, be cause fiyers are dangerous and might set the house on fiyer. Any cook which lets the house burn down through voilating this rule will have the value of the house subtracted from her next month's wages, with interest at forety persent from the date of the fiyer.

11. Brekfist must be reddy at all hours, and shall consist of boyled eggs or something else.

4. Wages will be pade according to work done on the following skale:

For cooking one egg one hour	1 cent.
For cooking one leg of lamb one week	3 cent.
For cooking pann cakes per duzzen	2 cent.
For cooking gravey, per kwart	1 cent.
For stooing proons per hundred	2 cent.

In making up bills against me cooks must add the figewers right, and substract from the whole the following charges:

For rent of kitchchen per day	10 cents.
For use of pans and kittles	15 cents.
For cole, per nugget	3 cents.
Matches, kindeling and gas per day	20 cents.
Food consoomed in tasting	30 cents.
Sundries	50 cents.

13. These rules must be obayed.

Yoors Trooly,
The Unwiseman.

P. S. Ennyboddy violating these rules will be scolded. Yoors Tooly,
The Unwiseman.

Whistlebinkie was rolling on the floor convulsed with laughter by the time Mollie finished reading these rules. He knew enough about house-keeping to know how delightful they were, and if the Unwiseman could have seen him he would doubtless have been very much pleased at his appreciation.

"The funny part of it all is, though," said Mollie, "that the poor old man doesn't keep a cook at all, but does all his own housework."

"Let's see what kind of a dining-room he has got," said Whistlebinkie, recovering from his convulsion. "I wonder which way it is."

"It must be in there to the right," said Mollie. "That is, it must if that sign in the passage-way means anything. Don't you see, Whistlebinkie, it says: 'This way to the dining-room,' and under it it has 'Caution: meals must not be served in the parlor'?"

"So it has," said Whistlebinkie, reading the sign. "Let's go in there."

So the two little strangers walked into the dining-room, and certainly if the kitchen was droll in the matter of placards, the dining-room was more so, for directly over the table and suspended from the chandelier were these

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.