

## KITTY'S CHOICE.

A wealthy old farmer was Absalom Lee, He had but one daughter, the mischievous Kitty: So fair, and so good, and so gentle was she, That lovers came wooing from country and city. The first and the boldest to ask for her hand Was a trim y dressed dandy, who worshipped her tin; She replied with a smile he should well understand, "That's ed marry no ape 'or the sake of his kin!"

The next was a merchant from business retired Rich, gouty and gruff—a presuming old sinner He saw the fair Kitty and greatly admired, And thought to himself, "I can easily win her." So he showed her his palace and made a bluff bow, And said she might live there, but wickedly then Kitty told him she'd long ago made a rash vow "Not to marry a bear for the sake of his den!"

A miser came next; he was fearless and bold In claiming his right to fair Kitty's affection; He said she'd not want for a house while his gold Could pay for a cabin to give her protection Half vexed at his boldness, but calm in a trice She curtsied and thanked him, and blushing then Demurely repeated her aunt's sage advice, "Not to marry a hog for the sake of his pen!"

The next was a farmer, young, bashful and shy: He feared the bold wooers who came from the city; But the flush on the cheek and the light in his eye Soon kindled a flame in the bosom of Kitty. "My life will be one of hard labor," he said, "But darling, come share it with me, if you can." "I suppose," she replied, gaily tossing her head I must marry the farm for the sake of the man!"

## IN HIS OWN HOUSE.

## HOW A HOUSEHOLDER WAS WORRIED TO DEATH.

From the many inconveniences and privations attendant upon married life in a boarding-house, and the mutations of proprietorial whim as to progressive rental values which yearly assail the tenant of other's improving real estate, it is the not unusual ambition of the man of family to devote his earliest pecuniary accumulations to the purchase of a house of his own wherein, in complacent defiance of extortionate landlords, he may enjoy the life and liberties of a freeman. Some there are who reach and revel in this rich consummation without excessive detriment from the grievous "law of compensation" which discomfits so many schemes of worldly felicity; but there is a tragedy of too frequent occurrence in the old Spanish proverb that "when the roof is on, the graveyard opens," and many a patient toiler after a house of his own has escaped death in the new edifice only to mourn the other common penalties of such attained estate. Certain natural enemies of the new householder, for instance, seem to have an unerring, wicked instinct for finding his family in their first hours of vainglorious proprietorial residence, and beguiling them to bankruptcy in the mad, duplicatory purchase of the innumerable articles suddenly commended as essential to the simplest safety and comfort of one's own house. One might not think it necessary to have such things in a mere hired tenement; but to one's own house they are indispensable. This is a really dreadful peril of the novice in domiciliary ownership, and the many who have suffered from it will be ready to credit the story of a citizen of Cleveland, Ohio, who, according to the *Leader* of that city, ended his intolerable anguish under it by leaping into the canal there, lately, leaving his explanation of the act in the form of a diary of his pitiless persecutions. A clerk, upon a fair salary, he had scraped and economized until his savings were sufficient for the erection of a house practicably mortgaged, and upon taking possession thereof he began that daily record of his life now serving to apologize for his untimely death. The extracts from this record, as given by the local journal above named, are full of admonitory suggestion for those who yearn to become their own landlords. At first he rejoices at his new dignity in these facile terms:

## IN HIS OWN HOUSE AT LAST.

"In my own house at last, built to suit my wife, with three closets to each room, a bath-room, back stairs leading to the servants' apartments, a verandah on two sides, and four bay windows, what drawback can there be to my future happiness? No more rent to pay—no grumbling landlords. I can cut a stovepipe hole where I choose, and kick

refractory doors in shape without reproof or charges. There are few young men so happily situated as I am with a wife, two sets of twins, a four year old boy, a coach dog, an old cat and nine kittens, to say nothing of a good salary at old Grinder's, with an occasional 'perquisite' when I am in charge of the money-drawer during the cashier's absence. Providence has indeed snickered right out on me."

## THE FIRST HORROR.

But scarcely have these notes of exultation lost their pungency in distance, when the first inevitable horror of the new situation invades his earthly paradise:

"Went home an hour earlier than usual to-day, because my new boots hurt me, and it was well I did, for I found Angeline crying and a big side-whiskered chap standing over her with a pen in his hand trying to make her subscribe for 'Poets of the World,' to be completed in 400 numbers, if possible to come in monthly parts, payable when delivered. He had already taken her note for thirty days for a map of Ohio (issue of 1812), and a full set of 'Noodle's Dime Romances,' library size. He had almost convinced her to subscribe to the 'Poets' as I entered. 'You will never feel it to pay for them by the month,' said he. Here I abruptly placed the toe of my shoe (which was built for war) against him and he concluded to call some other time."

## MORE TROUBLE.

That fearful visitation of the new American householder was thus checked for the time, though only to be succeeded by something even more agonizingly impudent:

"More trouble again to-day. Went home and found four gentlemanly looking men seated in the parlor, who had called 'on business of the utmost importance,' as they said, and Angeline had invited them to dinner, supposing them to be acquaintances of mine. After dinner each one called me aside at different times and asked me if my life was insured, at the same time stuffing my pockets full of circulars, pamphlets and figures relating to their respective companies. I smiled at their eagerness and said I would see them again. They pressed my hand warmly and said, 'I doubtless would unless death intervened.' I must insure, though, and one company is just as good as another."

Between that and the next fell persecution seems to have come a brief breathing spell, just long enough for the recital of

## A PRETTY LITTLE INCIDENT OF CHILD LIFE.

"Had an interesting time this morning; the four-year-old boy swallowed the stove-lifter—at least he said he did, and it's missing—and I remained at home so long standing him on his head and swinging him by the heels to get the missing article out of him that I was late at the store and received a reprimand from the 'old man,' who said I must not let that occur again. Whether he meant the tardiness or the stove-lifter affair is more than I know."

"P. S.—The lifter was found in the stove to-night with the handle burned off."

"There was no time, however, for protracted attendance to children, as

## OTHER TORMENTERS WERE AT THE DOOR.

"Everything has been more quiet to-day, and I would be perfectly happy if these boots I am trying to break in were two sizes larger; but then Longfellow says 'Into each life must some rain fall.' Angeline says she found the cards of six sewing machine agents shoved in under the front door upon her return from a neighbor's to-day. I hope these industrious members of society do not contemplate a raid upon me at present. I have promised Angeline a first class machine as soon as I am able to get round to it, but that will not be for a month yet."

The unhappy man takes comfort from fate too soon in the matter, for if s-wing-machine men and other furies are not immediately tolerated in the new house itself, they know how to terrorize the miserable owner elsewhere into readier future hospitality.

"The four insurance agents, a patent fence and wash-tub man, and six lightning rod men, called at the store to-day to see about insuring, fencing, wash-tubbing, and rodding me into a state of happiness and comfort. Mr. Grinder, my employer, said to me, 'You must not have your friends visit you during business hours, Jones,' which made me so vexed, I said \* \* \*

## DREADFUL SCENES OF VIOLENCE.

Next follow dreadful scenes of actual violence in this strange, pathetic story of house-owning life, succeeded by an entry hopeful with strategic confidence:

"To day everything ran like clock-work until I arrived at home, when I found a team of dashing horses hitched to a couple of dwarf pear trees in the front yard, and a bright red wagon filled with ladders and things stood in the middle of a bed of fuschias and geraniums, a bull-dog of the yellow variety, and with teeth like a cross-cut saw, smiled at me from the door step, while two men upon the roof were busy tearing off shingles and driving hooks into the chimney. I made a careful detour, and entered my house to find a black-whiskered chap, smelling strongly of patchouly, leaning lovingly over Angeline's shoulder, while she was engaged in practicing on a sewing machine. 'What in the name of all that is cheeky does this mean?' said I. 'Ah!' replied old Patchouly, with a leer at my wife, 'your husband, I presume. The fact is, sir, your wife (a devilish fine woman, by the way), has decided to purchase one of our double-treadle reversible needle, warranted not to rip, ravel or run down at the heel sewing machines.' But I forbear—why repeat what followed? My entry in this journal to-day will be brief but to the point. I am wearing a saddle-rock oyster over my eye. Angeline is in tears and in bed, with a strong odor of camphor about her person. But no back-action double-treadle sewing machine decks my house, and were it not for the trampled condition of my flower-bed, and a few displaced shingles on the roof, one would never dream that two able-bodied lightning-rod men had attempted to go through me yesterday. I must organize for war, however, on the Prussian plan. Peace exists in our household once more. I have pacified Angeline on the sewing-machine question, and we have formed an alliance for offensive purposes against all enemies to our peaceful home and happiness. A 'small-pox' sign kept the 'agents' away for two days, but the milkman and postman also forsook us, and we were forced to take it down. Since then, by keeping the doors doubly locked and using a system of countersigns and raps when members of the family desired ingress or egress, the obtrusive visitors were kept at bay."

## VAIN HOPES.

Vain the hope here entertained. Even after expelling a "patent-lightning-rod man" who had approached him by climbing in at a window, and having the window itself faced with iron bars, the luckless liver in his own house was doomed to endure another pageant:

"My little boy awakened me this morning by exclaiming, 'Oh, papa, come here to the window, there is a circus out here, and I want to see the elephant.' I did as requested, but what juvenile innocence had mistaken for a 'show' was about a score of lightning-rod wagons with the horses hitched to my newly painted picket fence. Reclining on my green and grassy lawn were forty-three lightning-rod men, each with a sample of their wares in one hand, and a tight note in the other for the unlucky victim to sign if he could not pay cash. While I was thinking what to do, up drove seven sewing machine men, each with a machine strapped in the hind end of his wagon, and which they commenced to unload shortly after coming to a halt. A scuffling sound also emanated from the fireplace in the parlor at this juncture, and upon investigation I found a life-insurance man tightly wedged in the opening, head downward. I did not go to my place of business to-day—not a member of my family stirred out of the house, and now, at 10 o'clock P. M., I hear the crowd outside, and know that it has not diminished."

## THE END APPROACHES RAPIDLY NOW,

And the concluding passage of this sad "Diary" shows the overtaxed mind breaking down at last under a burden of misery greater than it can bear.

"Three days in my house and most out of food. The letter carrier shoved a note from my employers through the key-hole this morning, which informed me I had been discharged for shirking work and going to picnics. I only smiled a sardonic smile as I read it. The twins clamored for milk last night, and I slipped out in the darkness to milk the cow. I found a sewing machine man tacking his cards on her ribs, her tail had been pricked and docked, and a lightning rod with a silver point extended along its surface. She was as dry as a powderhorn, and in returning to the house I had to run the gauntlet of a

dozen insurance men, and barely escaped with my life. I can't stand this much longer. My wife always knew she made a mistake in marrying me. To-night I will end this miserable existence. If I could only go out West and buy a farm, but even then I would soon be swept by the invading hordes of agents into the Pacific."

Mr. Jones' story—the story of life in one's own house—is told. The *Leader* reporter's language, in powerful allusion to the aquatic death-scene, is too beautiful to be improved—"He sleeps perchance beneath the waters of the canal, unmindful of the wealth-laden galleons of trade that pass and repass over him. He heeds not the proud ship, laden with hoop poles, as she creeps before the gale that strikes her in the stern and forces her ahead; nor the curses of her commander at the mule for allowing slack rope to accumulate on his heels."

## SMITHS AND BROWNS.

BY MRS. L. S.

"I'll tell you what it is, wife," said Peter Smith, and he emphasized the remark by a wise shake of the forefinger, "things have got into a very bad way. The farm is mortgaged to the last cent it is worth, and I owe a heap of money besides more by a long shot than I know how to pay. What is to be done?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Peter," replied the bothered wife, "but it seems too awful bad to be turned out of the house and home at our time of life. Now, if our son John would only marry John Brown's daughter Sally, it would help us out amazingly. The Browns, you see, are well off, and the connection would be a perfect gold mine to us. Of course they'd give Sally the hundred acres of land and things that they've always said they would."

"That's a good idea, wife," and Peter brightened up amazingly. "You always were a cute woman, and that notion does you credit. But do you think the young folks would take to it?"

"I don't know, but it seems to me that they've always taken a great notion to each other ever since they were children—been more like brother and sister than anything else."

"But suppose the Browns should object, as most likely they would. You know we ain't on good terms, thick as the young folks have been."

"I'll tell you what, Peter, is just the thing for us to do—put up John to elope with Sally."

"Agreed. I'll leave it all to you to manage."

Thus the matter was settled, and the scheming couple went to bed to dream of a speedy release from their financial embarrassments.

Coincidences are sometimes of the most curious character—almost surpassing belief in some instances. About the time of the above conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Smith, their neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Jonas Brown, held an important conference.

"Do you remember that note for six hundred dollars I gave for stock, last spring?" asked Jonas.

"Yes," replied his wife.

"Well, it's coming due in about a month, and how under the sun we're going to pay it I don't know."

"Mortgage the farm."

"We've done that until it can't be mortgaged another cent. I'm clean discouraged; and there's Sally wanting a piano. Where the money is coming from is more than I know. We're on the verge of bankruptcy."

"I wish Sally would marry John Smith—gracious knows they're together enough to take a notion that way."

"Yes; but I don't see how that would help us any."

"You don't, eh? Well, I do. Ain't his folks rich? and wouldn't they set him up handsomely? Then we could stand some chance of getting help through Sally."

"That's a good plan," was Jonas' conclusion, after profound meditation, "but the difficulty is that the Smiths are not on good terms with us, and would be likely to oppose the match."

"Then the best plan is to set the young folks up to an elopement."

So it chanced that the Browns and the Smiths planned to dispose of their children to their own pecuniary advantage. The next step in each case was to mould the young ones in the proper shape.

John Smith was a brawny, handsome country fellow, with plenty of good sense, and an ocean of love for Sally Brown. When his parents proposed his marrying her, he informed them that he would gladly do so, but he feared her parents would object. Then his father