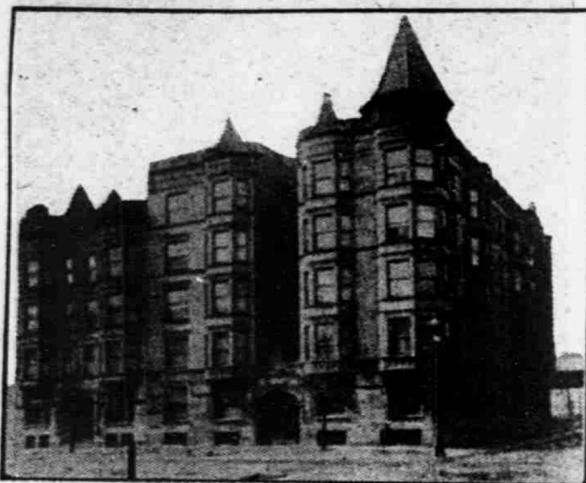


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### Her Saving Habit

By Katherine Howe

(Copyright, 1917, by W. G. Chapman.)

"Yes, come in, Tom. I'd like to sit down and rest a minute."

The bright-eyed girl in the doorway, capped, aproned and broom in hand, smiled invitingly to the young man on the other side of the gate, who had asked if he could enter. He followed her into the house, and she dropped wearily into a chair.

"It isn't so much the work," she went on, "but if I attempt to do a little clearing out of corners and throwing away rubbish, then mother and I get on a war footing at once, and there's great activity on the firing line. I declare, she saves up all kinds of truck, till we might as well start a junk shop, and done with it."

Mrs. Bliss drifted into the room in time to hear the latter remark, and regarded her daughter in good-natured protest. Nodding to Tom Holmes, she said:

"notice, Florry, you're pretty glad some times to go to that junk for things you need."

"Yes, but why save that wooden ladle, you don't use it in ten years."

"Well, suppose I don't, when I do want it it's there. It isn't so much saving the money, as it is the time it takes to dress and go out to buy some little thing you need, and have to delay what you're doing till you have it. I noticed you were tickled to death to find that cord, those little tassels, and that brocade for your dress, and that was more than eleven years old."

"Yes, I was," admitted Florry. "It gave just the touch I wanted, and I couldn't have bought it in this little town."

"So you see, you'll have to hand it to your mother, after all," said Tom, who, for obvious reasons, thought it tactful to keep on the right side of Mrs. Bliss. "I wish," he went on, "you might find in your collection that Harvard deed we're having so much excitement over. Talk about clearing out corners, I don't believe there's been a half-inch of space in our office that hasn't been ransacked for that missing paper."

"I didn't suppose lawyers ever lost anything—but cases," said Florry. "What is it?"

"Why, haven't you seen the big reward in the newspapers? It's gone up now from five hundred to fifteen hundred. The deed is an old one, but it involves the ownership of all that ground where the big Miles manufacturing plant stands. You see, my office, Myers and Jenks, has had all the Hazard papers in charge for years, and they can't account for the disappearance of that deed. If it was stolen, and we think it must have been, we can't see the motive. Well, it's a mystery. But I just wish I could collar that fifteen hundred. Suppose you look among your keepsakes, Mrs. Bliss. You might find it!"

The little woman shook her head doubtfully. "I'm afraid not," she sighed.

"No," put in Florry. "That isn't the kind of thing mother saves. It's not likely to be anything worth fifteen

hundred dollars. Besides, I don't think she was ever inside Myers and Jenks' office, so she couldn't be accused of stealing it."

Tom Holmes laughed heartily at the idea of the gentle-faced little woman in the role of a robber, and declared he couldn't imagine it even on the screen. After she left the room, he said, seriously: "Florry, do you know what I'd do with that money if I got that reward?"

Florry hadn't the remotest idea.

"I'd buy that Spellman house. It's going to be sold at auction next week, and it will go cheap. If it was fixed up a bit, it would make a beautiful little house. I want it for you, Florry," he whispered, drawing her to him. "Maybe then you would think we could afford to get married?"

"Yes, Tom, I suppose we could; but not now, at least till you get a raise."

"Yes," he answered in a disappointed tone. "I know I'm only a clerk in a law office, but I'll be in that firm yet. And while we're waiting you may get tired, and take the fellow that has the house all ready."

"Tom!" she cried reproachfully, "that isn't worthy of you!"

"Oh, well, I know Brooke has—"

"Brooke!" she broke in. "Why, he only just comes here in a friendly way."

"Yes, but he has money; he has lots of things I haven't—to give you. Your mother likes him, and—"

"And what I like doesn't count!" she laughed teasingly. "But that Spellman cottage is really a nice little place. I guess I'd better start in praying that you find that deed."

Tom went away downhearted. Her bantering tone hurt him. He was not at all sure that Brooke's visits were only just in "a friendly way."

It was within a few days of the auction sale when Florry met him walking disconsolately home from work.

"You don't look as though you had gathered in that reward," she laughed. "Your suspicions are well grounded," he retorted. "I haven't."

"Come home, and have dinner with us," she urged. "there will be other houses, even after the Spellman place is sold."

"But not other Florrys," he said. "I should hope not. Come along, and forget it!"

Tom didn't need urging, and went. Oh, what a dinner it was! Though it was plain and simple, it was well cooked, and Tom, used to a boarding house table, thought it a banquet of the gods, especially every time he looked at Florry opposite him. Then came the homemade jam.

"Florry, dear! Why didn't you open it before you brought it on?" said her mother.

Florry did not explain that Tom had got her slightly "rattled," and proceeded to remove the stout paper cover. It was tightly tied down, and Tom offered his assistance with a pocket-knife. He removed the paper and began reading the writing on the other side. Suddenly he gasped and cried out:

"Where's the rest of this paper?"

"On the other jars, I suppose," said Mrs. Bliss. "Why?"

"It's the Hazard deed!" he cried. "Such an opening of jam pots never was seen, and such a piecing together of bits, some of the paper being found intact, and not yet cut into."

"Mother, where did you get it?" asked Florry.

"One day a load of waste paper was going by, and some of it blew over in the yard. I thought that was such nice, tough, strong paper it would be just the thing for jellies and jams. It's been up on the shelf for a good while."

"It must have got brushed off into the waste basket," said Tom.

Tom bought the Spellman place, and it's being got ready for Florry and her mother. Tom doesn't know whether it was Mrs. Bliss' saving habit or Florry's prayers, but he wants it understood his mother-in-law is to run a junk shop if she wants to.

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