

JOHN'S FIRST WIFE.

BY ZOE ANDERSON NORRIS

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The air was crisp outside, but the roomy kitchen was warm and sunny. Mingled with the grateful heat was the odor of sprinkled linen, steaming under the iron. Linen hung on clothes-horses and on the backs of chairs, and still the wicker basket underneath the ironing board groaned with sheets, pillowslips, tablecloths and napkins neatly piled in soft damp rolls.

Ann Quigley stood at the board ironing. As she ironed she chatted with her neighbor, Susan Stephens, who had come in with her knitting from across the way.

"You don't mind my going right along with my work, do you?" she asked. Susan shook her head, her lips being occupied with counting intricate stitches. "Today's Tuesday, you know, and the ironing's got to be finished. It goes against grain to leave it over till Wednesday, for Wednesday I bake. Besides, I can work and talk at the same time."

She straightened out a sheet, tested an iron with the tip of a wet finger and passed it across, back and forth, this way and that, sidewise.

"You are a good housekeeper, Ann," said Susan admiringly. "You are given up to be the best housekeeper in this town. John Quigley got a prize when he got you. Everybody says so."

Ann stopped snort, resting her hot iron on the sheet so long that when

from the basket, she shook out the fringe and spread it on the board.

"She was a pretty woman," she continued, briskly ironing the bright red border, "and beauty goes a long way with a man. Nobody would ever accuse me of being pretty," she added, with a constrained laugh, and Susan, looking up, was forced mentally to confess the truth of her remark. Her purple calico, starched and bristling with cleanliness, set off a fairly good figure, but aside from that little could be said in her favor.

"You've got pretty hair, Ann," she ventured encouragingly.

Ann sighed again. "Yes, I've got pretty hair," she acknowledged, "but hair don't count much when your face is plain."

Her face was plain. There was no gainsaying it. Its plainness was accentuated by the halo of reddish brown hair.

"Beauty ain't but skin deep," said Susan sentimentally.

"Yes, but ugliness is to the bone," finished Ann.

There followed a period of energetic silence freighted with thought.

"John's first wife was pretty," repeated Ann by and by, "mighty pretty. She was young and fresh and bloomy, like a flower. She was one of them southern women that don't know any more about housekeeping than a fly, but they know how to make



"HE'LL NEVER FORGET HER, AND I CAN'T MAKE HIM."

she suddenly remembered and took it off there was the print of it in a fine light brown.

"See what you made me do!" she cried, and, snatching up the sheet, she took a shining pail from a shelf, filled it at the sink and soused the linen into the water. "Maybe it will come out," she muttered, "but I don't know. I'm afraid not."

"I am awfully sorry!" apologized Susan contritely.

"Never mind. I'll leave it to soak. I guess it will come out." She folded another sheet across the board. "It was my fault," she said. "You surprised me so. And they talk like that, do they? I'm a good housekeeper and John got a prize when he got me, eh?"

"That's what they say!" asserted Susan.

Ann ironed awhile in silence.

"And they say you're a splendid cook, too," added Susan, anxious to atone for the scorched sheet.

Ann smiled, well pleased. Then she sighed.

"It don't make much difference how good a housekeeper you are, Susan," she said reflectively, "or how good a cook. Things like that don't make a man care anything more for you. He kinder expects it of you. All the cooking in the world won't keep a man from thinking about somebody else if he's a mind to. It won't make him forget."

"What do you mean?" asked Susan. "You don't mean John?"

"Yes, John. Do you remember his first wife?"

"Umph, hum! But she wasn't a patching to you when it comes to housekeeping."

"Maybe not," mused Ann wistfully. "But there must have been something mighty lovable about her. She's been dead five years now this coming June, and John hasn't forgotten her yet. And what's more, I don't believe he ever will forget her."

She folded the sheet into squares, pressed it lovingly between her palms—it was so clean and white and smooth, and Ann's soul rejoiced in cleanliness and whiteness and smoothness—and laid it on a chair. Then, taking a towel

the men care for them, and that's half the battle. It's more than half. They say the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, but it ain't. It's through his eyes.

"You know I lived next door to them. I could see into her kitchen. And of all the kitchens it was a sight! She hadn't any system about her work. She would put things away and spend half her time looking for them. And cook! She couldn't any more cook than she could fly to the moon. She would have her potatoes mashed and ready for the table, a-cooling off, and her chicken only half done. I don't believe she ever got everything done at once in her life. She couldn't cook, and she couldn't learn to cook. It wasn't in her."

She shrugged her shoulders, with a laugh.

"It's the greatest wonder," she went on, "that John didn't get chronic dyspepsia eating the things she set before him. But he didn't. He seemed to thrive. Whatever she cooked was good enough for him. He would come home early and help her, stewing over the stove, doing all kinds of woman's work, trying to make things easy for her. I've seen him run along the walk and up the steps—three steps at a time—he was so glad to get home, then work like a nigger when he got there."

She hung the towel on the back of a chair and shook out the fringe of another.

"He has never done a lick of work since we have been married," she said, her mouth twitching. "He has never had to help me in the kitchen or in the garden or even in the flower beds in the front yard, but he never comes hurrying home, he never runs up the steps three steps at a time, and he never smiles when he meets me at the door."

"Maybe he is worried about business," suggested Susan, measuring the thumb of the glove she was knitting by her own. "Men have lots of things to worry them that they don't tell their wives."

"No, it ain't that; it's remembering her. He can't forget her, and I can't make him forget her."

"Sometimes I wish I didn't live in

the same house where they lived together. That makes it worse. There's the little front porch where they used to sit of evenings. When he and I sit there in the summer time and I see his eyes way off yonder, I know he's thinking of her."

She ironed slowly, staring through the window, her own eyes moist. "I know," she reiterated softly, "that he is thinking how he used to sit there with her, and he is wishing it was him and her again instead of him and me."

She took to ironing faster.

"I'll never forget the day she died," she continued. "She died three days after the baby was born. She never liked me somehow, but I didn't let that interfere with doing my neighborly duty by her. I went over and helped take care of her."

"The baby was born dead, but she grieved after it the same as if it had been a living child. She would lie there staring up at the ceiling and grieving until it was pitiful to see her. I believe it was that that killed her. She didn't want to live and it dead. One day she made me bring out its little clothes and lay them on the bed all around her. She fingered the sleeves, the tears rolling down her cheeks. 'There'll never be any little arms in them,' she said and turned her face to the wall."

"I put the things back in the drawer where she couldn't see them any more. 'That last day she was burning up with fever. Her little feet were hot as fire. So were her hands. She talked fighty about the baby, about how she wanted to see it and they wouldn't let her. How could they and it dead? I sat on the edge of the bed, stroking her poor hot feet, when suddenly they began to get cold, and she stopped talking."

"I sent for John in a hurry. When he came, he was like a madman. He knelt down by her bed and begged her to listen to him. 'Don't go away without telling me goodby, sweetheart!' he said, sobbing between the words. 'Don't leave me like this! Say goodby to me, sweetheart!'

"I put my hand on his shoulder. I wanted to tell him that she was past speaking, and past hearing for that matter, but he stared up at me as if he had never seen me before. 'Go away,' he said. 'Leave me alone with her, can't you? Go away!' And he gave me a push."

"I went out and shut the door."

She leaned her elbows on the board and looked hard at Susan, who had dropped her knitting in her lap.

"I think the only reason he married me," she said sadly, "was because I took good care of her. But sometimes I wish he hadn't. He'll never forget her, and I can't make him. I do everything I can to please him. I keep this place like wax from garret to cellar, but it might be better skelter from one week's end to the other for all the notice he takes of it. I stand in this kitchen for hours cooking things to please him, and he hardly tastes them. He sits and stares across the table at me, and I know he doesn't see me. He sees her there opposite him in her old place that I have taken. The look in his eyes hurts me, Susan."

Susan heaved a sigh and again took up the glove. "Maybe you imagine it," she said.

Ann stood erect. She replaced the cold iron with a hot one.

"I wish I did," she said. "I only wish I did. I don't complain. You mustn't think that. He is kind to me. There couldn't be a kinder man, but kindness ain't all a woman wants. She wants a little love mixed up with it sometimes—just a little bit of love."

"Listen! Last night I was lying by his side wide awake and he asleep and dreaming. After awhile he threw his arm around my neck and kissed me in his sleep. 'Sweetheart,' he said, 'my sweetheart! You'd have felt sorry for me then if you could have seen how still I lay, hardly daring to breathe for fear he would wake and find that it was me there by his side and not his 'sweetheart.'"

"Maybe he meant you," said Susan. "Don't he ever call you 'sweetheart?'"

"No, and he never called her anything else."

The basket was empty. Not a single towel, sheet, napkin or pillowslip remained to interfere with Ann's work on Wednesday—her baking day. She was ironing the last piece, a damask tablecloth, her best cloth, which she reserved for company. Traced upon it was a pattern of ivy leaves. Under the manipulation of her iron this pattern shone, raised into brilliancy by the heat and the pressure of her strong right hand.

A tear dropped. She quickly ironed it out and, passing her sleeve across her eyes, caught two other tears.

Then the slow, soft sweep of the iron over the steaming linen, back and forth, this way and that and sidewise, made rhythmic music in the silent room, while Susan's needles clicked in silent sympathy.

Fashions in Candy.

The confectionery trade is a trade of topsy turvydom. There is as much fashion in it as in the craft of evolving those creations of fallals, flowers and feathers whose ultimate destination is the adornment of ladies' heads. Time was when the hardpan goods were the one thing needful; these were ousted from public favor by the American invention of soft centered pan goods, jolly beans and so on. Jap nuggets had a reign, and a long one, and might fitly be styled the Victorian reign of this era, so far as candy is concerned. Hanky panky, slapjack and a thousand others of like kind had a brief popularity, to give way, in turn, to some other cunning form of candy wearing. It is to this ever changing fancy that the candy trade owes its vitality, and so long as there are inventive brains ready to devise new forms, so long will the trade be prosperous.—Exchange.

AN ARTIST AND HER AUNTY.

BY HOWARD FIELDING.

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"Marion," gasped Miss Adams, leaning against the balusters at the head of the third flight, "do you mean to tell me that you came here alone at night? Why, I'd be scared out of my wits!"

"I don't come very often, aunty," replied the girl, "but tonight I had to finish some drawings, as I told you. There's nothing to be afraid of. The building seems quiet, but there are people in many of the studios. If anything should happen and you should scream—"

"I'm likely to do it any minute," interrupted Miss Adams.

"—you'd have assistance in no time," Marion continued. "There! Do you hear those voices?"

A door was opened in the far end of the hall above them, and a burst of uproarious song rang out:

"Jefferson Brown tried to steal her away, Coffin sent to his house yesterday, Now he's in it!"

The door closed again, and the details of Mr. Brown's obsequies were lost to the two ladies.

"Well, I suppose even such people as those are better than nobody," said Miss Adams, "but not much."

The gas flickered and strange, alarming shadows ran along the dingy walls of the old studio building, but Sarah Adams marched with head erect and face to the front. Marion unlocked a door near the end of the hall and entered her workroom. The gas flamed up as the elder lady crossed the threshold, revealing a small apartment full of artistic odds and ends, furniture of weird designs, tapestries aesthetically ugly, and in the midst of all a dummy model with draperies that were still fluttering in the draft from the door.

Marion had found a letter on the floor and was holding the envelope under the gaslight. It was decorated with a pen and ink sketch of a table bearing a punch bowl and numerous bottles, and Miss Adams viewed it with the strongest disapproval.

"An invitation to the ladies' night at the Paint Pot," said Marion. "It's a very swell artists' club."

"These artists are a disreputable lot," rejoined Miss Adams, "and the more I think of you in such surroundings the easier my conscience gets. I wish you'd come right back with me to Hatfield. Of course you're not going to that orgy."

In what seemed to be a sheet, the four corners being tied together.

As Aunt Sarah stooped to examine it she saw a card lying on the floor. She picked up the card and read the name, "Phillip Hobart."

"So these are Mr. Hobart's things," said Aunt Sarah, "and a nice way he has of sending them around. Tied up in a sheet! Well, for goodness' sake, what kind of society has poor Marion got into, I should like to know? Let's see what Mr. Hobart has sent."

Aunt Sarah lifted the bundle up on to a table and untied the knots in the sheet. The contents then revealed themselves to be a considerable portion of a gentleman's wardrobe.

There were half a dozen shirts, a dress suit, two pairs of trousers, an overcoat and some shoes.

Aunt Sarah contemplated this assortment, and a red spot appeared in each of her cheeks. Any one who knew Aunt Sarah might have seen that she was angry. Presently she strode across the room and gave the messenger call a twitch that nearly dislocated its machinery.

"The idea of asking Marion to take care of this man's old clothes!" she exclaimed. "I never heard of anything so monstrous. It's time some of these crazy artists had a lesson in manners."

A boy appeared promptly in answer to the call. Aunt Sarah let him in after making him give his word of honor three times through the door that he was neither a burglar nor an artist.

"You take this bundle to Mr. Phillip Hobart," said Aunt Sarah. "He lives!"

"I know where he lives," said the boy. "I've taken messages over there before."

"From here?"

"Sure!"

"Oh, you have!" said Aunt Sarah. "Well, I guess this will be the last one. You tell Mr. Hobart that Miss Marion Adams declines to be responsible for his old clothes and that her aunt, Sarah Adams, from Hatfield, Vt., says he ought to have known better."

The boy rubbed the side of his head thoughtfully.

"Let's see if I've got it straight," he said and repeated the message with great care.

"You're a bright boy," said Aunt Sarah, and she gave him half a dollar.



"MR. HOBART" CRIED MARION, AMAZED.

"No," said Marion. "I haven't anything to wear. And now, aunty, I want you to stay here and make yourself comfortable for a few minutes while I hunt up the janitor. I must find out whether Phil Hobart has sent those things around."

"Who's Phil Hobart and what is he going to send?"

"He's an artist," replied Marion, "the most eccentric and at the same time the finest fellow in the world. He is going away for two or three months, and he has asked me to take care of a few little things for him. He has given up his studio and has no place for them."

"Doesn't he live anywhere?" inquired Miss Adams. "I suppose not, since he's an artist."

"He lives in that house that I pointed out to you on Eighteenth street—the one with the vines on the front—but it's a boarding house, and of course he will give up his room when he goes away. Now I'm going to find the janitor. If you get lonesome, ring for a messenger boy. There's the call box."

Marion hurried away, and Aunt Sarah hastily closed the door, supplementing the spring lock by pushing a bolt. No sooner had she done this than she became aware of a big bundle that had been concealed by the door when it was open. The bundle was done up

He had no sooner gone than Marion appeared. With the rapidity and directness of speech characteristic of the New Englander in earnest Aunt Sarah related what she had done. Marion was agast.

"Oh, aunty," she cried, "how could you? He'll never forgive me. There must be some explanation. I told you he was eccentric, but—"

"Eccentric! I call it downright insulting. Where are you going?"

"To catch that boy and bring him back," answered Marion as she ran out of the room.

Aunt Sarah followed her down the three flights of stairs to the street, but the boy was beyond recall.

So they climbed the stairs again, Marion in tearful wrath, Aunt Sarah suffering in sympathy, but sustained by conscious rectitude.

"You shouldn't have done it without consulting me," sobbed Marion as she re-entered the studio. "He may be offended and go away without giving me a chance to explain. I may never see him again."

"Small loss, I should say," rejoined Aunt Sarah. "Still, if you feel so badly about it you can write a note to him and say it was all my doing. Thank heaven, my shoulders are broad enough! Let him come and see me. I'll give him a piece of my mind."

Marion sat down by the table and began to struggle with a note to Mr. Hobart. She tore up half a dozen sheets of paper, but finally folded one and put it in an envelope.

"I've merely begged him to come and see me tomorrow," said she. "It was all I could do."

She rang the messenger call and then sank into a chair. Aunt and niece surveyed each other in silence. Neither could find words to express her feelings.

A loud knock startled them. Marion opened the door, and in strode a tall and dark young man whose appearance suggested slightly the handsome villain of society drama. His manner was appropriate to the scene where the villain begins to be foiled, but does not yet despair. He was pulling and biting his mustache in quite the conventional manner. Behind him came a messenger boy carrying a big white bundle.

"Mr. Hobart!" cried Marion, amazed, and Aunt Sarah sat up very straight in her chair and looked severe.

"Miss Adams," said the young man, "I have entirely failed to understand your message, and as for that of your aunt—"

He finished with a gesture of despair as he glanced at Aunt Sarah.

"Do you think it was quite proper, sir," said the maiden lady from Hatfield, "that you should consign your superfluous wardrobe to the care of a young lady?"

"And may I ask, madam," said Hobart, "what led you to believe that it was mine?"

Then Aunt Sarah was what she would have called "flustered." The suspicion of an awful mistake began to dawn upon her.

"I left my card for Miss Adams late this afternoon," said Mr. Hobart, with dignity, "but as for these garments I know nothing about them. They are not mine, and I shall ask Miss Marion Adams to explain how they came to be here. I should tell you, madam—and he turned to Aunt Sarah—"that there is an engagement of marriage between your niece and myself, or at least there was."

At this last clause Marion burst into tears.

"I—I really beg your pardon," stammered a voice from a corner of the room.

Every one started, and the two ladies screamed. A bearded face appeared above a screen. Evidently its owner was standing on a chair in order to make himself visible.

"Why, it's Mr. Walling!" exclaimed Marion. "Well, I should like to know what he's doing there!"

"So should I!" cried Aunt Sarah and Mr. Hobart in one voice.

"I can explain in one moment," said Walling. "You will pardon my remaining here. I am somewhat imperfectly attired."

Aunt Sarah threw up both hands with the gesture of one who abandons a wicked world to its fate, and Hobart looked like the villain just before he commits the murder in the last part of the first act.

"You see," said Walling, "my studio is next door. I live there. This evening after dinner I came home to dress and was astonished to find my dress suit and many other articles missing. The studio was upside down. In the middle of the floor was a sheaf of my bric-a-brac and other small belongings."

"Of course I saw at once that I had been visited by burglars and that they had been frightened away by some sudden alarm. How they had got in or out I could not understand, and I spent some time in wrestling with that problem and in discovering the extent of my loss."

"At last, in knocking about the studio I became aware that the door between it and this one was not fastened as usual."

"I nailed it up myself!" cried Marion.

"Evidently the burglars drew the nails and picked the lock," said Walling. "They doubtless knew the habits of the tenants and counted upon your being out, while I was a doubtful problem. So they planned to get my things together and carry them into this room, from which they would have more leisure to escape in case I interrupted them. But the interruption came unexpectedly from you, and they had no time even to collect their booty. They probably got away by means of the fire escape at your window."

"When I found that the door between the rooms was open, I came in here, because I saw through the thieves' game and supposed, from the fact of the light being here, that they had fled hastily. I hoped to find some of my property."

"While I was looking about you two ladies came in like a whirlwind. I had not time to reach the door, so I dodged in here, where I have been trying to concoct an apology that should fit the crime."

"Your apology is accepted, Mr. Walling," said Marion. "It comes in good time. Phil, will you accept mine and Aunt Sarah's?"

Then handsome Phil Hobart ceased to look like the villain at all. Instead he resembled the hero when he says in the last act that together they will face the world. It was a pretty scene, and Aunt Sarah, in memory of her absurd mistake, could do no less than give her blessing.

"And now, good people," said Mr. Walling, "if you will be kind enough to step out into the hall I will go to my own place. You see, I discovered the loss of my dress suit last of all, and I had got ready to put it on when the discovery of the open door tempted me here."

When this maneuver had been successfully executed, Mr. Hobart sent over to his house for the few little things that he had wished Marion to keep for him, and they proved to be a half dozen small landscapes very nicely done in water colors.