His Mother-in-Law

By CLAUDINE SISSON

At the age of twenty-three, when Moses Smith was married, he was spoken of as a hustler. As a carpenter by trade, he was at work early and late. Two years later he fell off a scaffold and hurt his back. He was petted and pitied and sympathized with, and, although after six weeks of loafing, the doctor pronounced Moses as good as new, the carpenter had lost his hustle. His wife dreaded that he might injure himself by going to work too soon and she started dressmaking to support them while he loafed.

Moses Smith's mother-in-law lived in another state. She heard how things were going, but it was a year before she came on. She found Moses growing fat and his wife growing lean. It didn't take the old lady over a week to size things up. In her time she had known of several lame-backed men and foolish wives. With the doctor to back her, she announced that her daughter must go away and rest for a month to prevent a nervous breakdown. She would remain to keep house for Moses.

The lame-backed man didn't like it at all. It meant an overturning of his pleasant program. He doubted if there would be any more tea and toast and "poor Moses!" for him. He was overruled, however, and the morning his wife started away he went down to the village postoffice and took his old seat on the veranda and hoped for the best. At noon he returned home to meet with a surprise. No fire—no dinner. In reply to his look of bewilderment the lady with the iron jaw replied:

"You didn't cut any wood, and so there's no dinner."

"But I can't raise the ax with this lame back."

"Then you won't have to raise knife or fork!"

Moses went back to the grocery and filled up on a raw turnip. He went home to supper, but there was no supper. No wood—no supper. He went out and sat down under a lilac bush, and his eyes filled with tears. He was in the habit of going to bed at 9 and getting up at the same hour next morning. His going to bed on this occasion was according to program, but he was aroused at 8 o'clock by a dash of water in his face. He had been called twice in vain.

"Moses, the ax and the woodpile!" said the mother-in-law as he came down stairs with a scowl on his brow.

"You know I'm a cripple," he answered.

"No wood—no breakfast!"

He went slowly out and bent to pick up the ax and straightened up with a groan and his hand to his back.

"It's a crik in the back," said the woman. "I'm glad to find it out. I've tackled fourteen different criks and cured each and every one. If I can cure you then Nelly will be very happy when she returns. Come along out to the smokehouse."

"But what's the smokehouse going to do for a man whose spinal cord is all knotted up?"

"Treatment, Moses—treatment. Just step inside."

He stepped, and the door was closed on him and locked. He found a cot, a jug of water and a loaf of bread. He kicked on the door and called out to know what it all meant, and was told to cuddle down and take treatment for the cure of general laziness, drink, a crik in the back and lying abed in the morning. He was warned that any extra emotion on his part would make the crik worse, and told that there was no objection to his sleeping all day. Moses was foolish enough to kick and shout until a score of villagers came running to see what the matter was. To one and all the mother-in-law answered:

"Moses has had a crik in the back for a year past, and I've set out to cure it. I hope to meet with great success. In fact, I don't think his wife will have to do dressmaking when she comes back. Thanks for calling. Come again."

During the first day Moses thought and slept by turns, and now and then shed tears. In a few hours his life had changed over and his peace and comfort had departed.

At sundown more bread and water. He yelled and kicked and again he was warned to supress his emotions. He demanded better fare, but was answered that until his crik got so that he could use the ax there would be no cooking. On the second night he seriously thought of suicide, and he smiled joyously as he conjured up a mental picture of the mother-in-law opened the door in the morning and finding him stark and stiff in death. But successfully to commit suicide one must have something more than a jug of water and a loaf of bread at hand. Moses couldn't choke himself with either.

Breakfast was the same old bill of fare, and the woman still had her iron jaw. There was no conversation. Moses nibbled and sipped and thought. An hour before noon he called out and when asked what he wanted he very humbly replied:

"Mother, I believe that crik is better."

"It's too soon, Moses—it's too soon."

"Maybe, if I was very careful, I could split a few sticks of wood to get dinner with."

"I wouldn't have you try it for the world, my dear son-in-law. You have been in dreadful bad shape for a year. Any undue exertion might finish you. You shall have a raw tomato to help out your dinner, as that goes with the treatment. If it wasn't half a mile to the nearest saloon I'd ask you to have a drink with me."

Moses didn't have such a lame back that he couldn't understand sarcasm, and he raised another row. Again the neighbors came, but when he appealed to them for help they looked at the mother-in-law. She asked them not to interfere with her treatment. She had set out to cure his crik, and they could all notice that his voice was growing stronger. That smokehouse door was the first thing he had raised his foot to kick a whole year.

Bread and water again for supper, and another long night. Not a look of pity—not a "poor Moses!" Truly, things had changed. At midnight Moses sat up on his cot to decide two questions. Was his crik really better? Was this his mother-in-law's fifteenth cure? Should he go to work? After an hour he decided both cases in the affirmative, and in the morning he was ready to say:

"Mother, I've been doing some serious thinking since you were here last."

"You have? I am sorry for that. I warned you not to strain your mind. You must be very, very quiet."

"I—I ought to have been at work for months past."

"But the lame back, you know?"

"I shouldn't have gone to drinking."

"But you had to, poor man."

"If you'll let me out now I'll have a job before night."

"I couldn't, Moses—I couldn't. It's altogether too sudden. If you went to work now it might be the last of you, and I don't want my daughter a widow. Let's do a good job and not hurry about it."

It was on the morning of the tenth day, and after two ministers and a score of lawmen had pleaded for Moses, that the door was unlocked and an ax put into his hands. He walked straight to the woodpile and made the chips fly. When he had worked for two hours he put on his coat and started to look for a job, and when his wife came home he was at work on a new barn. There was astonishment at his cure, and surprise that he wouldn't tell how it had been brought about. All the explanation he made was that he suddenly felt something give way. The mother was a little clearer as she said:

"Nelly, all men want a mother-in-law around the house, but some want them more than others. If I were you I'd let it kind o' leak out around the village that you ain't going to do any more dressmaking, and that Moses is going to give up sitting on the post-office steps and put in ten hours' work for eight hours' pay."

DATE FROM FIFTH CENTURY

Invention of Large Church Bells Ascribed to Paulinus, Bishop of Nola.

In the twenty-eighth chapter of Exodus, verses 34 and 35, occurs the first mention of bells, and their use is practically the same as that to which modern church bells are put, namely, to give notice of the time for public worship.

The uses of bells as summons to prayer are not derived directly from this source as they have been used in all ages for secular as well as religious purposes.

In the Grecian army the officer of the guard visited the sentries at night with a bell as a signal of watchfulness, and the Romans used small ones in their baths and places of business.

The honor of inventing the large church bells, however, is ascribed to Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, a city of Campania, who flourished in the fifth century of the Christian era. Not long after they were introduced into Britain.

St. Dunstan presented several to Malmesbury Abbey, and the abbot of England, in King Edward's time, made six bells, which were named after distinguished personages, and, says the historian, such a concert was never heard in the land before.

The custom of ringing upon occasions of public rejoicings is derived from an early usage of the Catholics, who in this manner gave notice of the arrival of a church dignitary within their jurisdiction, and it was regarded as a high offense if the bells were not rung.

Publicity an Essential.

James Hamilton Lewis, once a member of congress and now an attorney in Chicago, was on one occasion candidate for an elective position in the northwest. At that time Lewis was famous for "his pink whiskers," of which he had a roseate and flaming abundance. One day an acquaintance of Lewis' dropped into a hotel and asked the clerk:

"Isn't that Jim Ham Lewis over there reading that newspaper?"

"No," explained the clerk, "that's a fellow who looks so extraordinarily like him that Lewis' opponents have hired him to sit around in hotel lobbies and create the impression that he is Lewis."

Lewis coined the famous idea: "If you can't praise me in the newspapers, please roast me; but never leave my name out altogether."—The Sunday Magazine.

Stretching a Point.

"You have been telling me about your 'apartments' in town and you have but one room."

"My dear fellow, kindly observe this spacious closet in the corner."

In the Toils

There certainly were flaws somewhere in the screens. As Mrs. Stebleton waved distractedly at the buzzing pests that were interfering with the reading of her morning mail she calculated that there must be at least a thousand flies in the flat. And Mrs. Stebleton hates a fly as she hates a rattlesnake.

"I simply cannot stand this!" she cried in wrath. So she went to the phone and ordered sent over at once a quantity of sticky fly paper. When it came she hated to spoil the looks of the place, but desperate measures were imperative. The yellow sheets were scattered about through the rooms. Then Mrs. Stebleton hung around counting the first unwary victims and rejoicing as she checked them off.

Presently she got dressed and went out to a luncheon and shopping with a friend. When she came back she hoped that the last of the invaders would have buzzed out his final protests on the sticky fly paper.

Hilda, the maid, some hours later bore an armful of freshly ironed sheets and towels as she tramped heavily down the hall to the linen closet. Then she dropped her burden with a thump on a convenient table. When in the course of putting them away she came to the last sheet something seemed wrong with it. Hilda investigated and then she said: "My land!" One of the pieces of fly paper was immovably glued to the under side of the sheet.

With mutterings of disgust, Hilda peeled off the sheet and tried to wash it out in the bath tub. Her efforts proved to her how very useless it was for a fly to try to get away when once he got stuck to the sticky stuff. The fly paper she removed from its dangerous position on the table, and after aimlessly looking around for an out of the way place, deposited it upon the topmost sofa pillow on the library couch.

Linda Stebleton, aged 16, arrived home from school a little later, bringing with her three girls. They burst in with a gust of chatter and distributed themselves through two rooms recklessly. Thereupon simultaneously arose wild shrieks. Guest No. 1 had planted her elbow on one sheet of fly paper and her endeavors to remove it glued it firmly to her other hand. Guest No. 2 had leaned back her head and brought down a sheet hanging over the edge of a bookcase. Four puffs seemed inextricably attached to its surface. Guest No. 3 was trying to remove a sheet from Linda's back.

After the excitement had cooled down a trifle Linda gazed upon the fly paper with hostile eyes. "Mother must have put that horrid stuff around!" she said. "I suppose she saw a fly! You'd think that one fly was a regiment from the way she acts. Now, where can we put the awful stuff?"

They prowled around with the sticky paper gingerly held between their thumbs and fingers and finally arranged it to suit themselves. Then they devoted an hour to soap and alcohol in an endeavor to rid themselves of the general stickiness.

"Tod" Stebleton, aged eight, joined the procession when he rushed in and sat down with a bounce on a sheet that had slid into a chair. His objections were violent and acrid and it took the efforts of his sister and the other three girls combined to calm him. Taking the fly paper in no gentle hand, Tod hurled it out of his way.

Stebleton himself arrived home before his wife. "What's this? What's this?" he demanded in his nervous way, placing an investigating finger on the pale yellow sheet on the hall stand. It stuck. The other hand stuck, too, when he hastily endeavored to get it off. His son and daughter hastened to his rescue, explaining that doubtless mother had been waging war against her enemies, the flies.

When Mrs. Stebleton came in, tired, she was full of apologies for her lateness, she explained as she tossed off her hat and her gloves and coat. "I'm simply dead!" she ended. "I've just got to rest a few minutes before I dress for dinner!" Then she threw herself among the pillows on the library couch.

But not for long. From Mrs. Stebleton's appearance as she scrambled to her feet wildly after a horrified instant it seemed that Linda and her three friends, Tod and Stebleton all had followed Hilda's example in choosing the sofa pillows on that couch as a safe place to stow the sticky sheets of fly paper out of the way. Every last one of them was plastered on Mrs. Stebleton!

On the Nursery Menu.

Little sicknesses due to unwise feeding sometimes develop into troublesome maladies, and parents do well to watch, during the autumn especially, that injudicious treatment does not give rise to stomach complications in the case of young children. Contrary to the general idea, too much milk is not good, and should not be given promiscuously; there are many occasions upon which water is to be preferred, but cold water must not be given to an overheated child. A little barley water in milk will make the digestion assimilate it more easily and prevent vomiting and billiousness, and many children like and can with benefit be given buttermilk.