

MASTER JOHNNY'S NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR.

BY BERT HART.

It was spring the first time that I saw her, for her papa and mamma moved in next door, just as skating was over, and marble for the fence in our back-yard was broken, and I saw as I passed through the garden, that the doctor's son had his hair cut, and didn't know where he was. Then I saw her all around her, and I knew it was her.

I never knew whether she saw me—for she didn't say nothing to me.

But the next day the fence broke, and the boy that was next door can see.

But the next day I climbed on our wood-shed, and he called out, "Well, peekit' in m' m'bers?" and I answered her, "Sister is perh'."

"But I wasn't a bit mad, I was just, and to prove it, the very next day I went to her way.

For you know I am 'chuk'ed' and clumsy, as the doctor's son is, and this evening, and they say he has a coat of roses, and they say her dress is white, and they say her dress is white.

And she nearly wept, she did, pa, and laughed like tears in her eyes.

"And you were friends from that moment, for I think she was a little girl, and she was a girl, and she was a girl that would fatter, 'tath she thought I was tall for my age."

And I went to ride on my sled, and they had to ride on my sled.

"What am I telling you this for? Why, I think it's too bad."

"You don't hear one-half in I am saying—I really do."

"I think it's too bad, I've said, and they say he has a coat of roses, and they say her dress is white, and they say her dress is white."

"And she nearly wept, she did, pa, and laughed like tears in her eyes."

"And ma says it's decent and proper, so I was her neighbor and friend, and that was the way, and that should there be on the funeral, and she that you should speak to me, papa, I wouldn't know just what to say."

"Widow! that's what I always say."

"So I think I will get up quite early; I know I'll sleep in, but I'll wake up in time for my Bridget pulls the string that it's to my, and I'll gather the Johnny jump-ups as they grow."

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"For you're a big man, you know, pa, who can come and go just where you choose, and you take the flowers in her, and sure, but, papa, don't say 'they're from Johnny. They won't understand, don't you see? But just then down in her room, and papa, she'll know that they're from me."

THAT LITTLE WIDOW.

She was just the neatest little woman in the world, always smiling, always fresh, plump and dainty, in her room, one of the kind who smooth their aprons down while they talk to you. Then the little cigar shop at the corner, which she kept, and where she rattled on about fifty different brands of tobacco, and talked of the weather to her customers, and the kindness which any tale of sorrow to her always called forth from her, and when she came to you, she went into the drawer for change to be bestowed on some charitable place—all went to make up the best-tempored, the most motherly and the nicest little woman you would ever chance to meet.

She thought Dr. Ash, who lived next door, and who often went in for a little snuff, you know, but who invariably settled up more raisingly before popping into the shop. He used to say to her, "My! you must be lonely here, Widow Thorne!"

"O, not at all, sir, thanking you!"

"I wonder you never married a second time, Widow Thorne!"

"Well, it is a wonder, isn't it, doctor? But you see I'm such a queer old body that I guess not many could fancy me."

"Madam, there you must stop! I cannot hear the divine sex disparaged," returned the doctor. He was, as they say, of the old school. She laughed.

"Can't a woman speak against her self?" she asked.

"No! She never speaks against her self, she means to flatter herself by contradictory disprangement when some one is by."

"Sir, you are too plain."

"Widow Thorne, I was always called plain, and the wif's too big for me."

Then she laughed at him; and what promised to be a quarrel ended in a mere "Good-by."

There was the baker at the corner. He was a widower, and he used to come in the evening for a chat and a cheap cigar.

Said he, "This lonely state is miserable, isn't it?"

"Do you speak from experience?" asked she.

"Yes; my Maria's been dead four years now."

"I wouldn't think it would take so long a time for you men to forget any thing," she said.

"Ah, ma'am! man is a wonderful being—the most wonderful of God's creatures."

"Except woman," said she.

"You're right, widow! And that's the reason the Lord meant that every man should have a wife and every woman a husband, just to make them equal partners. So I think you and I must have new partners."

"Now, look here, Mr. John! You've had your partner, and I've had mine, and death has dissolved the partnership. Now we're both bankrupt, and we can't carry on a joint business; so we must go on separately," she said, and laughingly bade him "Good-night!" He had to laugh, too, because she was a good-looking woman.

"I've done it, ma'am!" said he, smiling.

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed, but she smiled in a pleasant way, too.

Then he put the flowers beside her, and went to see his patients.

The little widow hummed a tune, tapping her foot on the floor, late in the afternoon, when the bachelor from the way reached to her.

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