

HUNTING OWLS IN MISSOURI

BY J. G. SCHICKERBROOK.

You, who are skilled in hunting fowls,
Know you how they capture owls?
No? Then wait a little while,
How 'tis done in Missouri!

Well, they start out for the woods,
Having no explosive goods,
Nothing of the kind, you know,
Nothing but the plan below!

Now they spy one on a tree,
Very wise owl looks to be;
When they see he starts with fear
Round him fire their course they steer.

And the owl leaves, as is right;
To keep the hunter in his sight;
Onward still the hunter's bound—
The owl his head twists round and round!

Well, the consequence one knows—
Ho, at least, the s'ory goes—
Keeping the owl upon the wagon
Till his head quite on they bring!

IN SPITE OF HERSELF.

BY HILDA.

"Uncle Morton, I do wish you would drop the subject of Randall Whitney, now and forever. If you are tired of me, just say so, and I will pack my trunk yet to-night, and go to Aunt Barbara's." And the glow deepened on Ethel Dean's face; her brown eyes grew almost black, with little smoldering gleams of fire shining in their depths. She had been given into Uncle Morton's care at the early age of 3 years, and, in all the eighteen years that she had lived with him, he had never beheld her in such a passion. The good old man was frightened, both at the girl's anger and at her threat of leaving the old homestead.

"Well! well! Ethel, child, don't get so angry. Of course you needn't marry Randall Whitney unless you choose, for there is no compulsion about the matter at all. I only mentioned that he expected to pay us a visit this summer, and that I should like to have you treat him civilly. I am sorry if I said any thing to hurt your feelings, Ethel," said Mr. Morton, walking nervously up and down the broad piazza of the Morton farm-house.

"I am not angry with you, uncle, but I have grown tired of hearing Randall Whitney's name. If he is coming here this summer you can hire Dorothy Mason, and I will go to Aunt Barbara's while he is here. I have been wanting to visit her for some time, and this will be a good chance."

Uncle Morton paused in his walk, and looked down at the young girl as she sat on the steps pulling a rose to pieces, leaf by leaf, and a very pretty picture she made. The clambering rose-bush, with its wealth of foliage, and its buds just bursting into bloom, formed a pleasing background for the fresh, sweet face with the frank brown eyes and waving masses of lustrous brown hair.

"Why, Ethel, how can I spare you just now? cried her uncle, in real distress, "with the harvest just coming on, the summer's fruit to look after, and the dairy to be taken care of? Not now, Ethel, not now. I will write to him not to come until fall; will that do?"

Ethel laughed outright.

"You dear old uncle! It is a shame that you cannot invite who you please to your own house; but I do so much want to have the house without visitors this summer."

"Well, girlie, have it as you please. I will write to Randall this very evening not to come until fall. Bless me! we can't have you going off to Aunt Barbara's now. No, indeed!" And busting into the house, Uncle Morton called for a lamp, and immediately set about writing a letter to Randall Whitney. A glimpse of the old gentleman's letter to the son of his old college friend will explain the situation of affairs as well, or perhaps better than anything we could say.

MY DEAR RANDAL: I had anticipated a great deal of pleasure from the visit you promised to make us this summer. Though your father and I were such warm friends, I have not seen you since you were quite a small boy, and I am very sorry, but I shall have to ask you to defer your visit until fall. My niece, Ethel Dean, who has also been my housekeeper since the death of my wife, is a dear girl, and I am sure, as the farm-house this summer. You see, my dear boy, I do not beat about the bush, but tell you the plain truth of the matter. This fall, she is going away on a visit, then I shall certainly look for you. By the way, do you know of any likely young fellow who would come out here to work? I keep about twenty cows, and sell the milk at a cheese-factory, some three miles distant, and I need some to drive back and forth twice each day. Do you know of any steady, trustworthy man who would like such a place, send him out, and be sure to come yourself about the 1st of September."

Hoping you may not feel offended, I remain your friend, JOHN MORTON.

"There, Ethel, do you think that is plain enough?" and he tossed the letter to Ethel, who came in from the moonlight, her dark hair damp with dew, and curled about her forehead in tiny rings.

"Oh! uncle! he will think I am a cross grained old maid, and that I rule you and your house with a rod of iron," cried the girl. "But what need I care; anything so he don't come here, with his proud city ways; yes, that is all right, then! He will not be apt to bother us soon, especially, while I am here," and with a merry laugh she gave her uncle a "good-night" kiss, and went up to her own room.

John Morton and Richard Whitney had been schoolmates and "chums" in their early years, and warm friends during the dawning dignity of manhood. In time, they were both married, and while "Dick," as he was familiarly called, went to a distant city, and engaged in the mercantile business, Jack took up the occupation of a farmer. The young men were often spoken of as twins, though there was no tie of blood between them.

"But if we are ever blessed with children," they said "we will have the families united by marriage." No children ever came to John Morton's home, except Ethel, the daughter of his only sister, who, in dying, left her orphan child to his care. When Ethel was 12 years old, Mrs. Morton died, and on the shoulders of the young girl fell the care of her uncle's home.

Servants were employed as in her Aunt's time to do the heavy work, but Ethel, despite her tender years, had personal supervision of the household department, and soon proved herself to be a capital manager of affairs be-

longing to that domain. Ten years previous to the opening of our story, Richard Whitney died, leaving an only son, Randall. The young man was not aware of the existence of Ethel Dean, much less of the plan talked over by his father and John Morton, to have him marry the young lady some time in the future. Randall had succeeded his father in business, and one summer, weary of the ceaseless round of care, tired of the heat and confusion of the city, he remembered the promise he had made to visit Uncle Morton, and he determined to spend a few weeks at the farm-house. All needful preparations were completed, and he was on the eve of starting, when Mr. Morton's letter was received.

"Heigh-ho!" said he, when he had read the characteristic epistle through twice. "The poor old man does not have a very pleasant home, I'll wager. From the size of his letter, I imagine Miss Ethel Dean to be a crabbed old maid, who, to use a slang phrase, "runs the ranch."

So he sent an immediate reply to Mr. Morton's letter, stating that it would suit him just as well to make the promised visit later in the season, and he had found a young man that he hoped would suit Mr. Morton. He could recommend the young fellow as being trusty and of respectable family, and he would be on hand some time during the next week.

Randall Whitney's letter was received at the Morton farm-house on Tuesday, and on Thursday of the next week, as Ethel was busy in the front-yard tying up a refractory rose-bush, the click of the gate warned her of the approach of some one. "Well, I wonder what he has got to sell; for of course he is agent for something or another," was the girl's thought as a young man dressed in a serviceable suit of dark-gray and carrying a valise came up the flower-bordered path.

"Is this where Mr. Morton lives?" asked the stranger, lifting his broad-brimmed straw hat and bowing with the graceful ease that comes only with true politeness.

"Yes, sir," answered Ethel, stepping down from the elevated position on the three-legged stool; "you will find Mr. Morton sitting on the piazza."

"Thanks," said the young man, with a look of evident admiration of the sweet face half hidden in the depths of a capacious sun-bonnet, took his way in the direction of Uncle Morton's house.

Busy with her work Ethel had almost

forgotten the presence of a stranger at the house, when she heard her uncle calling to her. "Now, what's wanting?" said she to herself, as half petulantly she dropped her pruning shears and ball of twine. "My opinion on some wonderful labor-saving invention, I expect." But no sample in miniature of a washing machine, or automatic laundry, or self-cleaning ironing-board met her gaze. "Ha! ha!" what a merry laugh broke the morning stillness. "Ha! ha! marry Randall Whitney, well! that is news indeed. Have you ever met him, Ethel?"

"No; and uncle has not seen him since he was a little boy; but it was planned between his father and Uncle Morton that the two families should be united by our marriage."

"And you are willing the plan should be carried into effect?" he asked, his eyes twinkling merrily.

"No! I hate his very name," cried the girl, stamping her foot violently, "and I have told uncle so."

"Never mind, Ethel, I will have a talk with your uncle this morning, and I think Mr. Whitney may bring his harp on the willow."

"But I have not given you permission to speak to uncle yet; you are too quick in taking things for granted," said Ethel saucily, as Ned drove up, the rattle of the wheels drowning the sound of her voice.

"But it is 'yes' it is not, Ethel" and she could not say to him "nay," neither did she wish to.

"Yes," was the answer, as she danced merrily away toward the house, while Sidney Fields drove away through the dawning sunlight, his heart bounding lightly, and a knowing smile lurking on the proudly-curved lips.

"Ethel," said her uncle that evening after the duties of the farm and household were completed, "When do you want to go on your visit to Aunt Barbara's?"

The two were in the sitting-room where Ethel was just lighting the evening lamps.

The Parses.

The Parses of India are the descendants of the ancient Persian "fire-worshippers." They claim a history back to Abraham. The Zendavesta is their holy book, and the venerated Zoroaster, who flourished B. C. 550, is their great prophet. Driven from Persia a thousand years ago, they found a refuge in India. Now there are but 8,000 left in their ancient home. Of this strange people there are about 200,000 in all the world. Of this number 150,000 are in India, Bombay, "the city of the Parses," has 75,000, making one-tenth of the entire population. As you walk the streets of Bombay you cannot help noticing these descendants of Zoroaster, differing as they do from both Mohammedans and Hindoos.

"I know there is work to be done that the girls cannot do," said Uncle Morton, "but you know next month Randall Whitney will be here on his long-promised visit, and I thought maybe you would want to go away. You remember what you said last spring," and the old man rocked softly back and forth in the big arm-chair.

"Let him come, uncle, I cannot afford to let all the fruit go to waste on his account."

"Better say, Miss Ethel, you cannot afford to leave the new happiness that has come into your young life. Well, girlie, I am glad you are not going. I would hardly know how to entertain him alone."

Just then Sidney Fields sauntered in from the piazza, where he had been sitting, hidden by the vines and the early twilight.

"Mr. Morton," said he, as he drew a chair close to the old gentleman. "I have a confession to make. I have been living in our house almost three months under an assumed name, and as an impostor."

"What?" cried Mr. Morton, as he sprang to his feet, "you're a rascal; a scoundrel!"

"No, Mr. Morton, not quite a rascal, only Randall Whitney, the son of your old friend, Richard."

Uncle Morton stood spellbound. Ethel leaned against the mantle, her face flushing and paling by turns.

"Randall Whitney!" ejaculated the old man; "and you have been my hired man for three months!"

"Yes; Miss Ethel here would not receive me as a visitor, and as I was determined to spend my vacation here, I borrowed another name and came as a hired hand." Crossing over to where Ethel stood, white and still, he led her to Uncle Morton. "Uncle Morton, Ethel has vowed she will never marry Randall Whitney, but I love her so sincerely that I am willing to take the name of Sidney Fields henceforth, if with your consent, she will be my wife."

Uncle Morton sank down in the arm chair. "The girlie must do as she pleases."

Ethel stood blushing, bat no word left her red lips.

"Forgive me, Ethel, for my deception," and Randall Whitney drew her out into the silver moonlight. "You must say 'yes,' for I am a visitor now, and it will never do to be rude to company."

Next morning the young man entered upon the duties assigned to him; and, as Uncle Morton expressed it, "he proved to be the right man in the right place."

Every morning he was up with the sun, and down to the milking-lot where Ned and Susan, and Katy were filling the pails with rich milk, then back to the cool stone milk-house, with a brimming bucket in either hand, where Ethel, her round arms bared to the elbow, her lovely face flushed with the early exercise, was straining the

lacteal fluid into the bright tin-cans, around which the clear, cold water rippled with a soft, murmuring sound. There had been a wonderful change in the "new hand" since his arrival at the farm. His face was bronzed by exposure to the sun and wind, and glowed with the rich color of health and strength. The tired, jaded look in his brown eyes had given place to the brightness and buoyancy of renewed life. His musical voice, or clear, ringing whistle, as he went about his work, awoke the echoes through the meadow and woodland.

"Miss Ethel" said he, coming into the milk-room one morning, "do you know this summer's work will make me almost hate the city? I do not know how I can ever endure its noise and confusion again," and leaning against the open door he watched her deft hands flying swiftly about their work. "I have been here nearly three months, and my vacation is almost over," said he, musingly.

Ethel glanced up quickly.

"I think the summer has been a great benefit to you. You have gained almost perfect health, and a good brown color," she added, laughing.

"Yes, all thanks to the health-giving food and air of Morton farm, but Ethel, if I may call you so, there is something else I should like to have the assurance of having gained." Something in his voice brought a shade more of color to her smooth cheek but she gave no further sign of having heard.

"There," she said, carelessly, "the milk is ready and here comes Ned with the wagon."

"Ethel, do you hear me?" and behind the friendly screen of the iron-wood tree's thick foliage her hand was clasped in a firm, but gentle grasp.

"Yes," she answered, with downcast eyes and a glowing face.

"I want you, Ethel, to go with me to my home in the city, as my wife. Will you? for I love you girlie."

"But Uncle Morton has other plans for my future," said Ethel, archly. "He expects me to marry Randall Whitney."

"Ha! ha!" what a merry laugh broke the morning stillness. "Ha! ha! marry Randall Whitney, well! that is news indeed. Have you ever met him, Ethel?"

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"Never mind, Ethel, I will have a talk with your uncle this morning, and I think Mr. Whitney may bring his harp on the willow."

"But what can he do, uncle, if he is in such poor health?"

"That remains to be seen, for now that he is here I am under obligations to give him a fair trial. I like his appearance very well; he seems so thoroughly frank and outspoken."

And so thought Ethel when the young man came down to supper. Sidney Fields was not what one would call a really handsome man, yet there was something that suggested mental culture and wide and varied knowledge of life. His was a frank open face, though with proud, firm lines; a face that once seen was not easily forgotten. A look of expressive countenance when he entered the cool, wide kitchen where the evening meal was served. The table was spread with a snowy cloth, on which was placed the most inviting repast. Sweet yellow butter, and fresh rolls, strawberries, and a pitcher of richest cream, a crystal glass of summer-colored jelly, potatoes, eggs, doughnuts, fruit-tart, tea, and a large pitcher of milk for any who wish it. A pretty set of plain white china, silver knives and forks, and the whitest of white napkins.

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