

THE MAIL  
A PAPER FOR THE PEOPLE.

TERRE HAUTE, - - - JULY 27, 1878

Written for The Mail.  
THE LINNET.

BY EDWIN EARL.

Have you never heard  
Our bonny brown bird  
With little black necktie and gay yellow  
Jacket? - - -

No harvest could be  
Complete without he  
Was there with his happy, melodious  
racket.

He welcomes the dawn  
O'er'dew jeweled lawn,  
While deep in the grass shrills the slumber-  
less cricket in his merry note.

Is always afoot  
Ere robins astir in the hazelnut thicket

Above his mate,  
Merry mate,  
Asleep on her nest in the blossoming clover,  
He swings to and fro  
With the breezes that blow

His dutiful matins the wide field over.

Wherever you hide  
The midsummer tide  
When daylight grows longer and sunset  
grow mellow,

With his "O hear me  
Sing seek aching chee,"

You'll find him a most irreducible fellow.

Yet like all the rest  
Our brave little guest  
Is off with the robin, the martin and swal-  
low.

Like blessings they be,  
So quickly they flee,

While vainly our eyes would their dizzy  
flight follow.

And when o'er the bare  
Brown meadows the air  
Is a threatening mist full of autumnal clat-  
ter,

The sweater spring time  
Of some other clime

Shall waken to welcome their musical  
chatter.

Harper's Magazine—

## Aunt Eunice's Idea.

"Really, I don't like the idea at all," said mamma, looking puzzled; "and yet, for the life of me, I can't see what it is to do."

"There is nothing else to do," I said, resignedly. "I don't like the idea either, but I dare say I can manage very well."

I spoke dolefully, for all but the last clause of my speech was painfully, literally true. The idea was nothing else to do; I didn't like the idea at all, but—I had not the faintest hope that I should "manage very well." Nothing so wild entered my brain for a moment. On the contrary, I was quite sure that I should cover myself with shame and everlasting disgrace; but what is the use of howling about a thing that can't be helped?

The case, you see, was this: Mr. Robert Duncan, an intimate friend of my mother's youngest brother, was on his way to visit us, and must certainly arrive in the course of a few days. That was all very well, and had not concerned me for the least until five minutes before, when mamma had received a telegram which announced the sudden illness of her sister in Philadelphia, and summoned her thither imperatively. It was impossible to refuse to obey the summons; it was impossible to notify Mr. Duncan, for he was to take us in the course of other travels, and nobody knew his precise whereabouts at the present moment. Obviously, the only thing to be done was to let things take their course. But I—only eighteen, just out of school, a spoiled child, with never an atom of housekeeping experience, with no idea of the duties of a hostess—into what quagmires should I not founder before that terrible fortnight was up?

"After all, it will not be so bad," said mamma, encouragingly. "Mr. Duncan will be out most of the time, I suppose. We are so near the city that he will probably spend all his time there. Perhaps it is a good thing that I have invited Aunt Eunice, for she can matronize you, and Bridget will take all the care of the housekeeping off your hands. I am sure that you will be kind to Aunt Eunice; and Bridget, who had lived with us ever since I could remember, was a host in herself; but, all the same, my heart was very heavy as I watched mamma drive away, and thought of the burden that was laid upon me."

The above conversation with mamma occurred on Thursday, the 7th of October; it must have been, and on the same evening begins the story of my life, I kept during my period of martyrdom.

October 7.—Mamma left to day, and about half an hour after she had gone Aunt Eunice Singleton arrived. "Aunt Eunice we have always called her, though she is only a distant cousin of my father's. Such a droll little figure! She must have been pretty once, with that helpless pink and white prettiness which invariably fades into neutral tints as the years go on, until the golden hair and the peachy skin are all one uniform shade of dull whitish-brown, and the soft blue eyes are a pale, watery gray. A limp, pale figure in her gown of what was her gown? As I live, a brocade such as we may sigh for in vain in these degenerate days. A green and white brocade such as our grandmothers wore, 'thick enough to stand alone,' as the old saying goes. Originally it must have belonged to one of her ancestors, for, though a faint attempt at modernizing with the aid of a thin, shiny green silk is evident, it still bears traces of its antique cut in the skirt, which is short as well as scant, and the curious modeling of the bodice. And the bonnet! My first idea was that it had belonged to her grandmother, as I looked at the huge flaring brim, lined with silk of the brightest purple, but on dodging behind her to get a fresh view of it I saw that it was simply a Tuscan shade hat, turned up behind and set upon the back of her head. And this hat was trimmed with the richest and rarest of old point lace, yellow as coffee and priceless as diamonds. Round her throat and wrists she wore old point too, but not yellow old point. Oh no! Profanation! Who had had the heart to wash and starch—yes, actually to starch it—until it staled and bristled and rustled with every motion of her head or hands? An old-fashioned broche shawl, which I found she flattered herself might pass for Indian, and a pair of cotton gloves, completely covered her extraordinary array.

"You didn't expect to see such a fine old aunt, did you, dear?" said Aunt Eunice, complacently, as she laid aside her wonderful hat with the utmost care.

"You see, when I first got your mamma's letter I thought I could not possibly come, for I had not a thing fit to wear.

ut Sarah Eliza—that's my nephew's life, you know—she said, "Why, aunty,

there's your grandma's cedar chest that you haven't opened for years. There must be lots of things in that that will make you as fine as a fiddle." So we found this old dress, and Sarah Eliza matched it in silk, and Miss Fribble came in and made it all over in no time. You wouldn't guess it was nearly a hundred years old, would you now? Then, went on Aunt Eunice, fortunately waiting for no reply, "about my hat. I couldn't put one of your new-fangled fly-aways upon my old head, and I couldn't get anything else in town. My old one wasn't fit to wear; but at last Sarah Eliza hit upon this, and we found this lace, and Sarah Eliza said that would give it style, and it does, doesn't it? It does well enough on a hat, you see, but I couldn't put such dirty stuff next to my skin, so I just washed and starched enough for my neck and wrists, and I think it does look very nice and neat."

Poor old lady! Such a painful feeling of mingled absurdity and compassion took possession of me as I listened to her innocent expose of ways and means, that my heart grew too big for my breast and forced the tears from my eyes as I stooped and kissed her withered old

lips. The only thing that distressed me was Aunt Eunice's extraordinary behavior. I am really afraid that Mr. Duncan will think her insane, and an utterly inexplicable series of nods and winks did she keep up. I remarked that the meat was tough, only to be rebuked by a volley of warning glances. I asked Mr. Duncan if the carving-knife was sharp enough, and she coughed me into silence. But when I asked him if he liked to carve, she very nearly shook her head off in her efforts to hush him. Of course Mr. Duncan saw it all, and was much amazed by it as I, and far more diverted, or so I judged by the spasmodic manner in which he buried his napkin, and broke into sudden and uncalled-for fits of coughing, which left him red in the face and "teary round the lashes."

The evening passed off better than I expected, with music and talk. Then Mr. Duncan spoke of a volume of poems which he recently came out, and finding that I had not seen it, repeated one or two of them for me; and then it was time to separate for the night. Aunt Eunice beckoned me into her room mysteriously as I went up stairs, after a consultation with Bridget on the subject of breakfast.

"My dear," said Aunt Eunice, solemnly, "I know you don't mean any harm by it, and young things are always thoughtless; but if I were you, I wouldn't talk so much about butchers before Mr. Duncan. Depend upon it, he's hungry." I never thought of it before, but I can't help it now. Besides, even if I had thought of it, I don't know what I could have done; Bridget had locked everything up and was going to bed, and I should never have dared to ask her to go down again and get supper at that hour; so perhaps it's just well, though I don't like to think of his being hungry. Aunt Eunice and he haven't met yet. I wonder what he will think of her?"

October 8.—Oh dear! one day is over at last, but if they are all going to be like this, what shall I do? There's Aunt Eunice, in the first place. She came down to breakfast looking nice and quaint and lady-like, in her plain brown gown, with white collar and cuffs and little muslin cap. When she saw Mr. Duncan she started and said:

"I didn't know that your friend had come, my dear, or I would have put on my brocade. There's nothing like first impressions, you know, and I do want to do credit to the family."

If she had only known what a relief it was to me to see her in her plain morning dress! I am sure Mr. Duncan heard her speech, for all he looked so grave and abstracted, but that was nothing to what came afterward.

I don't know whether people would call Mr. Duncan a handsome man. For my part, I think him one of the handsomest I ever saw, but then I am not a judge. He is tall, but not overpowering so, with brown hair and mustache; a clear pale complexion, and eyes—no, I don't think I like his eyes. They are of a clear gray, shaded and black around the edge of the iris, which gives them richness and depth. They are beautiful eyes, I suppose, but they frightened me, they are so clear and steady and penetrating; they seem to look through you as if you were a pane of glass. And they look as if they could be merciless if they detected one shade of meanness or duplicity in all your soul; merciless in their satire, too, if anything ever so slightly ridiculous came under their ken. But there! if I go on frightening myself this way I shall make a greater goose of myself than ever.

Well, after Aunt Eunice had expressed her regrets about her brocade, I introduced Mr. Duncan to her, and we all sat down to breakfast. Luckily everything was very good, the steak done to a turn, the potatoes golden brown, the coffee clear as amber, fine as musk." Aunt Eunice was rather silent and subdued. Mr. Duncan did his best in the way of talk, but I was too much frightened and too much absorbed by my new duties to make even a faint impression, I think.

"Turtle's eggs!" cried Aunt Eunice, with an air of lively interest. "Do turtles lay eggs? Why, I never knew that before! But how do they hatch them? Do they sit upon them?"

The notion of turtle sitting upon its eggs nearly convulsed me, but I controlled myself, and explained the mode which they adopt, as well as I could. Aunt Eunice appeared quite satisfied at the time, but I began to perceive that a subject is never done with when you think it is. Hardly were we seated at the dinner table when she broke forth:

"Mr. Duncan, what idea do you think this ridiculous child has got into her head? She has been trying to convince me that turtles sit upon their eggs like hens! Turtles with their hard shells—just think of it! I told her that they bury them in the sand and let the sun hatch them; but no! she sticks to it that they make nests in the reeds and rushes, and sit upon them. Do tell her that it is nonsense, that it stands to reason it can't be. I have tried to convince her, but I can't. Not the green turtles, you know, added Aunt Eunice, with a sudden rush of recollection. "They are the only kind that I have ever seen in front of a—market; I wouldn't mention them for the world. But the common little mud-turtles, you know. They are not good to eat, and it can't hurt anybody's feelings to mention them."

Poor Mr. Duncan! poor me! In the midst of my wrath and mortification I could not help laughing until I cried at his puzzled face. Clew to her meaning, of course, he had none, and though he must have considered her demented and me an idiot, there was nothing worse than commiseration in the look he bent upon me. People do pity idiots, I suppose; but I wonder whether it is worse to be an idiot and not know it, or to be considered one and have no chance of disproving the charge?

October 12.—Things go on in much the same way here. Mr. Duncan break fasts with them that takes himself off, and see no more of him until near dinner-time. Yesterday I was obliged to leave Aunt Eunice to her own devices most of the morning. The night before, in recalling some of the memories of his childhood, Mr. Duncan expressed a desire to taste once more such gingerbread as his mother used to make, and I determined to gratify him. I began to be so concerned about my housewife's accomplishments that I might have known that pride would have a fall sooner or later. How in the world Bridget ever came to make such a blunder I can't tell; but the most trusted will fail sometimes. The gingerbread was all mixed, and I was sitting in the flour slowly and carefully.

"Bring me some flour, Bridget," I said. "Here isn't half enough."

Bridget turned upon me a face of dismay.

"Sure, Miss Marion, there's never a bit more," she cried—and me that forgot to tell you about it this morning!"

No more flour! I stared from the pan

to Bridget, and from Bridget back to the pan. The inside was the worst, though. We coughed and choked, and sneezed and wept, in the stinging, stifling atmosphere. We sat around the dinner table a mournful trio, while the tears, uncall'd-for, poured down our burning cheeks.

"Why?" I asked, quoting an old conundrum—"why is a smoky chimney like a swallow?"

No one replying, I was obliged to answer my own question.

"Because it has a crooked fiew."

Mr. Duncan laughed, but Aunt Eunice only stared in rigid disapprobation.

"A crooked fiew," she repeated, with a puzzled air. "But, my dear, that's not correct—not at all correct. A swallow has not a fiew, a fly, and as far as I can see, it can't put an article before it. You couldn't parse such a sentence as that. A crooked fiew, it should be. A swallow may have a crooked flight—indeed, I believe he has—but a crooked fiew!"

"But, Aunt Eunice," I said, stifling my laughter as best I could, "a chimney hasn't a flight."

"Certainly not," retorted Aunt Eunice, severely. "A chimney has a fiew, but not a flight; and a swallow has a flight, and not a fiew. That is just what I say. You see that it is incorrect altogether. There is no wit in such a thing as that—not even sense."

The attempt at enlightening her in regard to the pun was palpably hopeless, and I gave up in despair. It is singular that she should be so totally devoid of imagination on some points, while in other respects it is so vivid. I do wonder what idea she has taken into her head lately? She seems full of some project which forces sighs from her breast and incoherent words from her lips every time she looks at me when we are alone together. Yesterday we had a very mysterious conversation—at least I was mysterious to me; I suppose she understood it.

"My dear," she said, after several false starts, "are you quite sure that your mother knows all about Mr. Duncan?" "All about him?" I said, somewhat puzzled. "I don't exactly know what you mean. She knows that he is here, of course, and she knows all that Uncle Jack has told her; but 'all about him' is a very wide phrase."

"About his profession, I mean," said Aunt Eunice.

"Oh yes!" I replied, in temporary for-

getfulness of her hallucination. "She knows all about that, of course."

Aunt Eunice shook her head slowly.

"Well, it's all a puzzle to me. The Nortons always held their heads so high

and that your mother should be willing—I can't help thinking that there is some mistake somewhere, and I've just been thinking whether it isn't my duty to write to your mother."

"It was a very good way," she said, with an air of mild remonstrance. "You see, I thought that as you were busy, I thought I would go without bothering you, for once. I did not say anything about it, for I knew that you would insist upon going with me. Well, I went to New York, found my way to the ferry without any trouble, but when I got on the other side, what with the noise and the confusion, I fairly lost my head, and wandered about for I don't know how long, without an idea of where I was. I was getting very much discouraged, when suddenly I caught sight of this man, and remembered that I had seen his cart at your door. I had some trouble to make him hear me, but when he stopped at once, and a most civil spoken young man he proved to be. He offered to call a cab for me, but I said, "No, if he would just take me himself in the course of his round, that would do very well." People stare! Well, a little, perhaps; but you see no one could mistake me for anything but a lady—wasn't it lucky I put on my brocade?—so it didn't much matter."

"Did you—did you stop at many houses?" I asked, falteringly.

"A dozen or so," replied Aunt Eunice, cheerfully. "It is singular what a com- motion such a simple thing as the stopping of a butcher's cart at the door makes. Every one rushed to the front windows as if they had never seen one before."

"Turtle's eggs!" cried Aunt Eunice, in irrepressible horror.

"How could I what?" asked Aunt Eunice, innocently. "If it's riding in a butcher's cart that you mean, I might have objected to that a month ago; but if you have no scruples on that point, why should I?" I have no doubt that Mr. Duncan himself drove a cart when he first went into the business, though I suppose that he has got beyond it now."

Mr. Duncan, who had been out to settle with the man and dismiss him, re-appeared at this juncture. I glanced at him in dismay. Had he heard? I really could not tell. His eyes were dancing, while the rest of his face was preternaturally grave; but there was quite enough in the circumstances of the case to account for that, without making it necessary to suppose that he had caught Aunt Eunice's last words. I might at least hope that he was still in ignorance of the horrors which Aunt Eunice had seen fit to thrust upon him.

My gingerbread? I had forgotten all about it in the anxiety of the afternoon, and it did not return to my mind until we sat down to table.

"How did the gingerbread bake, Bridget?" I asked.

"Sure, ma'am," said Bridget, composedly. "It didn't bake at all; it boiled—producing in proof of her words a cake-pan, of which bottom and sides were thickly incrusted with a substance closely resembling the 'taffy' dear to childish hearts. In the laughter which this episode caused, our embarrassment melted away. Indeed, I am ceasing to be afraid of Mr. Duncan. We had a delightful evening after Aunt Eunice's fatigue had got the better of her and banished her to her own room.

October 14.—Aunt Eunice has not distinguished herself in any special way of late. Yesterday she was too much exhausted by her adventures of the day before to be any thing but quiet and meek. What should I do if any one but Mr. Duncan were staying here? I like him more and more every day. It seems impossible that I have only known him for a week. He is so kind and thoughtful toward me, and Aunt Eunice treats with a respect which is wonderful. She sees, I do, that the dear old lady is—what shall I say?—little shaky in her wits, and he is tender of even her worst freaks and blunders. Of course he can not help laughing—nobody could—but the laughter is not of a kind which could hurt her feelings, even if she knew of it, which she does not.

Yesterday was a damp, rainy day, and there was a raw chill in the air which struck to the very marrow of your bones, so, toward evening, I ventured to ask Bridget to light the furnace fire. I think I would have let them freeze to death quietly if I had known what the result would be. Out of every register the smoke came pouring, until the whole house looked like London in a fog. The cellar was full of smoke too, which got out in great puffs through the grates windows, until the passers-by stopped and stared, under the impression that the house was

on fire. The inside was the worst, though. We coughed and choked, and sneezed and wept, in the stifling atmosphere. We sat around the dinner table a mournful trio, while the tears, uncall'd-for, poured down our burning cheeks.

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