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LITTLE SOULS

A Powerful Two-Part Story of Human Values

By LAURA GOODMAN SALVERSON

PART THE SECOND

MARIANNA was queer—queer at least, judged by the standards of yesterday. She worked "by the day" for the "families" of her little Scandinavian village and mended for them at home

. . . and although she never ate meat herself, she raised two fine pigs every year. She treated them with far too great equality for a Christian and was frequently heard to address them when in philosophical mood as "Little Souls." The folk knowledge of rare herbs was part of her "queerness" too, for she picked and dried them for some purpose or other.

But it was in the homes of the villagers that her strangeness, and her reluctance to gossip, was most bewildering, and at once most comforting. Their petty woes, quarrels and intrigues swirled about her like water about a placid rock—and strangely enough, were usually quietened by the contact. On Mondays she washed for Fru Jensen, the doctor's wife, whose airs and graces impressed neither the doctor nor Marianna. On Thursday she did the same for Dame Christine, the baker's wife—and there first heard of how Elma, the painter's lady, was flirting with that lady's brother-in-law, Hendrick. On Saturday she found bedlam rampant at Fru Bings, the minister's wife—the children shrieked, the minister stormed—but when she left, the trouble had in some way subsided. Marianna knew everyone's troubles so well that she could find no interest in bearing tales.

But to the Stroms, too poor to employ anyone and asking only friendliness, Marianna gave of herself. There was real

trouble in that household, for Vilmar, the eldest, had just pitched his employer's nephew through the store window for accusing him of short-weighting customers to feed the brood at home. To Vilmar in this crisis, Marianna suddenly and quite inexplicably suggests the probability of a career at sea—and throws in a seemingly irrelevant reference to her pigs into the bargain. The boy, though grateful, merely thinks her more "queer" than usual. Yet with guileless grin, Marianna leaves the family strangely reassured, with a happier picture of Vilmar.

Returned to her little house, Marianna's part in the lives of the villagers is still not done. A devastating storm is tearing across the countryside, when she hears frantic knocking at her door.

SHE ran to the door. Yes, there, limp and breathless, leaning against the wall and clinging together like the babes they were, stood Milly and Vilmar. Marianna whisked them in and got a flood of rain along with them. They were too exhausted to talk. Mutely they begged her

understanding. Marianna nodded at them.

"Rain," said she, "is sometimes too much. Milly, just you go in that other room where my bed is and take every last stitch off. You do the same here, Vilmar. Thank God I'm mending the Doctor's hunting-pants. Most likely they'll be short but the frock coat will go better."

Thus, in a little while she had the truants dressed in dry clothing and sitting before the roaring fire sipping hot strong coffee. And since youth lives in the moment, amusement soon leaped to life in their eyes and before long bubbled over in reckless laughter.

"Oh, Vilmar," giggled Milly, "you should see the sight you are! Plaid hunting-pants, six inches too short, and a broadcloth frock coat! If Mamma were only here!"

Vilmar looked down at his long legs ruefully, just a little hurt at such tactless derision. But a glance at Milly, swallowed up in Fru Jensen's discarded purple silk, smoothed down his ruffled feathers.

"Well, I've seen you in many outfits, Milly, but never quite like this!"

Milly was a young witch. Up went her little nose, and her pretty mouth, by some miracle of mimicry, flattened out in Fru Jensen's cold thin smile.

"My good Vilmar," her voice was pitched to just that wavering treble which Fru Jensen considered indispensable to good breeding, "my good Vilmar, it's not to be expected that you should appreciate fine taste in dress."

Marianna shook her head at their foolishness, but her crooked eyes twinkled despite her. Then she looked at the

little pigs, nose against nose before the fire. Happy, poor things, with the shadow of the Lofoten already upon them! And, not three feet away, Milly smiled at Vilmar, whose honest blue eyes were boyishly adoring but shadowed with a dozen miseries. To-night, Nature's storm afforded this intimate happiness, but to-morrow—Herr Gud, what a hullabaloo that Christine would raise! Marianna sniffed, and, being queer, bent down to tap Brother on his shiny black back.

But this was not the end of adventure to-day. In the midst of laughter Marianna's visitors suddenly fell silent, bodies taut, every sense alert. There! now it came again—

"Heavens, it's a cry!" Milly's eyes were wide with anticipated horrors.

"Hush!" cautioned Vilmar. "There it is again—hear it? Someone lost in the timber—!"

"Herr Gud! A child lost in such a night—oh, Vilmar!"

Marianna sniffed. Being alone had sharpened her sensibilities. "Nu, then, that's no child. More like it's a woodcutter calling another."

It was not a child—neither was it a woodcutter. Plainer now, came the voice, lusty enough and masculine. "Halloo! Halloo! Halloo!" Nearer and nearer drew the sound. Marianna understood. Whoever it was, he was coming from the Blue Ridge. He had seen her house, but on the north it would appear a black and uninviting habitation. Quickly, she lighted another lamp and, carrying it into the bedroom, set it in the window. A cry, unintelligible, but of evident relief, proved that he had caught her signal and understood that he was welcome.

Marianna was cautious. She knew human nature. "Pigs," said she, "is pigs—and folks is folks. I'll be asking you two to go into that there room till we see the stranger."

It was well she commanded when she did, for on seeing her visitor, and the burden he carried, precaution and all

else deserted her. For the moment she could do nothing but stare. It was Hendrick Berg, Christine's brother-in-law and Ingeman's business partner. Hendrick Berg, and such a sight! His fine clothes bespattered with mud, hung like rags on his bulky figure, and in his arms lay a limp, moaning bundle of silks and laces, that certainly could be no other than the painter's lady. Herr was a witches' brew, indeed! Hendrick with Ren's wife lost in the night, and Milly and Vilmar in the next room!

For once Marianna's sniff was feeble, but her wits were fast reviving. To Hendrick's peremptory requests for something dry to put on Madam Ren, she nodded brightly. From a trunk in the corner she drew a woolen blanket. This she hung over the clothes-line that ran diagonally across her kitchen. Fru Ren could discard her sopping clothes on the one side, Herr Hendrick on the other, so she said. Fru Ren made a grimace, Herr Hendrick shrugged. But, both being cross and weary, they forebore to argue and did as they were told.

This time Marianna's wardrobe disgorged an even less happy mixture. For Christine's elegant brother, she found nothing better than a much mended nightshirt—it had once been the Deacon's—and a purple smoking-jacket. To somewhat mend matters she added a quilt. Herr Hendrick's legs were very stout and red. Marianna could understand that the less displayed of them the better. Fru Ren shuddered at the atrocities offered for her comfort. Having already taken Dame Christine's cashmere apart, Marianna could offer her delicate visitor nothing better than a green wrapper and a cape—both of which had done long service in the Pastor's household. In fact, poor Lena had only parted with them last year, thinking she would no longer need them. Fru Ren sobbed afresh on viewing herself in these horrors. But the green wrapper was inured to tears and caressed her soft flesh none the less warmly.

Marianna alone was proud of her work. Like a manager of an amateur show, she flung up the impromptu curtain when her stars were fully clothed. "Nu, then," she sniffed, "it's coffee you need and maybe a bite. Sometimes rain is too much."

Fru Ren slumped in her chair and pouted like a bad child. "Don't talk of food," she whimpered. "Most likely I'll never live to eat another mouthful. Oh, Himmel above, what will Julius say!"

Hendrick shrugged and muttered something vitriolic under his breath. But then the poor man was hunting in his coat for pipe and tobacco. The tobacco was there, wet and stringy, but the pipe was gone to the demons of the night. Such things are hard to bear!

Marianna went ahead with her coffee. And the storm went right on with its gleeful destruction. Louder and louder grew the wind; the rain falling now in such volume that it seemed the heavens had opened to emit another flood. Swelling this terrific harmony, peals of distant thunder rolled down from the mountains in the north and, like a thousand Valkyries, came roaring down the valley. Dreadful swords of lightning tore aside the darkness, revealing the boiling heavens in an awful, greenish light. Marianna despaired of her garden; the phlox and the golden poppies would never survive such a deluge. Only the marigolds, the pansies and the asters would hold their own. Fru Ren clapped her jewelled hands over her pink ears at each successive thunderbolt, and glared across at Hendrick as if it were all his doing. He, wretched man, glowered straight before him trying to pretend that only the storm engaged his thoughts. From time to time he lifted a stick from the wood-box, putting it in the stove—always with the greatest gusto and sober concentration.

At last Fru Ren could bear no more. "A nice situation you've got me in, Herr Hendrick! (Continued on page 40)



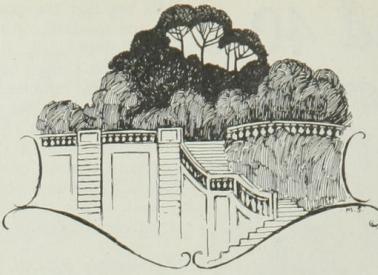
On that day of days she rose with the dawn, dressed in her best alpaca, tucked a bottle of coffee and a sandwich into her handbag, and set off for Gildness with her pigs.



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Little Souls

Continued from page 7

If I should survive—which seems unlikely—what will people say?"

Hendrick crossed and recrossed his heavy legs—not a graceful manoeuvre with a padded quilt about him. "Damn folks!" said he.

"Himmel above!" wailed Fru Ren, her brown eyes (formerly so liquid and soft) shooting darts of hate at him. "You've got me into this dreadful mess and sit there oblivious to my suffering! Sit there like a heartless brute and swear!"

"My dear Elma, calm yourself. We're here, and thankful we should be. What's the good of a fuss? After all!"—he concluded ungallantly, "you would insist on making the Blue Ridge to-day. I warned you it was three miles. And in such shoes!"

The scorn of it brought an angry red to Elma Ren's white face. "Hear the man! Oh, you warned me, did you? And did you urge me to stay home, maybe? You with your pestering attentions week after week! It's a miracle Julius didn't catch on to you—praising his pictures and all the while planning to steal his wife!"

Hendrick cast an uneasy glance at old Marianna. Here was a mess indeed! Tomorrow the old woman would carry the whole tale to Christine. To Christine of all people! The reflection robbed him of the last remnant of patience. "For pity's sake, shut up," he barked. "Shut up, you little fool! Do you want the whole town agog by to-morrow?"

Fru Ren was not accustomed to being chided. She burst into hysterical shrieks. "Oh, Himmel, such a brute! Such ingratitude! Such coarseness! Oh, I deserve to lose my sweet Julius for even talking to such a creature! Marianna, Marianna, good soul, I call you to witness that this man has pestered me with his odious attentions for weeks. Yes, you know it's true, Hendrick—for weeks and weeks! Despite my reluctance, Marianna, that man has dogged my every step—and I, an innocent little woman wrapped up in the best of husbands!"

"Damn!" shouted Hendrick. "Think what you like, but say less if you know what's good for you!"

Elma's pretty face turned positively green. "Don't dare to lord it over me, you brute! I'm only a helpless woman, but I'll have you know I stand for my rights. And Marianna shall know the truth—yes, if I die for it! Oh, Himmel, I swear it, Marianna, only my loneliness tempted me. Nothing else—oh, nothing! You know how my Julius wanders about with his painting—now here, now there—never at home. Is it my fault then? "Oh, Himmel! What is a poor woman to do all day alone in this dreary village?"

Marianna poured out a big cupful of steaming coffee. Her eyes were mysteriously bright, but her sniff quite unaltered. "Nu, then, Fru Ren, here's as good coffee as ever I made. Life's mostly this and that—but coffee's never amiss."

Fru Ren shivered with delicate distaste. "Oh, how can you expect me to eat and drink when my heart is broken? My good Marianna, you don't seem to understand. The awful perils that threatens me seem quite to have escaped you! I know I just can't swallow a drop!" But, of course, she did, and asked for more.

Hendrick did not dally. With honest eagerness he accepted Marianna's good brown bread, eating it with as hearty a relish as any starved boy home from a tramp. This, of course, added to Elma's chagrin. "To see him eat," she cried, in exasperation, "one would think nothing else mattered. Oh, Himmel, what cruelty! Whatever shall I do? Julius will be furious!"

"Humph!" her cavalier retorted, his mouth full of bread. "I'll bet it's not the first time. Don't belittle yourself, my dear Elma, you'll find a lie to fit the occasion."

Elma stamped her little feet, forgetting that they were unshod. The effect was disastrous. Instead of the epitaph selected for Hendrick's annihilation, the pain of this rude encounter brought real tears to her eyes. She had tramped on Tabby's Spool—much to the cat's delight, who scampered after it as it flew across the floor. Hendrick nearly choked on his bread. Marianna sniffed suspiciously. It really was too much! Feeling tremendously sorry for herself, Fru Ren hid her face in the faded cape and wept bitterly.

MEANWHILE in the other room, Milly and Vilmar clung to each other in desperate solicitude. Fear robbed them of their sense of humor. The silly squabble on the other side of the wall struck them as being terrible indeed. Milly's heart thumped so loud in her little breast that it seemed a monstrous enemy bent on betraying her. Vilmar was similarly afflicted. They dared not move; they dared not whisper; and found comfort alone in a passionate hand-clasp. Within and without, the storm waged merrily on.

Marianna was beginning to wonder just what dispensation she could make of her unhappy guests when a frightful clap of thunder catapulted down the sky. So terrible to hear, it seemed that nothing could remain unharmed in the wake of such furious vibrations. Courage and discretion deserted young Milly. With a piercing scream she flung herself upon Vilmar's breast and buried her little nose in the Doctor's elegant frock coat.

Here was a pretty how-d'y-e-do, thought poor Marianna. No use now, to plan on hiding the scapegoat. Herr Hendrick set down his coffee cup and looked at Marianna with suspicious eyes.

"Ha!" said he, "so we're not alone?" Judged by his voice, this was a grave offence—she should have arranged things better—"So we're not alone?"

Marianna saw no reason to refute so wise a deduction. Besides, what could she say? Herr Hendrick had no taste for argument at any time. Indeed, she had nothing to say, but she sniffed in eloquent fashion when Hendrick stalked, with what dignity the patchwork quilt permitted, toward the door.

Herr Hendrick had his suspicions. He was certain that voice from the inner room was familiar—disagreeably certain. In fact, he suspected Milly in a prank. He put nothing past that girl. Still, to expect her here at this particular time—well, that was going too far! And then poor Hendrick came to a petrified halt, the tableau before him so far exceeding his wildest fancy. Agog and agape, he leaned against the door-jamb, mopping his big red face in stricken be-



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wilderment. But can you blame him? Right there before his very eyes, his own niece clung to the bosom of that good-for-nothing Vilmar. Clung, mind you, as if the hope of Heaven depended on it!

Speech failed him and thought flew round and round in a dizzy whirl. How dared that young reprobate lead an innocent girl to destruction? How dared the son of "Red" Strom even talk to Milly Berg! It was monstrous! Beyond belief or reason! Herr Hendrick opened his mouth to say as much but old Marianna who had drawn to his side, checked him with her enigmatic smile. One wrinkled hand on his arm, she whispered: "Where there's two culprits, there's no so much fear of tattling."

Hendrick was scandalized. He actually gasped. "Marianna! why Marianna, good woman, it amounts to bribery. As I live, you're asking me to shield that faithless rascal from the consequences he deserves!"

Marianna nodded. "That's so, Herr Hendrick. That's so. Begging and taking—that's the way of things mostly. But you—you've no mind to ask for the like?"

Peals of laughter added to poor Hendrick's discomfiture. Fru Ren had a sense of humor when the joke was on another. Besides, plotter that she was, she now realized that her own danger was greatly minimized. Milly would save her and she would save Milly. Hendrick could make what excuse he would to that termagant of a sister-in-law.

"My dear Hendrick," shrilled the relieved lady, "what's the good of getting pious this late in the day?"

She got no further. Milly, too, had seen the way of escape. Like a young tigress she sprang to her feet, pushing her scowling uncle back from the doorway, and confronted her elders, anger making her small face singularly transparent and white.

"You should talk—you two! You should look at Vilmar and me as if we were guilty of some terrible crime! You, Uncle Hendrick, buying jewellery for another man's wife! Oh, don't look so horrified. I know that pendant she's wearing. I know, too, why you've bought ten water-color daubs from Julius Ren! I hate you, Uncle Hendrick—no, I loathe you. Making out to be so good and all the time such a double-face! Acting like this and upholding Mamma in her notions about Vilmar—"

"Milly!" thundered Hendrick, "Milly, hold your tongue! These crazy notions are Vilmar's doings. You're out of your head! And what's more, my girl, there'll be a reckoning when Mamma knows the whole of your carrying on. You'll not be so flip, my young one, in the face of your Mother!"

All the while Vilmar had sat in forced silence, his young heart aglow with pride in Milly. Now he jumped up, a volley of angry words on his tongue, but old Marianna pushed him back roughly. For the first time that evening she broke into laughter, and, since no one had ever heard her laugh, the shrill cackle affected them more than the din outside. The whole world and everything in it had certainly gone mad. Old Marianna, however, enjoyed it hugely—unreservedly, wholeheartedly. "Oh, ho, ho, ho!" she struggled with her mirth. "Little souls, little souls—Oh, ho! Oh, ho! The wolf accuses the lynx and the lynx, no doubt, the weasel! Oh, ho, ho!"

"Woman, come to your senses! Talk reason!" bawled Hendrick, trying desperately to recover his dignity, but finding it exceedingly hard with Milly's contemptuous eyes upon him. Confound that Elma anyway! Now his prestige in the Berg household was forever shattered. Confound the rain; confound the abominable quilt; confound the crazy Marianna! "Herr Gud! we've had enough of foolery. Talk sense, woman! Sense, I say, or keep quiet!"

"That's so, Herr Hendrick, that's so. It's no so good, this foolishness. Only, you see, it struck me you'd all forgot your whereabouts. Good or no, it's my house you're in. You're here, or you're not here, according to my liking. You understand, Herr Hendrick?"

"What!" screamed the always excitable Fru Ren. "You wicked old woman! You

mean to say that you'd deny that we were here if it suited you?"

Marianna sniffed. "Women's women, Fru Ren, and has their weaknesses."

Hendrick was fast tiring of the whole thing. He was all a mass of aches. Drat that Elma, anyway. She couldn't walk a step in those silly slippers, and he knew that his rheumatism would come back after this crazy adventure. He glared at Marianna, but his face was determined. He was ready to come to terms.

"Well, then, Old Marianna, what is it you want? Just what do you want us to do?"

Marianna was quite as ready to put argument aside. "No so much, Herr Hendrick—still, a little. There's Vilmar, here, accused of wrong dealing in the store. You'll remember the right of it."

"It's impossible to take him back, if that's what you mean," interrupted Hendrick.

"I'm not asking it. Vilmar is going to sea—betimes to study navigation in Oslo. But there's little Hans—he's needing work to help his Mamma—little, too, if you think it over."

Milly's eyes were stars in her face. She had never suspected this ambition of Vilmar's, but she accepted it joyously. She even relented toward Uncle Hendrick. Rosy with new hope she ran to his side.

"Uncle Hendrick, oh, Uncle Hendrick, it's true. It's so very little. And think how Mamma would rage—think of Julius and how the people would laugh. Do say you'll make things right. You know Tomi lied. You know, all of you just have the habit of picking on the Stroms. It's cruel, Uncle Hendrick. How can Vilmar help it if his Papa drinks and his Mamma is lazy?"

"Indeed, that is true," Fru Ren agreed amiably. "Many a good man has gone down through drink. Yes, my dear Hendrick, considering that all this mess is your doing, the least we can ask of you is simple justice. And as Milly says, my dear Julius is apt to be unreasonable when he's aroused. All geniuses are."

"Geniuses be hanged!" growled Hendrick, then turning to Marianna he concluded—"It seems there's no other help for it. I'll see what can be done, though I warn you, Ingeman's apt to be hard to handle. And for the other—well, I'll do my best. If this tale about the sea is true it won't be so hard. And now, for Heaven's sake, where can we sleep?"

Marianna was nothing if not resourceful. Now that they had come to their senses, she disposed of them in short shift. Milly and Fru Ren shared her bed; Hendrick and Vilmar, much against that gentleman's fancy, a pallet in the kitchen. As for Marianna, she curled up in a corner, a single quilt and pillow her bed. At midnight the wind died down with a last long, shuddering sigh, and the rain died with it. The house of little souls lay wrapped in slumber.

In the morning, Marianna was the first to waken, but she made short work of rousing her company. After giving him coffee, she sent Hendrick packing. He could go to the store and make what explanations he wished. No one would contradict him, though Marianna thought it wisest that he pretend to have been at the Blue Ridge Loch fishing. Hendrick stood not upon the order of his going. His paramount need just then was a bottle of liniment from the village drug store.

Perhaps an hour later Marianna suggested that Fru Ren and Milly set out for Christine's. Milly was to carry Marianna's little shopping basket and to tell her mother that, owing to the storm, her old washerwoman would be a trifle late. The pigs needed looking after, and so on. Also, it was agreed upon between them that Fru Ren should say she had gone to Marianna's to engage her services—had met Milly on her way to the berry patch and on the spur of the moment had joined her. Later, the storm upon them, they had fled back to the old woman's house. No one would doubt them. Marianna would see to that. Being queer, people believed her. Being simple, she had a reputation for truthfulness.

When they were gone, Marianna turned to Vilmar, very dejected now and lost in hopeless speculation.

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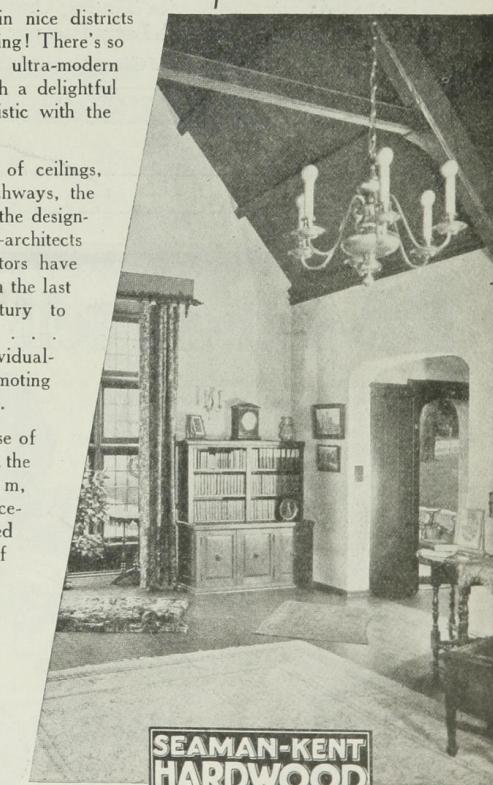
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"But how—"

"This is how, Vilmar. To-day you don't go home. Yesterday, we'll say, you left for Gildness, and if you walk fast, rain or no rain, you'll be there shortly. At Gildness you'll go to Toby—you know his hut by the fjord—and you'll give him these boxes of herbs. There's more to the looks of them than the heft. I've carried fifteen myself, tied together and swung to my back. That's all we've a need to speak of to-day. At Toby's, you'll stay till I bring the pigs; barring misfortune that'll be next Wednesday. And now, Vilmar, just let the questions wait, and get along afore someone spies your going. Dogs love a hue and cry, Vilmar, and folks is the same."

Marianna knew her village. No one doubted her tale. Why should they? Thursday night, after leaving Dame Christine's, she appeared at the Ren's, where she encountered a very troubled artist. His wife was so sick, said he, all tired out after her terrible adventure in the woods. No wonder! What could you expect—a delicate little thing like Elma, half carrying, half dragging a great lumox like Milly down the hill to shelter. Marianna expressed her sympathy with a sniff, and, much as she hated to disturb the good lady, said she must get the dress Fru Ren wanted mended. She got it and a kiss to boot. The sight of such tenderness in his dear Elma quite overcame Julius. With a cry he knelt at her bedside and fell to kissing her small hands and calling himself all sorts of names for the dreadful doubts he had had of her. Sweet angel that she was, full of love and pity, not scorning a cross-eyed washerwoman, much less aught else!

After a bit, the good villagers began to see that they had made too much of a boy's quarrel. Tomi had a queer sense of humor, was always a boy for teasing, and, of course, Vilmar was touchy. Somehow or other, the sea was dragged into it. Philip the barber, agreed the sea was an excellent idea. Now that he thought of it, Vilmar's Papa had been a fair sailor until he got that wound in the leg. Of course, a lame man lost out in that business. So the tale grew. Meanwhile, Marianna went on washing and cleaning and playing her allotted part.

Then came Wednesday. On that day of days she rose with the dawn, dressed in her best alpaca, tucked a bottle of coffee and a sandwich into her handbag, and set off for Gildness with her pigs. She knew many a short-cut, yet it was dusk before she reached Toby's tumble-down cottage by the fjord. He was on the watch for her. His peg-leg thumping down the gravel path to meet her was the only greeting she got. Toby was a man of few words.

When the pigs were safe in an empty chicken-coop, and Marianna had helped herself to the coffee that waited her, freshly made, on the stove, Toby took his pipe from the corner of his mouth and made a conservative deduction: "So you're here, Marianna."

Marianna sniffed and kept on with her coffee. Toby sat down opposite his visitor, refilled his pipe, stuck it in his mouth again, and pulled away for dear life. Marianna knew from the way Toby smoked, what mood he was in. She pushed back her cup and elbows on the table, wrinkled old hands cupping her tired face, smiled at him her miracle-working smile.

"Toby," said she, "you're no so bad, for a man."

Toby bit down on his pipe-stem and blew a great cloud of smoke over his left shoulder. "I tell you that, woman, thirty years ago!"

Marianna nodded. "That's so, Toby. But to-day is to-day and now I'm saying that same. Toby, I suppose you know the time's come at last?"

He nodded. "He's a good 'un, he is—Johann's boy."

Marianna smiled, her crooked eyes lit from within, her old face singularly pleasant, seen in the yellow lamplight. "Do you mind the frolic that summer at the shearing?"

Toby smoked furiously now. "When Johann clumb for that eagle's nest? D'you

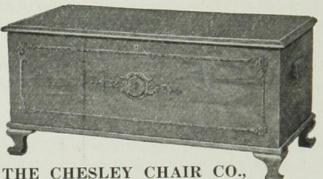


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think I'd forget—me watching you run for him when he fell—and that look on your face?"

Thirty years is a long time. It was hard for them both to translate memory into speech. Marianna rocked her old body as if in pain. "That's so, Toby—I see it still."

"Ja, what else? You, that dived into the icy Loch—Gud!—the rest not daring."

But Marianna was back in the paradise of the moment. Her face was the face of love lighted with sacrifice. "Toby, you'll no believe it, but he kissed me. Kissed me, Toby—the ugliest girl in the 'Biggen'!"

Toby's weather-beaten face turned a purple hue; he said nothing, but his thoughts were bitter. A kiss, thought he, was little enough to pay for the gift of life. Nor could he remember that Marianna had been so ugly. But women were queer, that he knew, who had shunned them consistently. A lifetime. Drat their queerness, anyway! He squirmed in his seat, knocked out his pipe and peered into the bowl like a prophet into the future, and with very similar results.

Marianna recovered herself bravely, sniffed defiance at sentimentality, and beamed on her faithful old friend. "And now's the day, Toby, to make good our plotting. Vilmar's the making of a good captain, and in Grenbo a slip of a girl loves him dearly." Marianna's voice rang with conviction, and yet no more were the words out than doubts assailed her. "Toby," she leaned forward beseechingly. "Toby, old friend, you'll not be telling me that my pigs have made it—the pigs and the herbs?"

Toby's eyes were misty. "No, Marianna, I'll no tell you that. There's enough in the bank, and more. Vilmar can have his learning if he's so minded, and Eric Houg has promised me his berth. He'll be leaving for northern waters on the schooner Gullberg."

And now Marianna did what she had never been known to do before. She crumpled up on the table and shook with silent sobs. Toby stared in bewildered horror. Marianna crying? Marianna, who always had a quip on the end of her tongue, and laughed in

the face of hardship? And then Toby did what he had never done before. With fear and trembling he hobbled to her side and with awkward kindness patted her shoulders.

"There now Marianna, there now,

Awkward kindness, but grateful after the long lonely years, and persistent sacrifice of self. Marianna pulled herself together, shook herself impatiently and reassured herself with a lusty sniff.

"No so bad, you are, Toby, no so bad. But where is that rascal, Vilmar?"

Toby was fumbling in his tobacco pouch. "I tell you, woman, Eric promised him a berth—he's at the schooner mess round. A fair young 'un—the love o' the sea's in him. You did well, Marianna, but why—it beats me."

Marianna laughed. "You've done me well, too, Toby, all the years. It's time you knew. I could no have the father—so I take the son!"

Toby scratched a match, applied it to the bowl and drew heavily on his old pipe. Then without warning, he banged a knotted fist on the table so forcefully that every plate and cup upon it danced with fright.

"Drat it, Marianna, it ain't fair! No more pigs, no more herbs, no more nothing! What's to become of me?"

Marianna sniffed. "Toby," said she, "you're just like Brother when I bring the halter, hollering and squealing. Why man, there's no end to anything, little souls, little life, over and over—never an end!"

"You're wrong," shouted Toby, banging the table again. "It's the end o' everything!"

He considered him in silence a long speculative moment. Then she sighed. Poor Toby, he always was thick-headed—he'd never get her meaning, she'd have to tell him.

Marianna drew in a deep breath, sniffed somewhat feebly and then, red in the face, righteously determined to let him have it. "For a man, Toby, you're no so bad—but I've seen brighter. Nu, then, you old fool, when Vilmar gets his Milly I'll be expecting you at Grenbo. It's old I am, Toby, to be minding the pigs alone!"



When Children Play Out-Doors

Continued from page 39

for furnishing. Chairs and tables were made of blocks, a window was cut in one side and curtained. It was rather out of plumb but what of that? The result in the eyes of the children was perfectly satisfactory. A strawberry crate made a cupboard for dishes and an old box did duty as a stove. The children derived a great deal of joy and acquired much useful information while making their own playhouse as well as having the opportunity of exercising their ingenuity to assemble the necessary furniture. Offers of adult help were treated with the scorn they deserved and for three days they were as busy as bees foraging about and setting the house in order. I am sure they had a great deal more fun out of it all than if a playhouse had been set down ready made in front of them. One point to remember about a playhouse is that it should always be open on one side for supervision, or it may become a source of trouble.

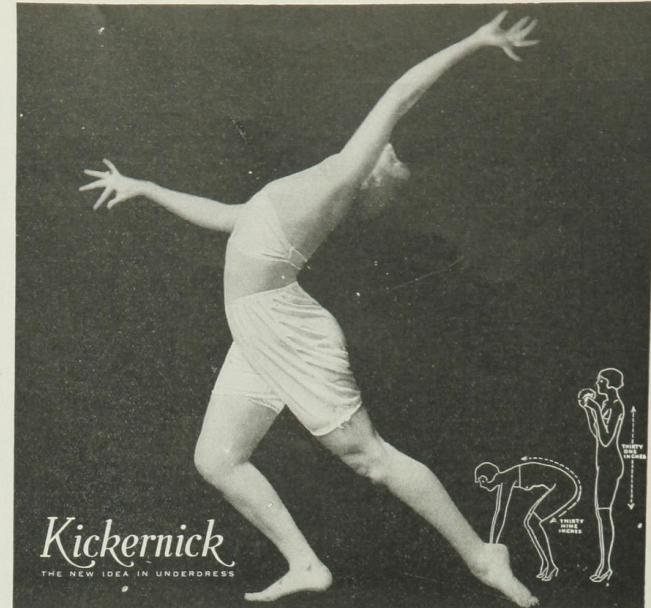
AMONG the toys which are helpful in the playground are skipping ropes, footballs, baseballs and bats, marbles and other articles which make for the development of skill, dexterity and control of the muscles.

Toys which teach motor co-ordination are invaluable as the control of muscles gained in this way is useful in all the work and play of life. Such toys as the miniature motor car, pedal car or tricycle, where it is necessary to use the feet independently of each

other and alternately, are in this class. I have seen a small child work for a week before mastering the intricacies of this problem, and then consume another week in learning to steer his machine while using the pedals.

MOST rarely seen, but one of the best pieces of equipment, is a shallow wading pool. Perhaps its cost is prohibitive in the ordinary course of events, but a neighbor of mine put one in his garden last year and never have I seen anywhere greater pleasure than was manifested by his children and their playmates in the pool. He did the work himself and says that the whole outlay was not much over twenty dollars. The foundation is cement and when the children are grown, a school of gold fish will take up residence in the erstwhile wading waters. In the meantime, many are the islands built within its confines and wonderful are the bridges which span it, while squeals of pure joy echo from its brink.

You may choose all or only a few of the pieces of equipment mentioned. The main aim in furnishing a playground is to further normal physical and mental development. When space and funds are limited, as they are with most of us, the choice of apparatus should be so planned that the combined use of the equipment chosen will provide exercise for the child's whole body and not only for certain isolated members.



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