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THE SEWING CIRCLE MEETS  
AT MRS. MARTIN'S

BY  
F. M. KELLY

DICK & FITZGERALD  
PUBLISHERS  
18 Ann Street, New York

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RIDING THE GOAT. Burlesque Initiation; 1 Scene; 1½ hours	24

DICK & FITZGERALD, Publishers, 18 Ann Street, N. Y.

**THE  
SEWING CIRCLE MEETS  
AT MRS. MARTIN'S**

**A Humorous Sketch in One Act**

**By F. M. KELLY**

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**NEW YORK  
DICK & FITZGERALD  
18 ANN STREET  
MAY 19 1916**

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# THE SEWING CIRCLE MEETS AT MRS. MARTIN'S.

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## CHARACTERS.

ELIZA.....*Mrs. Martin's maid*  
 MRS. MARTIN.....*President of the Missionary Society*  
 MRS. DODGE.....*Treasurer of the Missionary Society*  
 MRS. BADGER.....*The minister's wife*  
 MISS ELLA PETERS.....*Mrs. Badger's sister*  
 MRS. SMITH.....*Parish terror and member of the Society*

MRS. BUNCE. MRS. TIMMINS MISS SPOONER MRS. SPRUCE	}	..... <i>Members of the Missionary Society</i>
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TIME.—*The present.*

LOCALITY.—*A suburban village.*

TIME OF PLAYING.—*One and one-quarter hours.*

## SYNOPSIS.

ELIZA objects to so much work without pay. Arrival of "The Parish Terror," Mrs. SMITH, who immediately starts things going. Others arrive and the fun begins. ELIZA's eccentricities. The trials of the sexton, as well as those of the ladies of the society. ELIZA serves tea and a hat-box. The unfortunate cookies and the sad end of the biscuits. Church fair discussed, more or less amicably, but generally less. More of ELIZA's doings. The treasurer's report and how it brought about her resignation. The meeting disbands, having accomplished as much as expected.

### **COSTUMES.**

Modern, according to character portrayed.

### **INCIDENTAL PROPERTIES.**

Plate, dish-towel, book, vase filled with flowers, tea cloth, tea service, teapot, plate of biscuits, bell, and large hat box containing a stylish hat, also a bill, for ELIZA. Work-bag containing a huge pink flannel nightgown, also spectacles for MRS. SMITH. Work-basket containing a red flannel petticoat for MRS. MARTIN. Work-bag containing a hideous apron for MRS. SPRUCE. Hand-bag, note book, lead pencil and sewing for MRS. DODGE. Work-bag containing kimona for MISS PETERS. Sewing for other characters.

### **STAGE DIRECTIONS.**

As seen by a performer on the stage facing the audience, R., means right-hand; L., left-hand; C., center of stage; D. R., door at right; D. L., door at left; D. C., door at center. UP means toward back of stage; DOWN, toward footlights.

# THE SEWING CIRCLE MEETS AT MRS. MARTIN'S

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SCENE.—*Sitting-room in Mrs. MARTIN'S home. Afternoon of April First. Doors at C. R. and L. Window UP R. Sofa UP L. Cushions on sofa, also a novel. Piano in any convenient place. The room is arranged in preparation for a number of ladies to gather around and sew. DISCOVERED Mrs. MARTIN, setting things to rights while waiting for the members to appear.*

MRS. MARTIN (*going to D. L.*). Come! Come! Eliza, aren't those dishes washed yet? What in the world are you doing out there? Don't you know the Sewing Circle meets here this afternoon? Make haste with the dishes, then come and dust this sitting-room just as quick as ever you can. Mrs. Smith will be here before we can turn around and *she* would see it if there was a speck of dust *under* the carpet. As soon as you finish dusting make up a couple of pans of cookies and sweet biscuits. I suppose I shall have to give them a cup of tea. Dear, dear, I wish there was no such thing in the world as a Sewing Circle.

ENTER D. L. ELIZA, *with plate and dish-towel in her hands.*

ELIZA. So do I, mum. What with the ironing not done, and the dishes to finish up, and the baking to do, and the dusting to be done before them interferin' women gets here, and fresh flowers to put out, and the verandy to wash off—all in the twinkle of an eyelash, how am I ever to get done, I'd like to know. I suppose you couldn't bake them cookies yourself, mum?

MRS. MARTIN. Why, Eliza! How could I? I must get ready

to receive those women. You are very inconsiderate, Eliza, what do you suppose I am paying you for? [EXIT D. R.]

ELIZA. For doin' the work of three women in this blessed house, and I ain't paid reglar, either. Dash them sewin' women! Why can't they come any other day but ironin' day, and me with the whole house to clean up. (*Catches sight of a novel* MRS. MARTIN *has been reading and has left on the sofa, sits down and takes a peep into it. Reads aloud stumbingly*) "Dear heart, you are the one woman in the world for me, I dream of you by day and by night, you are the centre of my thought, my lodestar and my joy." My stars! if Tom Green would only talk that way to me—

MRS. MARTIN (*off r., calling*). Eliza! What in the world are you doing in there?

ELIZA (*jumps up hastily, thrusts plate under the sofa and book under cushion and begins to dust with the dish-towel*) Dustin', mum, this place is awful dirty.

ENTER D. R. MRS. MARTIN, *hurriedly*.

MRS. MARTIN. Don't you see Mrs. Smith coming up the walk? For heaven's sake keep her at the door for a minute until I get the table dusted. (*ELIZA hurries out D. L., returns with a vase of flowers which she places on the table, spilling the water as she does so. Rushes out D. C., nearly overturning a chair in her haste*) Awkward young nuisance! Dear knows what she will do before the meeting is over. Why didn't I leave that book alone and get ready before three o'clock. (ENTER D. C. MRS. SMITH) My dear Mrs. Smith, how lovely of you to come so early. Isn't this a beautiful day, so mild and balmy for the first of April? (*Places chair for MRS. SMITH*) I am so glad it is my turn to have the Sewing Circle to-day. I do so enjoy the meetings, and to think that we are doing so much good, making clothes for those poor, ignorant, heathen creatures, who never know the value of a good flannel petticoat until we make it for them. A true Christian woman, I often say, will sacrifice anything to send her poor heathen sister a flannel shirt—petticoat, I mean. Do sit down, dear Mrs. Smith, and make yourself at home.

MRS. SMITH (*sits on sofa, discovers book under cushion, gazes at it in horror and reads the title aloud*). "Love's Bonds"! Mrs. Martin, is it possible that you read this wretched stuff, you, a member of the Christian church?



MRS. MARTIN. That dreadful Eliza must have left that book there. Really, Mrs. Smith, you cannot know what a trial that girl is to me. I send her to Sunday School and I allow her to go to church once a fortnight, but it does seem to me that strive as we may for some people's souls, we never win them. I must speak to her once more about those wretched books.

MRS. SMITH (*removes her bonnet, places it on top of the piano, folds her gloves neatly, opens work-bag and draws out a huge pink flannel nightgown*) Where is your work, my dear? We should not waste one moment of these precious hours. (*Spreads the garment over her knee and gazes at it admiringly*)

MRS. MARTIN. Just a moment, and I'll bring mine. (EXIT D. R. MRS. SMITH, *drops her work, looks under the table then under the couch, discovers plate, shakes her head mournfully and replaces plate; runs her finger over the piano and looks at it in disgust, does the same to the chair rungs and utters a scornful "humph!" Is back in her seat sewing for dear life when MRS. MARTIN RE-ENTERS D. R. with her work-basket and sewing*) I hope, Mrs. Smith, we shall one day know the result of our efforts to clothe the naked and to reap the reward of our toil. (*Threads her needle, and shakes out a red flannel petticoat*) I am making a petticoat for some poor wanderer from the fold. I am afraid this is not a very good fitting pattern (*Holding garment around her*) but then it doesn't matter what sort of a fit a heathen has, does it? What a splendid nightgown you are making.

MRS. SMITH (*holding nightgown at arm's length*). Beautiful shade of pink, isn't it? I have always thought that even though they be poor heathen, we women who work for them should arouse in the objects of our pity a sense of the aesthetic, a love for the beautiful. I selected this lovely pink thinking it would contrast charmingly with the skin of some black woman.

MRS. MARTIN. Why, then, my red flannel petticoat will be just the thing, but I wasn't clever enough to choose it designedly.

ENTER D. L. ELIZA, *hands covered with flour.*

ELIZA. Please, mum, Mrs. Bunce and Mrs. Timmins are coming up the walk, will I let them in? (MRS. SMITH *looks over her spectacles at ELIZA, letting her work drop*)

MRS. MARTIN. Eliza! What do you mean? Let them in, of course.

ELIZA. Me hands is all flour, mum. (*Whispers loudly*) I'm bakin' the cookies. [EXIT D. L., followed by MRS. MARTIN.]

MRS. MARTIN (*off stage, heard scolding*). You great stupid, how often have I told you how to answer a door properly.

ELIZA (*off stage, grumbling*). Well, mum, how am I to do forty things at once, I'd like to know. If I had half a dozen hands I might be more nimble, and remember more, but seein's I've only got two you'll just have to be a bit more patient.

ENTER MRS. MARTIN D. L., crosses to D. C. and admits MRS. BUNCE and MRS. TIMMINS.

MRS. SMITH. I was so afraid you were not coming. Did you meet any of the other ladies?

MRS. BUNCE. We left Mrs. Spruce, Mrs. Dodge and Miss Spooner at the milliner's. Really, those women are the vainest creatures, every one of them trying on the new spring hats, and threatening to buy one before they come to the meeting. I suppose they want to come and crow over those of us who have no new hats.

MRS. TIMMINS. For my part, I think the first of April is altogether too early to think of new hats. I wouldn't dream of buying my spring hat until the first of June.

MRS. SMITH (*looking scornfully at MRS. TIMMINS' shabby hat*). What June did you buy that one in, 1905?

MRS. TIMMINS (*laughs nervously*). What a joker you are, Mrs. Smith. If I did not know you had worn your own hat four summers I would really think you were in earnest. Oh, you did manage to use up that awful flannellette, did you? I remember seeing you buy it at the fire sale, but how in the world did you manage about the holes burned in it and the scorched places? You are the most skillful creature. I wish I could do as much with as little money as you spend. (MRS. SMITH glares at her but goes on sewing)

MRS. BUNCE (*anxious to change the subject*). My dear Mrs. Martin, where did you get that maid of yours? Why, my dear, she actually held out her hand and asked us for our tickets.

MRS. MARTIN. She is the most awful specimen. I imported her direct and I have tried so hard to teach her, her duties. Sometimes I think she will be the death of me, but you know what servants are nowadays.

MRS. BUNCE. I know to my sorrow, I had to discharge mine last week. She couldn't cook at all and when I found her frying

doughnuts in goose-grease, rather than waste it, I thought it was time for a change.

ENTER D. L. ELIZA.

ELIZA. Mrs. Martin, here comes the minister's wife and her sister, will I let them in?

MRS. MARTIN. How often have I to tell you— (*Rises, goes D. C. and returns with MRS. BADGER and MISS PETERS*) We are all so glad to have you with us to-day, Mrs. Badger; you know you missed the last meeting, and you, too, Miss Peters. Beautiful day, isn't it. Did you meet any of the other ladies?

MISS PETERS. We saw what I think are three new hats, with women attached, moving this way, but they were so busy admiring themselves in every window they passed, we did not wait for them. My dears, when you see Miss Spooner's new hat you will turn green with envy. It looks like the nightmare of a dipsomaniac.

MRS. BADGER. Ella, my dear, you shouldn't talk that way.

MISS PETERS. And Mrs. Spruce has one that would look young on her baby, but Mrs. Dodge is a howling swell. (*Looks out of the window*) Oh, here they come, the three graces. Faith and hope I see, but which of the three is charity. Look at them, oh, look at them. (*ALL look out window and hurriedly draw back*)

MRS. BADGER. Ella, my dear, you shouldn't talk that way. How would you like to have people make fun of your new hat?

MISS PETERS. Well, when I am idiot enough to buy a hat like that, I shall expect to have somebody make fun of it.

ENTER D. C. MRS. DODGE, MISS SPOONER and MRS. SPRUCE.

MISS SPOONER. I know we are rather late, dear Mrs. Martin, but the spring hats are so fascinating we could not resist going to the millinery openings and trying them all on. (*MRS. SPRUCE takes off her hat and eyes it with great satisfaction. The ladies all try on the hats as the newcomers remove them*)

MRS. SPRUCE. I really think it is the most becoming hat I ever had. But then most of them were becoming—to me. This one is simple, so, so dis-ting-ay, don't you know. But, my dears, the price—Ruin! (*ALL seat themselves, the newcomers unfolding their work, chattering all the time*)

MISS SPOONER. Well, I'm going to try to get this everlasting

sewing finished to-day. Dear me, we don't get much done in one afternoon.

MRS. SPRUCE (*spreading out a hideous apron on her knee, as she bastes it together*). I wonder if heathen women wear aprons.

MISS PETERS. I'm sure they will wear that one. I think that is all they do wear.

MRS. TIMMINS. Then why are we making nightgowns and petticoats for them?

MRS. BADGER. My dear Mrs. Timmins, the first step towards Christianizing is civilizing.

MISS PETERS. And no person is truly civilized who does not wear a garment made by this sewing circle. And as no civilized woman is without a kimona, why, I am making a kimona.

MRS. BUNCE. Well, by the time our bale reaches them, I am sure we shall have to our credit a well-dressed detachment of the heathen.

MRS. SMITH (*ponderously*). It is man that looketh upon the outward appearance.

MISS PETERS. Why, I always thought it was woman.

MRS. DODGE. While we are all here together, wouldn't it be a good time to talk about our church fair?

MRS. MARTIN. Capital idea, if we have really decided to have a fair.

MRS. SMITH (*decidedly*). Of course we shall have a fair. Since my earliest childhood I have annually attended the church fair. I cannot imagine a Christian church without an annual fair.

MRS. DODGE. I suppose we must have them, but they are such a worry and nuisance.

MRS. SMITH (*reprovingly*). A nuisance! Surely not that, Mrs. Dodge. Think of our love and devotion in the sacrifice we make to send salvation to the heathen.

MISS PETERS. Well, for my part, I believe if we sent the money we spend on labor and material, it would do far more good.

MRS. SMITH. Perhaps it would be as well, Miss Peters, to leave these things to older and wiser heads. (*Tremendous clatter heard in kitchen.* MRS. MARTIN rises and hurries to the kitchen) That dreadful girl, what *has* she done now? Such servants we have inflicted on us, and for the wages we pay them, it is too bad.

MRS. SMITH. The wages *she* pays them, takes a home girl, my dears, and pays her three or four dollars a month; wages!

Humph! (*Smash heard in the kitchen and MRS. MARTIN scolding*)

ENTER D. L. MRS. MARTIN, *who resumes sewing, followed by*  
ELIZA.

ELIZA. I forgot to tell you, mum, Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Smithers came a while back and I didn't let them in.

MRS. MARTIN. You didn't let them in! You dreadful girl, why didn't you let them in?

ELIZA. You told me anybody as was a lady had a ticket and they didn't have no ticket, so I gave them their walkin' ticket, mum. [EXIT D. L. ELIZA.

MRS. MARTIN (*tearfully*). What shall I do with her? Now Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Smithers will be mad enough to leave the church and nothing I can say will satisfy *Mrs. Smithers*.

MRS. BADGER. Don't fret, my dear, Eliza is certainly amusing. I should think she would keep things lively, at any rate. (*Crash heard from the kitchen*)

MRS. MARTIN. I suppose that is another Crown Derby cup, that will be the third this week.

MRS. SMITH (*aside*). Crown Derby! Ironstone, more likely.

MRS. TIMMINS. I thought we were going to discuss this church fair.

MRS. SPRUCE. Yes, now that spring is here, the fair must be our first consideration. We always hold it shortly after Easter. I wonder if our efforts will be appreciated *this* time. The last time we got up a fair there were decided hints from the pulpit about entertainments for raising money.

MRS. BADGER. I don't think Mr. Badger said anything about that.

MRS. SPRUCE. Oh, we could read between the lines, Mrs. Badger. Of course, Mr. Badger must voice his convictions, but considering what we do towards raising his salary, I really don't think—(*Shakes her head dubiously*)

MRS. TIMMINS. I don't think Mr. Badger really objects to our working for the church.

MRS. SPRUCE. Well, I'm of the opinion that the congregation in general, yes, and the minister, too, do not appreciate the way we work for this parish. I shudder when I look back to the days when there were no flowers on the altar, none of the little refinements of worship *we* have introduced.

MRS. MARTIN. Yes, I fear that Mr. Badger himself does not

realize what we have done since he came to the parish. You must not mind my saying so, dear Mrs. Badger, it is no reflection on Mr. Badger, personally, but on the men of the church as a whole, they are so careless, so indifferent to our little innovations.

MRS. SMITH. Since I first became a member of the Christian church I have noticed that all reforms, all improvements, have been introduced by the *ladies* of the congregation. Not a man would go to church if he were not dragged there by some woman, and I see that Mr. Smith goes regularly.

MISS PETERS. Oh now, Mrs. Smith, there are always plenty of *young* men there.

MRS. SMITH. Do you think *you* are the attraction, Miss Peters?

MISS PETERS (*thoughtfully*). No, I was just wondering why marriage removed their inclination to go to church.

MRS. BUNCE. Oh, they'd go to every service if they got something to eat.

MISS PETERS. Well, perhaps the way to a man's *soul* lies through his stomach.

ENTER D. L. ELIZA.

ELIZA. Please, mum, the caretaker of the church is at the door, and he wants to know if the ladies are going to give him a hand with the cleaning this week. He says the floor is all covered with peanut shells that Mrs. Bunce's little boys left there when they came with their mother to the missionary meeting, and *he* ain't going to sweep them up.

MRS. BUNCE. The impudent old man! What do we pay him for, I'd like to know.

ELIZA. He says there's too much work for the salary he gets. And the flower vases is leakin' all over the church and it's Mrs. Dodge's week to look after them.

MRS. DODGE. It wouldn't hurt him to empty them for me after the evening service, and you can just tell him so, Eliza.

ELIZA. And he says some of the ladies must have took his dusters, mum, he can't find them all over the church. And Mrs. Timmins's daughter has been practising on the organ and mussed the place all up, and *he* ain't going to clean it.

MRS. MARTIN. Tell him we are very busy, Eliza, and the ladies will straighten things out on Saturday afternoon.

ELIZA. He says it's got to be done before Saturday, mum, 'cause that don't give him no chance to clean up for Sunday with the ladies all fussing about. [EXIT D. L. ELIZA.

MRS. SMITH. And that is the way our work is appreciated. it has been the same ever since I joined the church.

MRS. MARTIN. Yes, I would like to see every woman in this parish drop her church work for just one month, and see what would happen.

MRS. TIMMINS. Oh, do let us; wouldn't it be lovely not to have it to do?

MRS. SMITH. Mrs. Timmins, is it possible that I hear aright?

MRS. TIMMINS. Well, I would like a rest for awhile. If it isn't one thing it's another. If it isn't Mission Band it's the Young Folks' Union, or the choir suppers, or the Tennis Club or choir practice, and both my girls in everything I don't take a hand in myself, the Sewing Circle and the Flower Guild, or the Willing Workers, and a collection or a baking every other day in the week, and I think it's time to drop something.

MRS. SMITH. Be not weary in well-doing, Mrs. Timmins, not weary.

MRS. TIMMINS. Well, if I could only be sure it *was* well-doing.

MRS. BADGER. You think you have a hard time, my dear, if you were the minister's wife.

MRS. SMITH. We've got enough to be thankful for without that. Not but what *you* do your duty as far as you know, Mrs. Badger.

MRS. TIMMINS. Well, I suppose it has to be done, any way. But this is not discussing the fair, is it. Now that so many of us are here together it would be a good time to discuss it, as Mrs. Dodge said. I suppose it will be the same old tune and sixpence, aprons, and dolls, and candy, and fancy work, and refreshments.

MRS. BUNCE (*eagerly*). Oh, let me have the doll booth this time, I do love dolls.

MRS. BADGER (*meekly*). I always have had the doll table.

MRS. BUNCE. Oh, I know you won't insist on it this time, I do want it so badly.

MRS. SPRUCE (*aside*). Less trouble than anything else, that's why.

MISS SPOONER. Mrs. Badger is the minister's wife and I think she ought to have the doll booth if she wants it.

MRS. BADGER (*plaintively*). I always have had it at the other fairs.

MRS. SMITH. Well, if Mrs. Badger wants dolls, let her have dolls. Now what about the handkerchief and apron stall?

MRS. MARTIN. I will have Eliza bring in the tea while we discuss matters.

[EXIT D. L. and RE-ENTERS after a short delay.]

MISS PETERS. Let Mrs. Bunce have the aprons, she seems to have a fondness for aprons.

MRS. BUNCE. I simply hate selling aprons. I move that Miss Peters takes the aprons and I will take the candy booth.

MRS. SMITH. Miss Peters has always had the candy booth, she likes to have the young men around it, but I think we really must have a change this time.

MISS PETERS. If we had you there in that pink nightgown, you *would* be an attraction.

MRS. BADGER. Ella, my dear, you must not talk that way. We must be unselfish and helpful, give in gracefully, my dear.

MISS PETERS. I didn't notice you giving in about the dolls.

MRS. MARTIN. I am sure, if we take a little time, we can settle everything satisfactorily. I always think it is well to make careful preparation for *everything* beforehand, I don't believe in leaving things until the last moment—

ELIZA (at D. L.). If you please, mum, there's no sugar.

MRS. MARTIN. You stupid girl, telephone for some, and tell them to hurry. (*Turns hurriedly to members who are trying to repress their smiles*) What a beautiful sermon Mr. Badger preached on Sunday night, I was quite affected by it.

MRS. SMITH. In what way? I hope the seed took root, Mrs. Martin.

MRS. MARTIN. He didn't preach on seed, but on fruit. I didn't notice you at church, Mrs. Spruce.

MRS. SPRUCE. I couldn't go, I didn't have my new hat, but I'll be there next Sunday all right.

MRS. TIMMINS. Mrs. Jones had on the most frightful looking suit last Sunday, did you notice it, Mrs. Smith?

MRS. SMITH. I noticed it, where does she get the money to buy such clothes. Depend upon it, my dear, Jones never earns the money for these expensive suits of hers, and a new one every season.

ELIZA (at D. L.). Please, mum, the laundryman wants the boss's shirts and collars, and I can't find them.

MRS. MARTIN. Why, Eliza, I left them all ready in the laundry bag.

ELIZA. Well, I thought those were the right ones, and I gave him the bag, but he says he ain't going to carry no such looking thing as that through the streets, if that's the right one.

[EXIT D. L. grumbling.]



MRS. MARTIN. Well, we are not getting much farther ahead with the fair, are we? Mrs. Dodge, you are the treasurer, how much money have we on hand?

MRS. DODGE (*takes little book out of her hand-bag and runs over a column of figures, lead pencil in her mouth, announces result triumphantly*). Forty-nine dollars and thirty-seven cents.

MRS. SMITH (*looking over her glasses*). How much?

MRS. DODGE. Forty-nine dollars and thirty-seven cents.

MRS. SMITH. I thought we had more money than that.

MRS. DODGE. Oh, no, you forgot what we spent on materials and supplies and the freight on the last bale we sent out.

MRS. SMITH. I can't understand where it all went to, we *must* have more than that in the treasury.

ENTER D. L. ELIZA.

ELIZA. If you please, mum, the grocer's boy is here, will I let him in?

MRS. MARTIN. Why, of course, Eliza, let the boy in, what is he there for?

ELIZA. You told me, mum, not to let any person in that had a bill, and the boy has the bill for the sugar, mum. (EXIT D. L. MRS. MARTIN, *scolding all the way to the kitchen*)

MRS. SMITH (*to MRS. SPRUCE*). Murder will out, I haven't enjoyed a sewing meeting so much in a long time.

MRS. SPRUCE. Well, for my part, I'm sorry for Mrs. Martin. That girl is a specimen, to be sure.

MRS. BADGER. Hired girls are such a trial, but I suppose they are a necessary evil.

MRS. SMITH. No such thing, if people would do their own work they wouldn't be bothered with hired girls. In my day we all did our own work and were none the worse for it, but nowadays people are too genteel to be seen hanging out their own washings.

MRS. BADGER. But some of us are not able to do it, Mrs. Smith.

MRS. SMITH. Stuff and nonsense, I've always noticed that those people who are too delicate to do their own work can go to two teas and a bridge every day, and keep it up week in and week out. But they'd faint dead away if their husbands asked them to sew a button on their Sunday trousers, so they give the mending out.

ENTER D. L. MRS. MARTIN.

MRS. MARTIN. Now, ladies, if you will put your sewing away, Eliza will bring in a cup of tea and we can go on making arrangements for the fair. (*ALL begin to lay their work aside*)

ENTER D. L. ELIZA, *bringing in tea service, etc., spreads tea cloth over table.* MISS PETERS *tries a new waltz on the piano, members all chatting together as they move their chairs and make ready to enjoy the cup of tea.* ELIZA EXITS D. L. and RE-ENTERS *immediately carrying a huge hat box.*

ELIZA. The boy just left this hat box at the door, mum.

MRS. MARTIN. I didn't order a new hat, it can't be for me.

MISS PETERS. Oh, let us see it, any way. (*Opens hat box and takes out a stylish spring hat. Ladies all exclaim and try it on before the mirror, ELIZA, meanwhile completing arrangements for the afternoon tea*)

MRS. MARTIN (*taking bill out of the box*). Twenty-two dollars, that settles it, ladies, it certainly is not for me. Eliza, where is that boy, is he gone? Just take this hat back to him and tell him there must be some mistake.

ELIZA (*grinning*). If you please, mum, he's sorry he made a mistake, he says the boss ordered the hat yesterday, but it was to go to Miss Primrose down the street. (*EXIT D. L. MRS. MARTIN, covered with confusion, followed by ELIZA*)

MRS. SMITH. I knew it, I knew it, with his mealy-mouthed ways, and his poor wife with a hat she has worn five summers. The beast!

ENTER D. L. MRS. MARTIN.

MRS. MARTIN. All a mistake, my dears, these errand boys are so stupid.

MRS. SMITH (*sotto voce*). And hired girls. (*MRS. MARTIN sits at table and commences to pour the tea*)

ENTER D. L. ELIZA.

ELIZA (*in loud whisper*). There ain't enough cream to go round this crowd, mum, and the cat's been at what there is.

[*EXIT D. L.*

MRS. MARTIN. Well, bring the milk, then. Ladies, you will excuse the lack of cream under the circumstances.

MRS. SPRUCE (*to her neighbor*). Depend upon it, there was no cream in the first place. (*ALL assist in passing the filled cups, sugar, etc.* MRS. MARTIN *passes the cookies.* ALL *take one, taste them and lay them down on their plates.* MRS. MARTIN, *observing, looks closely at the cookies, then rings the bell*)

ENTER D. L. ELIZA.

MRS. MARTIN. Eliza, these cookies are very badly burned.

ELIZA. Well, mum, what with trying to watch the cat and do the ironing and bake two pans of cookies and scrub the kitchen and clean the stove and dust up-stairs, all in the twinkle of an eyelash, I ain't surprised the cookies is burned.

MRS. MARTIN. Take them away, and bring in the sweet biscuits, and make a fresh pot of tea. [EXIT D. L. ELIZA.

RE-ENTER D. L. ELIZA, *with teapot and plate of biscuits.*  
*Drops the biscuits all over the floor. Sets teapot down on the floor and picks up the biscuits, and passes them to all and EXIT D. L.*

MRS. BADGER (*slipping her biscuit up her sleeve*). This is a beautiful cup of tea, Mrs. Martin.

MISS SPOONER (*places her biscuit in the front of her dress*). Indeed it is.

MRS. SPRUCE. Where do you get your tea, my dear? (*Covertly slips her biscuit in bag hanging on the back of her chair*)

MRS. MARTIN (*rings bell*). I always get mine at McCollum's.

ENTER D. L. ELIZA.

MRS. MARTIN. Some more biscuits, Eliza. Another cup of tea, Mrs. Badger?

ELIZA (*drops empty plate on floor, picks it up and RETURNS with more biscuits*). The boss is coming up the street, mum, will I let him in?

MRS. MARTIN. Eliza! Don't you always let your master in?

ELIZA. Not always, mum, there was one night you told me not to let him in.

MISS PETERS (*hastily*). I do wish we could settle this fair business. Look at the time we are wasting.

MRS. BADGER. And there is another little matter, ladies, I

wish to bring to your attention. The vestry needs a new carpet, it is really in a shocking condition.

MRS. BUNCE. Yes, I was looking at it last week, it is dreadful, we must have a new carpet at once.

MRS. SMITH. Where will the money come from? There is very little in the treasury, very little, indeed.

MRS. DODGE. And we can't take that, that forty-nine dollars is missionary money, remember.

MRS. SPRUCE. I am sure carpeting the vestry is missionary work, home missions, any way. And charity begins at home, Mrs. Dodge.

MRS. DODGE. Well, if we start that sort of thing, it is apt to end at home, too.

MRS. TIMMINS. That money was raised for the heathen, I don't think we ought to spend it on ourselves.

MRS. MARTIN. Not on ourselves, dear, on the church.

MRS. TIMMINS. I don't care, I will never consent to taking that money for a carpet. That money was earned by hard labor to spread the gospel among the heathen. Why, I grated twenty-five bottles of horseradish myself, and sold it too, for the poor heathen, and I will not grate horseradish to buy carpets, now then.

MISS PETERS. I don't care how the money is spent but I think the Ladies' Aid ought to carpet the vestry.

MRS. SMITH. The Ladies' Aid has enough to do, now. We're raising the money to have the roof of the church fixed, and we can't do any more, we have no money to spare for carpets. Better have something over your head before you put something under your feet.

MRS. BADGER. Couldn't we have a rummage sale, we might make some money that way.

MRS. DODGE. Well, we can't touch the missionary money.

MRS. BADGER. We haven't had a rummage sale for a long time now.

MRS. SMITH. Do you mean to sell the old clothes and buy a carpet with the proceeds?

MRS. BADGER (*brightly*). Yes, or give that money to the heathen and spend what we have on the carpet.

MRS. MARTIN. I don't think Mr. Badger would like that, would he?

MRS. SMITH. What has he got to do with it, pray?

MISS PETERS. I think he ought to know how we earn our money.

MRS. SMITH. What he doesn't know won't hurt him.

MRS. BADGER. I'm sure Mr. Badger never minds what we do, if we only do it in the right spirit.

MRS. SMITH. Well, for my part, when we do the work I think we have a right to spend the money as we please, parson or no parson. But as for the vestry carpet, the old one did well enough for the last twenty years and I don't see why it can't stay there a while longer.

MRS. BADGER. But last week, when we had the strange minister who didn't know where the holes were, he caught his foot in one and nearly broke his neck. My dears, I was *so* ashamed.

MRS. SMITH (*gloomily*). Pity he hadn't, any man who preaches like that deserves a broken neck.

MRS. BUNCE. We really ought to get a carpet some way.

MISS SPOONER. Couldn't we get up an entertainment, a minstrel show, or a poverty social, or something like that?

MRS. TIMMINS. We can't have too many socials and the church fair coming off.

MRS. SPRUCE. Why can't each one of us give a little money and buy a carpet, socials are such a nuisance.

MRS. SMITH. Some people have more money than brains. I think the congregation as a whole should consider this matter of a vestry carpet.

MRS. DODGE. We seem to have so little money to do anything with.

MRS. SMITH. Yes, we have very little, surprisingly little.

MRS. TIMMINS. Supposing we lay this matter over until our next meeting.

MRS. BADGER (*worriedly*). I wish we could lay the carpet.

MRS. MARTIN. I have an old carpet up in the attic that might tide over the breach.

MRS. SMITH. Might what?

MRS. MARTIN. Might answer the purpose until we can afford a new carpet.

MRS. SMITH (*looking around the floor*). Is it one that you have discarded, Mrs. Martin?

MRS. MARTIN (*who has not seen the look*). Yes, one I took off this room some time ago.

MRS. SMITH. Oh!

MISS PETERS. Well, that matter is disposed of. But I do wish we could get something done about this fair. What sort of refreshments will we have this time, and will it be a sit-down supper or a hand out?

MRS. BADGER. You shouldn't talk that way, Ella.

MRS. SPRUCE. Do let us have something new. I am so tired of ham sandwiches and layer cake and bread and butter and coffee.

MRS. MARTIN. I think, myself, we might vary the refreshments a little this time.

MRS. SMITH (*witheringly*). Yes, let us have quail on toast, or roast turkey, or oysters on the half, or any little inexpensive delicacy. Vary the refreshments by all means. (MRS. MARTIN *touches bell*)

ENTER D. L. ELIZA.

MRS. MARTIN. Remove these things, Eliza. (ELIZA *carries out tray and RETURNS immediately*)

ELIZA. If you please, mum, what shall we have for supper? There ain't no meat.

MRS. MARTIN. No meat! What about the cold roast?

ELIZA (*gloomily*). The cat got that, mum, while I was up-stairs. There ain't no handle on the refrigerator door, mum, and I can't hold it shut and do my work up-stairs at the same time. And the baker hasn't come to-day, mum, and there ain't no bread.

MRS. SPRUCE. Do what I do when he forgets to come, make a pan of biscuits.

ELIZA. There ain't no flour, it all went into them blessed cookies.

MRS. MARTIN. Well, for goodness sake, telephone for some more flour at once.

ELIZA. He said when I sent for the sugar, mum, that we couldn't have no more goods without the money. [EXIT D. L.]

MRS. BADGER (*hastily*). I have just thought of the loveliest thing for the fair. Let us have a refreshment counter and make everybody pay extra for what they eat. We could make heaps of money that way.

MRS. DODGE. Why, so we could. One loaf of bread would make a lot of sandwiches and if we sold them at ten cents each just think of the profit we could make on a loaf.

MRS. SPRUCE. Oh, how lovely! Mrs. Badger, you are so clever. I am sure no one else would ever have thought of such a splendid scheme.

MRS. TIMMINS. Isn't that what you call a hold-up?

MRS. SMITH. Not a bit of it, the public expects to be held up at a church fair.

MISS PETERS. And they're not disappointed. I still have three match scratchers, five calendars and six pairs of sleeve protectors that I was compelled to buy at the last fair.

MISS SPOONER. To spread the gospel, my dear Miss Peters, we must use every means at our disposal.

MRS. BUNCE. Oh, dear me, when I think of the work and worry and confusion, my heart fails me.

MRS. SMITH. Mrs. Timmins, surely *you* are eager to make some sacrifice to better the condition of the poor benighted heathen who bows down to wood and stone.

MRS. TIMMINS. Oh, it's all very well for you to talk, Mrs. Smith. If you had six children and a husband to look after you would not be so anxious for a fair. I sometimes think we are all wrong about this church work.

MRS. MARTIN. Why, Mrs. Timmins; you surely do not mean that? How could the Christian church exist without we women and our work? What would the poor ministers do? Think of a church without a Ladies' Aid, or a Missionary Society, or a Glee Club!

MRS. TIMMINS. I often do think of it, I think it would be heaven itself.

MRS. SMITH. Mrs. Timmins, do you expect to go to heaven?

MRS. TIMMINS. I don't much care sometimes whether I go or not. If there are no church socials there I believe I'd as lief go to the other place. (*Begins to cry nervously*) I'm just sick and tired of everything, fairs and socials, and sewing meetings, packing bales for the heathen who are far more comfortable *without* our old clothes—sweeping out the church because nobody else will, washing dishes and stuffing cake and sandwiches into the kids who swarm around every time we have an entertainment—I tell you, ladies, I'm sick of it all, and I won't have anything to do with the old fair. (*Members sit in dazed astonishment while MRS. TIMMINS, still sobbing, rolls up her work, puts it into her bag and hurries out D. C.*)

MRS. SMITH (*sepulchrally*). Lost! eternally lost! Little did I ever think to live to see a member of the Christian church sink so low.

MRS. MARTIN. I don't know but what Mrs. Timmins is right in some respects. After all, what do we accomplish?

MRS. BADGER. I never saw in the Bible that women worked for the church this way, but I don't see how we are to get along without it.

MISS PETERS. Well, perhaps if we practised more real Christianity we *would* get along better, and do more good.

MRS. SMITH. Real Christianity! Isn't it real Christianity we have been practising here this afternoon?

MRS. SPRUCE. Well, this church work is a problem. For my own part, I can't see that I am doing much good running around to church socials and letting the hired girl feed my family on half cooked victuals while I'm gone.

MRS. SMITH. You may have the root of the matter but not its spirit, Mrs. Spruce. What does it matter if your pampered husband does have to put up with one poor meal, when, by meeting together weekly, we can make and provide for the poor heathen, garments such as these. (*Holding up the nightgown*)

MRS. DODGE. It is so hard to get along as it is, and we have only forty-nine dollars and thirty-seven cents in the treasury.

MRS. SMITH. We all know we have *only* that amount, Mrs. Dodge.

MISS SPOONER (*thoughtfully to her neighbor*). *Real Christianity!*

MRS. MARTIN. Well, ladies, life is short and we must do what we can while we are on this mortal sphere. But supposing we postpone the discussion of the fair until our next meeting.

MRS. BUNCE (*folding up her work*). Remember you meet at my house next week. (*ALL make preparations to leave, folding up their work, putting on wraps, etc.*)

MRS. MARTIN. I am so glad to have had you here to-day. This little discussion will do us all good.

MRS. BADGER. I think, perhaps, if we had a meeting at the parsonage some evening soon we might complete the arrangements about the stalls and booths. You know I have *always* had the doll table, and Ella always has the candy booth but there are so many other things to arrange.

MRS. DODGE (*rising in agitation*). Ladies, I beg to resign from the treasurership of this *MISSIONARY SOCIETY*. I have not said much to-day but I will not sit at another meeting and be accused of stealing the missionary money.

MRS. MARTIN. My dear Mrs. Dodge, whoever thought of such a thing?

MRS. DODGE. I mention no names, but I am not altogether an idiot, Mrs. Martin. Here is the book and I shall send the bank book over by one of the children in the morning. You will find every cent accounted for there, *every cent*. Perhaps you had better let Mrs. Smith look over it, it may convince her that



I have not pocketed the money. I'll never hold office in this society again. [EXIT D. C., *hurriedly and sobbing*.

MRS. BADGER. You *were* rather uncharitable, Mrs. Smith, and I'm sure a better little woman than Mrs. Dodge never lived.

MRS. SMITH (*indignantly*). Well, I'm sure! *Me* uncharitable! I've been connected with the Christian church since my childhood and no person ever called *me* uncharitable before. Good afternoon, ladies. Mrs. Badger, when you see fit to withdraw *your* uncharitable remarks I shall again attend the sewing meetings. [EXIT *haughtily* D. C.

MISS PETERS. Recall them at your peril, Margaret Badger. The church would be much more of a Christian church without her.

MRS. BADGER. Ella, my dear, you should not talk that way. Good-bye, Mrs. Martin. I feel dreadfully upset.

MRS. MARTIN. I am so sorry this has occurred, it has spoiled everything. Good-bye, Mrs. Badger, good-bye, Miss Peters.

[EXEUNT D. C. MRS. BADGER *and* MISS PETERS.

ENTER D. L. ELIZA.

ELIZA. If you please, mum, Mrs. Bunce's little boy is at the door and he wants to know if his mother isn't soon coming home. The fire's out and there's no supper ready for them.

[EXIT D. L.

MRS. BUNCE. Oh, dear, I must hurry away home. I forgot it was nearly supper time. Good-bye everybody. [EXIT D. C.

MISS SPOONER. Come, Mrs. Spruce, you go my way, it is high time I was getting home, too.

MRS. SPRUCE. Good-bye, dear Mrs. Martin. We have had such a lovely afternoon. I wish the Sewing Circle met at your house every week.

[EXEUNT D. C. MRS. SPRUCE *and* MISS SPOONER.

ENTER D. L. ELIZA.

ELIZA. Now, mum, all the old cats are gone and we can think about the supper.

MRS. MARTIN (*setting things to rights in the room*). Oh, Eliza! You dreadful girl, you have given me such a day. I was so mortified, all the afternoon. Whatever am I going to do with you?

ELIZA. Well, mum, you might pay me my wages. There's three months coming to be now, mum.

MRS. MARTIN. You ungrateful girl, how is it you are always thinking about money? You have a good home, and if I do say it, Eliza, a good mistress. What more do you want?

ELIZA. The money's coming to me, mum, and you shouldn't grudge me what I've earned, and three months is too long to wait, Mrs. Martin. I want to pay for my new hat.

MRS. MARTIN. Your new hat? What new hat?

ELIZA (*grinning broadly*). Sure, mum, you didn't think I was meaning it when I said the boss sent a hat to Miss Primrose. Why, bless your heart, mum, that was a bit of an April Fool I sprung on you; that was me new spring hat.

CURTAIN.

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