

THE BABES IN THE WOODS.

XVIII.

The Babes in the Woods.

Jerry and Jane are at home again in Barber County.

The last contest between "Chester" and Jerry has been fought—and won by Mr. Long. Chester I. Long will go to Congress, Jerry Simpson will never more be in official place. A century of new thought has flowed into the last decade. "It does not matter so much," says Emerson, "how far a man has got, as which way he is facing." As with a man so with the world at large.

One Sunday morning Jerry is stretched at length on the lounge in their cosy farm house living room. He is holding a news-

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paper before his face to hide the mischievous twinkle in his eyes from the observation of his son Lester.

Lester's face is anything but placid. For the first time in his life he finds it hard to broach a matter to his father.

Lester fidgets, casts anxious glances towards the obstructing newspaper. He wants to break the silence, he lacks courage and goes to the kitchen.

"Ma, I wish you'd tell him."

"Oh, son, I think you ought to tell him yourself."

"But, Ma—oh, well, I will, hang it all."

"Son" returns to the sitting room. The newspaper still absorbs his father's attention.

Another spell of fidgets, another rush to the kitchen.

"Ma, I think I'll wait until tomorrow, then I'll ask Pa to go hunting, he likes to go

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with me, then I'll get him in a fence corner and tell him I'll shoot if he says no."

"Now, son, just go in and have it over with, Pa will be all right."

Jane goes in and whispers, "Do make it easy for the boy."

Jane goes back to the kitchen. Lester, breathlessly, "Did you tell him, Ma?"

"No, son, it wouldn't be proper, go yourself."

Lester rushes in, "Pa, I want—Pa, I'd like—well, Pa I'm going to get married."

"Oh, are you, son? Well who is the other Babe in the Woods? There's some lady mixed up in this case, isn't there?"

Of course "Pa" has known all the time the cause of Lester's perturbation. Jerry and Jane had talked half the night before about their boy with all the tenderness and all the wonderment that come to parents

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when they awaken with surprise to the fact that their little child—their baby—is a grown up and getting ready to take into the life that has heretofore belonged so closely to them another to whom he will cleave closer than to father or mother.

“The other Babe in the Woods” was a sweet school girl, Gerlie Kelly by name. Jerry and Jane took her to their warm hearts. Little Hallie’s place was not quite vacant after Gerlie came.

Lester brought his pretty wife to the farm home and the same evening Jerry called Jane aside and whispered, “Let us go on a bridal tour. We’ll take the night train for Kansas City and leave the Babes in the Woods to keep house by themselves, they will be happier alone.”

“But,” said Jane, “I’m not ready to go so soon.” “Oh, never mind, just go as you

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are and we’ll buy some wedding toggery in Kansas City.”

And so they went—these life-long chums—a wiser, sadder, happier pair than sailed so long ago upon the Summer Cloud.

For one blessed, care-free month they staid in Kansas City.

Jerry read to Jane, they joked, they laughed, they shopped, they went to the theatres, they ordered good things at the restaurants, they planned for the future of the dear children in the home nest, whom Jerry always spoke of as their Babes in the Woods. They talked much and wondered about the mysterious Great Beyond.

And this their second bridal trip was better, richer than their first.