

Old Lady Number

31

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Author of "The Story of Sarah" "The Ship of Dreams" Etc.

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SYNOPSIS.

Captain Abraham Rose and Angelina, his wife, have lost their little home through Abe's unlucky purchase of Tenady Gold mining stock...

CHAPTER III—Continued.

Now the Amazonian Mrs. Homan, a widow for the third time, made sturdy retort:

"That's jest like yew old maids—always a-blamin' the men. Yew kin jest bet I never would have let one of my husbands go ter the poorhouse."

"Oh! Miss Olive G., used ter say—" "Can't we do somethin'?"

"I could do a plenty," mourned Miss Abigail, "ef I only had been savin'."

"Yew fertit," spoke some one gently, "that it takes considerable ter dress a matron proper."

Aunt Nancy, who had been sneezing furiously at her own impotence, now found her speech again.

"We're a nice set ter talk er bout davin' somethin'—a passel o' poor old critters like us!" Her cackle of embittered laughter was interrupted by the low, cultivated voice of the belle of the home, "Butterfly Blossy."

"We've got to do somethin'," said Blossy firmly.

When Blossy spoke with such decision every one of the sisters pricked up her ears. Blossy might be "a shal-lar-pate," she might arrange the golden-white hair of her head as be-fitted the crowning glory of a young girl, with puffs and rolls and little curls, and—more than one sister sus-pected—with the aid of "rats," she might gown herself elaborately in the mended finery of the long ago, the better years; she might dress her lovely big room—the only double bed-chamber in the house, for which she had paid a double entrance fee—in all sorts of gawgaws, little ornaments, hand-painted plaques of her own producing, lace bedspreads, embroidered splashes and pillow-shams; she might even permit herself a suitor who came twice a year more punctually than the line-storms, to ask her withered little hand in marriage—but her heart was in the right place, and on occasion she had proved herself a master hand at "fixin' things."

"Yes," said she, rising to her feet and flinging out her arms with an eloquent gesture, "we've got to do somethin', and there's just one thing to do, girls: take the captain right here—here"—she brought her hands to the faces on her bosom—"to our hearts!"

At first there was silence, with the ladies staring blankly at Blossy and then at one another. Had they heard aright? Then there came murmurs and exclamations, with Miss Abigail's voice gasping above the others:

"What would the directors say?"

"What do they always say when we ask a favor?" demanded Blossy.

"How much will it cost? It won't cost a cent."

"Won't, eh?" snapped Aunt Nancy.

"How on earth be yew goin' to vittle him? I hain't had a second dish o' peas this year."

"Some men eat more an' some less," remarked Sarah Jane, as if favored a spinster as ever the sun shone on;

"generally it means so much grub ter so much weight."

Miss Abigail glanced up at the ceiling, while Lazy Daisy, who had refused to tip the beam for ten years, surreptitiously hid an apple into which she had been biting.

"Le's have 'em weighed," suggested a widow, Ruby Lee, with a pretty, well-preserved little face and figure, "an' ef tergether they don't come up to the heartiest one of us—"

Miss Abigail made hasty interrup-tion:

"Gals, hain't yew never noticed that the more yew need the more yew git? Before Jenny Bell went to live with her darter I didn't know what I should dew, for the 'aters was gittin' pooty low. Yew know she used ter eat twenty ter a meal, an' then look hungry at the platter. An' then ef old Square Ely didn't come a-drivin' up one mornin' with ten bushel in the farm wagon! He'd been savin' 'em fer us all winter fer fear we might run short in the spring. Gals, there's one thing yew kin depend on, the fore-sightedness of the Lord. I hain't afraid ter risk a stretchin' the board an' keep o' thirty ter pervide ample fer

thirty-one. Naow, haow many of yew is willin' ter try it?"

Every head nodded, "I am," every eye was wet with the dew of merciful kindness; and Mrs. Homan and Sarah Jane, who had flung plates at each other only that morning, were observed to be holding hands.

"But haow on arth be we a-goin' ter sleep him?" proceeded the matron un-easily. "Thar hain't a extry corner in the hull place. Puttin' tew people in No. 30 is out of the question—it's jest erbout the size of a Cinderella shoe box, anyhow, an' the garret leaks—"

She paused, for Blossy was pulling at her sleeve, the real Blossy, warm-hearted, generous, self-deprecating.

"I think No. 30 is just the coziest little place for one! Do let me take it, Miss Abigail, and give the couple my great big barn of a room."

Aunt Nancy eyed her suspiciously. "Yew ain't a-gwine ter make a fool o' yerself, an' jump over the broomstick ag'in?" For Blossy's old suitor, Samuel Darby, had made one of his semi-annual visits only that morning.

The belle burst into hysterical and self-conscious laughter, as she found every glance bent upon her.

"Oh, no, no; not that. But I confess that I am tired to death of this perpetual dove-party. I just simply can't live another minute without a man in the house."

"Now, Miss Abigail," she added imperiously, "yew run across lots and fetch him home."

CHAPTER IV.

One of Them.

Ah! but Abraham had slept that night as if he had been drawn to rest under the compelling shelter of the wings of all that flock which in happier days he had dubbed contemptuously "them air old hens."

Never afterward could the dazed old gentleman remember how he had been persuaded to come into the house and up the stairs with Angelina. He only knew that in the midst of that heart-breaking farewell at the gate, Miss Abigail, all out of breath with running, red in the face, but exceedingly hearty of manner, had suddenly appeared.

"Shoo, shoo, shoo!" this stout angel had gasped. "Naow, Cap'n Abe, yew needn't git narvous. We're as harmless as doves. Run right erlong. Yew won't see anybody ter-night. Don't say a word. It's all right. Sash! Shoo!"

And then, lo! he was not in the county almshouse, but in a beautiful, bright bedchamber with a wreath of immortelles over the mantel, alone with Angy.

Afterward, it all seemed the blur of a dream to him, a dream which ended when he had found his head upon a cool, white pillow, and had felt glad, glad—dear God, how glad!—to know that Angy was still within reach of his outstretched hand; and so he had fallen asleep. But when he awoke in the morning there stood Angelina in front of the glass taking her hair out of curl papers; and then he slowly began to realize the tremendous change that had come into their lives, when his wife committed the unprecedented act of taking her crimps out before breakfast. He realized that they were to eat among strangers. He had become the guest of thirty "women-folks." No doubt he should be called "Old Gal Thirty-one." He got up and dressed very, very slowly. The bewildered gratitude, the incredulous thanksgiving of last night, were as far away as yesterday's sunset. A great seriousness settled upon Abe's lean face. At last he burst forth:

"One to thirty! Hy-guy, I'm in fer it!"

How had it happened, he wondered. They had given him no time to think. They had swooped down upon him when his brain was dulled with anguish. Virtually, they had kidnaped him. Why had they brought him here to accept charity of a women's institution? Why need they thus intensify his sense of shame at his life's failure, and, above all, at his failure to provide for Angelina? In the poorhouse he would have been only one more derelict; but here he stood alone to be stared at and pitied and thrown a sickly-satisfying crumb. With a sigh from the very cellar of his being, he muttered:

"Aye, mother, why didn't yew let me go on ter the county house? That air's the place fer a worn-out old hull like me. Hy-guy!" he ejaculated, beads of sweat standing out on his forehead, "I'd rather lay down an' die th'n face them air women."

"Thar, thar!" soothingly spoke Angy, laying her hand on his arm. "Thar, thar, father! Jest think haow dreftul I'd feel a-goin' down without yer."

"So you would!" strangely comforted. "So you would, my dear!" For her sake he tried to brighten up. He joked clumsily as they stood on the threshold of the chamber, whispering, blinking his eyes to make up for the lack of their usually ready twinkle.

"Hol' on a minute; supposin' I fertit whether I be a man er a woman?" Her love gave inspiration to her answer: "I'll lean on yer, Abe."

Just then there came the loud, imperative clanging of the breakfast-bell; and she urged him to hurry, as "it wouldn't dew" for them to be late the first morning of all times. But he only answered by going back into the room to make an anxious survey of his reflection in the glass. He shook his head reprovingly at the bearded countenance, as if to say: "Yew need not pride yerself any longer on lookin' like Abraham Lincoln, for yew have been turned into a miserable old woman."

Picking up the hair-brush, he held it out at arm's length to Angy. "Won't yew slick up my hair a liddle bit, mother?" he asked, somewhat shame-

facely. "I can't see extry well this mornin'."

"Why, Abe! It's slicked es slick es it kin be naow." However, the old wife reached up as he bent his tall, angular form over her, and smoothed again his thin, wet locks. He laughed a little, self-mockingly, and she laughed back, then urged him into the hall, and, slipping ahead, led the way downstairs. At the first landing, which brought them into full view of the lower hall, he paused, possessed with the mad desire to run away and hide, for at the foot of the stairway stood the entire flock of old ladies. Twenty-nine pairs of eyes were lifted to him and Angy, twenty-nine pairs of lips were smiling at them. To the end of his days Abraham remembered those smiles. Reassuring, unselfish and tender, they made the old man's heart swell, his emotions go warring to-gether.

He wondered, was grateful, yet he grew more confused and afraid. He stared amazed at Angelina, who seemed the embodiment of self-possession, lifting her dainty, proud little gray head higher and higher. She turned to Abraham with a protecting, motherly little gesture of command for him to follow, and marched gallantly on down the stairs. Humbly, trembling at the knees, he came with gingerly steps after the little old wife. How unworthy he had always been, yet never realized to the full until this moment. He knew what those smiles meant, he told himself, watching the uplifted faces; they were to soothe his sense of shame and humiliation, to touch with rose this dull gray color of the culmination of his failures. He passed his hand over his eyes, fiercely praying that the tears might not come to add to his disgrace.

And all the while brave little Angy kept smiling, until with a truly glad leap of the heart she caught sight of a blue ribbon painted in gold shining on the breast of each one of the twenty-nine women. A pale blue ribbon painted in gold with—yes, peering her eyes she discovered that it was the word "Welcome!" The forced smile vanished from Angelina's face. Her eyes grew wet, her cheek white. Her proud figure shrank. She turned and looked back at her husband. Not for one instant did she appropriate the compliment to herself. "This is for you!" her spirit called out to him, while a new pride dawned in her working face.

Forty years had she spent apologizing for Abraham, and now she understood how these twenty-nine generous old hearts had raised him to the pedestal of a hero, while she stood a heroine beside him. Angy it was who trembled now, and Abe, gaining a manly courage from that, took hold of her arm to steady her—they had paused on a step near the foot of the stairs—and, looking around with his whimsical smile, he demanded of the bedecked company in general, "Ladies, be yew 'spectin' the president?"

Cackle went the cracked old voices of the twenty-nine in a chorus of appreciative laughter, while the old heads bobbed at one another as if to say, "Won't he be an acquisition?" And then, from among the group there came forward Blossy—Blossy, who had sacrificed most that this should come to pass; Blossy, who had sat till midnight painting the gold-and-blue ribbons; Blossy, the pride and beauty of the home, in a delicate, old, yellow, real lace gown. She held her two hands gracefully and mysteriously behind her back as she advanced to the foot of the stairs. Looking steadily in Abraham's eyes, she kept a smiling until he felt as if the warmth of a belated spring had beamed upon him.

"The president!" Her mellow, well-modulated voice shook, and she laughed with a mingling of generous joy and tender pity. "Are we expectin' the president? Yew dear, modest man! We are welcomein'—yew!"

Abe looked to Angy as if to say, "How shall I take it?" and behold! the miracle of his wife's bosom swelling and swelling with pride in him. He turned back, for Blossy was making a speech. His hand to his head, he bent his good ear to listen. In terms poetical and touching she described the loneliness of the life at the home as it had been with no man under the roof of the house and only a deaf-and-dumb gardener who hated her sex, in the barn. Then in contrast she painted life as it must be for the sisters now that the thirty tender vines had found a stanch old oak for their clinging. "Me?" queried Abraham of himself and, with another silent glance, of Angy.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Puritan Jury.

That the Puritan fashion of nomenclature produced some very odd results is very generally known. The London Chronicle recalls that James Brome, in his "Travels Over England, Scotland and Wales," published in 1700, gives a copy of a "Jury Return, made at Rye, Sussex, in the late Rebellious Troublesome Times."

The names of the 12 good men and true were: Meek Brewer, Graceful Harding, Killin Pimple, Earth Adams, Weepnot Billing, More Fruit Fowler, Hope for Bending, Return Spielman, Fly Debate Roberts, Stand Fast on High Stringer, Be Faithful Joiner, and Flight the Good Fight of Faith White.

Origin of "Uncle Sam."

The name Uncle Sam was first used in Troy, N. Y., in 1812, when some goods bought for the government and marked U. S. were inspected by Samuel Wilson, a government employe, whose nickname was Uncle Sam. The similarity of the initials suggested the adoption, and the familiar picture was soon created.

TAKING THE BRUTE OUT OF A CONVICT

Jonas Szikely Was a Savage, Half-Witted Beast.

WAS CONVICTED OF MURDER

Surgeons Lifted a Little Piece of His Skull and Now He is a Man, Mild Tempered and Intelligent.

In Trenton, N. J., the menacing walls of the state prison ramble about an area that would normally represent several full blocks in a somewhat dubious residential district.

The main gate of the penal house is of ponderous brownstone, a relic of eighty years ago, when it was set there, with its fluted lotus columns and its wise Egyptian serpents reaching their cynic tongues at the warden's home across the street.

The subtle snakes have been there watching men come and go since time began for the prison. In their eighty years the serpents have watched the toll of immured men run into the many thousands. In their eighty years, too, they have grown wiser with the seasons.

But nothing they have learned is rarer than the case of Jonas Szikely—nothing marked with more curious wisdom, slow in coming, but come at last.

It is September, 1910. Jonas Szikely, fifty-four years old, a laborer in the coal mines near Belvidere, N. J.—a huge, bovine, helpless man—goes to attend a carousel in a Hungarian boarding house in the little town and drinks more than is good for any mortal.

Eight or ten other Huns, rough laboring men, too, are at the boarding house, and whisky has mastered them all before much of the night is gone. There is a brawl; one man is stabbed to death.

Pleading Guilty.

Several men try to escape from the boarding house, as men will when a sudden and terrible thing has been done, innocent though they may be individually. The police and the mob attack Jonas Szikely to prevent his escape.

He is captured and thrown into jail with nine other Hungarians. He is badly hurt and what he says has no rhyme or reason in it. Mostly he howls and cnges.

When he is arraigned an ambulance surgeon examines his cuts and says he has a scalp wound. It is treated as such and the man is cast back into prison to await trial and sentence.

A lawyer is provided for him so that he may have his rights, but he understands none of these things. His head hurts terrifically. He is irrational. Even in full possession of his faculties he, likely enough, would not have understood how to save himself.

In a few weeks he is led into court, where a judge, come hastily from another town, is sitting. He pleads guilty to murder in the second degree and is sentenced to go behind the lotus columns and the wise serpents for thirty years.

He does not know just what has befallen him or why these things are. It is said his scalp wound was inflicted by a pickax handle wielded by one of the mob after the killing, but that is not certain. Another story says he received the blow in the brawl. What matter? In thirty years no one will remember—or care.

Like a Cave-Dweller.

In October, 1910, they brought to the gate of the Trenton prison a sad and fearful thing which might have been a man. In its present state it was only a great, hulking brute, speechless and empty-eyed, save at rare moments when some cryptic light came into them.

It was not ferocity nor yet hatred, but a dull probing, a hurt inquiry as of some beast wondering at its cage.

This thing had long arms that seemed longer than they actually were. It carried its shoulders hunched forward in a queer position that added to the illusion. The hard, round head, the sloping forehead, the prognathous jaw and the empty, searching eyes made up this picture of some cave or forest thing.

But they called it Jonas Szikely and "dressed it in." Henceforth it was known by a number and locked into a small steel cage like the brute it was.

When they let it out this wild thing ran away—not with any sense of escape, not with any injury in its path, but innocently, with a tragic playfulness. It could not work or be made to work.

Nor was this stubbornness or chicanery. This creature did not know what work was. So far as its cerebral capacity went, there was no such thing.

When it came to eating, such things as knife and fork and plate and cup were undreamed of. With its great hands it crammed the rough food into its face, smearing it over neck and bathed and shaved by force.

Soon, in the long, still prison nights, with their dark sounds, the thing began to howl and scream. It could not be stopped or cured. They put the thing off to itself in the farthest corner of the walled inclosure and let it scream in its steel house.

Now and then it put its hairy hand to its poor head and groaned. And if they let it loose where there was a tub of water it would dip its head into the cool liquid and whimper like a wounded dog.

The warden or chief keeper, Thomas B. Madden, a kindly seeming and urbane old man, who has spent his life among prisoners, watched this hurt thing many a time, wondering what might be done.

He called Dr. J. W. Crane, the resident physician, and asked whether the thing was not insane. No, it was not insanity in the ordinary sense. It might be imbecility, but the thing was not mad. It was just a brute, speechless and without speculation.

It had to go back to its iron house. There was no help for it.

Assuming the Responsibility.

In August of last year Dr. Martin W. Reddan of Trenton, visiting surgeon at the New Jersey State prison, had the thing that had been Jonas Szikely brought from his cell for an examination.

The patient could not talk save in a strange gibberish which no one understood, with a pathetic word of Hungarian here and there. The examination and diagnosis had to be made without aid of the prisoner.

Doctor Reddan found the depression in the skull readily enough, a big indentation in the external occipital protuberance—which is to say, somewhat behind the top and center of the head, where the skull turns downward.

It was decided that trepanning was necessary to remove what seemed to be obvious brain pressure. Ordinarily where the prisoner is at all rational, his consent must be had before any so hazardous operation may be performed. In Szikely's case it was impossible.

The physician assumed the responsibility and proceeded. The skull was trepanned and the depressed bone cut out, leaving an opening 2 by 1½ inches in dimensions. No artificial covering was provided. The wound was simply sewed up and left to heal.

It had been discovered that no bone splinter had been pushed through the dura, or brain covering, so that it was not necessary to penetrate to the brain. In this fortunate manner much of the danger was eliminated.

The wound had been sewed, the healing and sterilizing materials applied and the heavy bandages adjusted. The surgeon and his assistants were bending close, waiting for the anesthetic to pass off.

Soon the patient breathed hard, stirred and opened his eyes. He looked about him for a moment or two, dazed and appalled. Then, suddenly, he smiled.

"I want milk," he said in plain enough English.

The recovery of the man was remarkable. In a few weeks he was up and about his prison tasks like any other man.

The stoop and the simian arms were gone. The eyes were alight with intelligence, the voice was able to utter Hungarian fluently and English in phrases and sentences. Jonas Szikely was no longer a hopeless brute, but a man, with a smiling face and an almost pathetic obedience and willingness about him.

The report of a prison investigating committee tells it best:

No Man Can Say.

"Instead of the brute features and expression of before the operation, the man is now exhibiting a bright, kindly, human countenance, is quite intelligent and has shown one of the kindest and sweetest dispositions to be found anywhere."

"He is constantly helping everybody, doing little things for other prisoners' comfort and working with perfect obedience and cheerfulness, so that everybody, prisoners and authorities alike, have become particularly fond of him."

They are likely to pardon Jonas Szikely. The men who have investigated the operation and its results have recommended that the circumstances of the crime be gone into thoroughly with a view to determining whether the murder was not actually committed in the brawl in which Szikely suffered the wound in the skull. If so he was not rational when the knife was used, and there has been no murder.

It is probable that the wise Egyptian serpents are soon to see the pitiable thing that passed into Trenton prison under their eyes four years ago emerge a man and free.

The serpents grow constantly more erudite. It is even possible they soon will know that criminals are sick men. No man can say to what lengths wisdom will go.

Where the Road is Water.

After a few weeks I began to perceive that Schiedam and similar places, though thrilling, were not the whole of Holland, and perhaps not the most representative of Holland. As the yacht worked northward Holland seemed to grow more Dutch, until, in the chain of shallow lakes and channels that hold Friesland in a sort of permanent baptism, we came to what was for me the ideal or celestial Holland—everything done by water, even grass cut under water, and black-and-white cows milked in the midst of ponds, and windmills over the eternal flatness used exclusively to shift inconvenient water from one level to another. The road is water in Friesland, and all the world is on the road. If your approach to a town is made perilous by a succession of barges that will obstinately keep the middle of the channel, you know that it is market day in that town, and the farmers are rolling home in agreeable inebriation.—Exchange.

WOMEN WHO ARE ALWAYS TIRED

May Find Help in This Letter.

Swan Creek, Mich.—"I cannot speak too highly of your medicine. When through neglect or overwork I get run down and my appetite is poor and I have that weak, languid, always tired feeling, I get a bottle of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and it builds me up, gives me strength, and restores me to perfect health again. It is truly a great blessing to women, and I cannot speak too highly of it. I take pleasure in recommending it to others."—Mrs. ANNIE CAMERON, R.F.D., No. 1, Swan Creek, Michigan.



Another Sufferer Relieved.

Hebron, Me.—"Before taking your remedies I was all run down, discouraged and had female weakness. I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and used the Sanative Wash, and find today that I am an entirely new woman, ready and willing to do my housework now, where before taking your medicine it was a dread. I try to impress upon the minds of all ailing women I meet the benefits they can derive from your medicines."—Mrs. CHARLES ROWE, R. F. D., No. 1, Hebron, Maine.

If you want special advice write to Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co., (confidential) Lynn, Mass. Your letter will be opened, read and answered by a woman and held in strict confidence.

How She Escaped.

"Algy fell in love with a girl at the glove counter. He bought gloves every day for a week. To discourage his attentions she became a manicure."

"Then he had his nails manicured every day, I s'pose?"

"Just so. However, I don't think he'll follow her any farther."

"Why not?"

"Then she got employment with a dentist."

ECZEMA SPREAD OVER HANDS

101 S. Boots St., Marion, Ind.—"First the eczema started on my fingers, then spread all over my hands. It broke out in tiny blisters, then would get dry and crack and swell so I could not have my hands in warm water they hurt me so badly. I could not do all my work. The itching and burning were terrible. The more I scratched my hands the worse it made them. They were so bad I could not help scratching them and would walk the floor they annoyed me so. I could not sleep, lost many nights of rest on account of the eczema. My hands were not fit to be seen and I kept them wrapped up and wore mittens that I made out of old linen."

"I was about one year using remedies, then I saw an advertisement in the paper saying that Cuticura Soap and Ointment were good. I wrote at once for a sample. Then I bought one cake of Cuticura Soap and one box of Cuticura Ointment. Before the second box of Cuticura Ointment was gone my hands were well and have remained well ever since." (Signed) Mrs. G. W. Sharp, Mar. 21, 1914.

Cuticura Soap and Ointment sold throughout the world. Sample of each free, with 32-p. Skin Book. Address post-card "Cuticura, Dept. L, Boston."—Adv.

Every time a widower looks twice at a woman the gossip has something to interest them.

All the world loves a lover—he makes such an exhibition of himself.

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Many people who have weak kidneys fail to appreciate how much water can do for them—but while it is good to drink water freely, it must be pure water. In many sections, the lime or alkaline water starts kidney trouble of itself.

Doan's Kidney Pills are a most reliable remedy for weak kidneys. When kidney or urinary disorders first appear, take Doan's and be sure to assign the kidneys by drinking plenty of pure water. Prompt treatment will assist the danger of gravel, gout, rheumatism. Doan's Kidney Pills are successfully used all over the civilized world and publicly recommended by thousands.

A Nebraska Case.

J. N. Kennedy, Broken Bow, Neb., writes: "I suffered terribly from rheumatism, the pain in my back and joints was unbearable night and day. Every sudden move sent a sharp pain through me and I was so lame and sore, I could hardly straighten. I had terrible headaches and felt all worn out. Doan's Kidney Pills relieved me as soon as I used them and before long restored me to good health. I can't be too grateful."

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