

# OLD LADY NUMBER 51

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More than one faded, fragrant romance is revealed in the chapters of this homely little story. Through it runs like a golden thread, the tender devotion of the aged husband and wife.

## CHAPTER I.

### The Tea Table.

Angelina's slender, wiry form and small, glossy gray head bent over the squat brown teapot as she shook out the last bit of leaf from the canister. The canister was no longer hers, neither the teapot, nor even the battered old pewter spoon with which she tapped the bottom of the tin to dislodge the last flicker of tea-leaf dust. The three had been sold at auction that day in response to the auctioneer's inquiry, "What am I bid for the lot?"

Nothing in the familiar old kitchen was hers, Angelina reflected, except Abraham, her aged husband, who was taking his last gentle ride in the old rocking chair—the old armchair with painted roses blooming as brilliantly across its back as they had bloomed when the chair was first purchased forty years ago. Those roses had come to be a source of perpetual wonder to the old wife, an ever-present example.

Neither time nor stress could wilt them a single leaf. When Abe took the first mortgage on the house in order to invest in an indefinitely located Mexican gold mine, the melodeon dropped one of its keys, but the roses nodded on with the same old sunny hope; when Abe had to take the second mortgage and Tenafly Gold became a forbidden topic of conversation, the minute hand fell off the parlor clock, but the flowers on the back of the old chair blossomed on none the less serenely.

The soil grew more and more barren as the years went by; but still the roses had kept fresh and young, so why, argued Angelina, should not she? If old age and the pinch of poverty had failed to conquer their valiant spirit, why should she listen to the croaking tale? If they bloomed on with the same crimson flaunt of color, though the rockers beneath them had grown warped and the body of the chair creaked and groaned every time one ventured to sit in it, why should she not ignore the stiffness which the years seemed to bring to her joints, the complaints which her body threatened every now and again to utter, and fare on herself, a hardy perennial bravely facing life's winter-time?

Even this dreaded day had not taken one fraction of a shade from the glory of the roses, as Angelina could see in the bud at one side of Abraham's head and the full-blown flower below his right ear; so why should she droop because the sale of her household goods had been somewhat disappointing? Somewhat? When the childless old couple, still sailing under the banner of a charity-forbidding pride, became practically reduced to their last copper, just as Abe's joints were "loosening up" after a five years' siege of rheumatism, and decided to sell all their worldly possessions, apart from their patched and threadbare wardrobes and a few meager keepsakes, they had depended upon raising at least two hundred dollars, one-half of which was to secure Abe a berth in the Old Men's home at Indian Village, and the other half to make Angelina comfortable for life, if a little lonely, in the Old Ladies' home in their own native hamlet of Shoreville. Both institutions had been generously endowed by the same estate, and were separated by a distance of but five miles.

"Might as well be five hundred, with my rheumatism an' yer weak heart," Abraham had growled when Angelina first proposed the plan as the only dignified solution to their problem of living. "But," the little wife had rejoined, "it'll be a mite o' comfort a-knowin' a body's so near, even ef yer can't git tew 'em."

Now, another solution must be found to the problem; for the auction was over, and instead of two hundred dollars they had succeeded in raising but one hundred dollars and two cents.

"That air tew cents was fer the flour-sifter," inwardly mourned Angelina, "an' it's wuth double an' tribble, fer it's been a good friend ter me fer nigh on ter eight year."

"Tew cents on the second hunderd," said Abe for the tenth time. "I've counted it over an' over. One hunderd dollar an' tew pecky pennies. An' I never hear a man tell so many lies in my life as that air auctioneer."

"I'd 'a' thought he was sellin' out the empery o' Rooshy, Hyguy, it sounded splendid. Fust off I thought he'd raise us more 'n we expected. An' mebbe he would have tew, Angy," a bit ruefully, "ef yew 'd 'a' let me advertise a little sooner. I don't s'pose half Shoreville knows yit that we was gwine ter have a auction sale." He watched the color rising in her cheeks with a curious mixture of pride in her pride and regret at its consequences. "It's no use a-talkin', mother, pride and poverty makes oneasy bedfellers."

He leaned back in the old chair, creaking out a dismal echo to the auctioneer's "Going, going, gone!" while the flush deepened in Angelina's cheek. Again she fastened her gaze upon the indomitable red rose which hung a pendant earring on the right side of Abraham's head.

"Yew wouldn't 'a' had folks a-comin' here ter bid jest out o' charity, would yew?" she demanded. "An' anyhow," in a more gentle tone—the gently positive tone which she had acquired through forty years of living with Abraham—"we hain't so bad off with one hunderd dollars an' tew cents, an'—beholden ter nobody! It's tew cents more'n yew need ter git yew into the Old Men's, an' them extry tew cents 'll pervide fer me jest bewtiful." Abraham stopped rocking to stare hard at his resourceful wife, an involuntary twinkle of amusement in his blue eyes. With increased firmness, she repeated, "Jest bewtiful!" whereupon Abe, scenting self-sacrifice on his wife's part, sat up straight and snapped, "Haww so, haww so, mother?"

"It'll buy a postage stamp, won't it?"—she was fairly aggressive now—"an' that's a envelop what wa'n't put up ter auction in the cupboard an' a paper bag I kin iron out—ketch me a-gwine ter the neighbors an' a-beggin' fer writing paper—an' I'll jest set daown an' write a line to Miss Halsey. Her house hain't a stun'n throw from the Old Men's; an' I'll offer ter come an' take keer o' them air young 'uns o' her'n fer my board an' keep an'—ten cents a week. I was a-gwine ter say a quarter, but I don't want ter impose on nobody. Seem'n that they hain't over well-ter-do, I would go fer nothin'; but I got ter have somethin' ter keep up appearances on, so yew won't have no call ter feel ashamed of me when I come a-visitin' ter the hum." Involuntarily, as she spoke, Angelina lifted her knotted old hand and smoothed back the hair from her brow; for through all the struggling years she had kept a certain, not unpleasant, girlish pride in her personal appearance.

Abraham had risen with creaks of his rheumatic joints, and was now walking up and down the room, his feet lifted slowly and painfully with every step, yet still his blue eyes flashing with the fire of indignant protest.

"Me a-bunkin' comfortable in the Old Men's, an' yew a-takin' keer o' them Halsey young 'uns fer ten cents a week! I wouldn't take keer o' 'em fer ten cents a short breath. That be young 'uns an' young 'uns," he elucidated, "but they be tartars! Yew'd be in yer grave afore the fust frost; an' who's gwine ter bury yer—the taown?" His tone became gentle and broken: "No, no, Angy. Yew be a good gal, an' dew just as we calc'lated on. Yew jine the Old Ladies'; yew've got friends over ther, yew'll git erlong splendid. An' I'll git erlong tew. Yer know"—throwing his shoulders back, he assumed the light, bantering tone so familiar to his wife—the poorhouse doors is always open. I'd jest admire ter go ther. That's a rocking chair in every room, and they say the grub is A No. 1." He winked at her, smiling his broadest smile in his attempt to deceive.

Both wink and smile, however, were lost upon Angelina, who was busy dividing the apple sauce in such a way that Abe would have the larger share without suspecting it, hoping the while that he would not notice the absence of butter at this last home meal. She herself had never believed in buttering bread when there was "sauce" to eat with it; but Abe's extravagant tastes had always carried him to the point of desiring both butter and sauce as a relish to his loaf.

"Naow, fur's I'm concerned," pursued Abe, "I hain't got nothin' agin the poorhouse fer neither man nor woman. I'd as lief let yew go than 'stid o' me; fer I know yew well that what yew're a-layin' out fer ter do. Yes, yes, mother, yew can't fool me. But think what folks would say! Think what they would say! They'd crow, 'Thar's Abe a-takin' his comfort in the Old men's hum, an' Angelina,

she's a-satin' her heart out in the poorhouse!'"

Angelina had, indeed, determined to be the one to go to the poorhouse; but all her life long she had cared, perhaps to a faulty degree, for "what folks would say." Above all, she cared now for what they had said and what they still might say about her husband and this final ending to his downhill road. She rested her two hands on the table and looked hard at the apple sauce until it danced before her eyes. She could not think with any degree of clearness. Vaguely she wondered if their supper would dance out of sight before they could sit down to eat it. So many of the good things of life had vanished ere she and Abe could touch their lips to them. Then she felt his shaking hand upon her shoulder and heard him mutter with husky tenderness:

"My dear, this is the fust chance since we've been married that I've had to take the wust of it. Don't say a word agin it naow, mother, don't yer. I've brought yer ter this pass. Lemme bear the brunt o' it."

Ah, the greatest good of all had not vanished, and that was the love they bore one to the other. The sunshine came flooding back into mother's heart. She lifted her face, beautiful, rosy, eternally young. This was the man for whom she had gladly risked



She Wondered If Their Supper Would Dance Out of Sight.

want and poverty, the displeasure of her own people, almost half a century ago. Now at last she could point him out to all her little world and say, "See, he gives me the red side of the apple!" She lifted her eyes, two bright sapphires swimming with the diamond dew of unshed, happy tears.

"I'm a-thinkin', father," she twittered, "that naow me an' yew be a-gwine so fur apart, we be a-gittin' closer tegerther in speret than we've ever been afore."

Abe bent down stiffly to brush her cheek with his rough beard, and then, awkward, as when a boy of sixteen he had first kissed her, shy, ashamed at this approach to a return of the old-time love making, he seated himself at the small, bare table.

This warped, hill-and-dale table of the drop-leaves, which had been brought from the attic only today



## RANK CASEY WITH HORATIUS

Comment of Those Whose Opinion is Worth Heeding Concerning the Two Famous Ballads.

"Casey at the Bat in his own humbler sphere deserves to be mentioned as a distant relative of Horatius at the Bridge," said the late Harry Thurston Peck, as quoted by the Little Classics Press, which republishes the baseball ballad.

Literary people are reluctant to see merit in contemporary ballads of "low life," so-called. Casey is really better stuff than its prototype Horatius. Horatius did impossible things. He licked a whole army single-handed, then jumped into the river and swam across in a 200-pound suit of lead pipe, cast iron and chain mail.

There is no element of surprise in the poem, either, because everybody expects him to float safely across the river with a ton of steel tied around his neck! "And with his harness on his back plunged headlong in the tide."

But Casey is human. He works no miracles. He goes to bat in high favor

after resting there for ten years, had served as their first dining-table when the honeymoon was young. Abe thoughtfully drummed his hand on the board, and as Angy brought the teapot and sat down opposite him, he recalled:

"We had bread an' tea an' apple sass the day we set up housekeepin', dew yew remember, Angy?" "An' I burned the apple sass," she supplemented, whereupon Abe chuckled, and Angy went on with a thrill of genuine gladness over the fact that he remembered the details of that long-ago honeymoon as well as she: "Yew don't mind havin' no butter to night, dew yer, father?"

He recalled how he had said to her at that first simple home meal: "Yew don't mind bein' poor with me, dew yer, Angy?" Now, with a silent shake of his head, he stared at her, wondering how it would seem to eat at table when her face no longer looked at him across the board, to sleep at night when her faithful hand no longer lay within reach of his own. She lifted her teacup, he lifted his, the two gazing at each other over the brims, both half-distracted, half-comforted by the fact that love still remained their toastmaster after the passing of all the years. Of a sudden Angy exclaimed, "We forgot ter say grace." Shocked and contrite, they covered their eyes with their trembling old hands and murmured together: "Dear Lord, we thank thee this day for our daily bread."

Angy opened her eyes to find the red roses cheerfully facing her from the back of the rocking chair. A robin had hopped upon the window sill just outside the patched and rusty screen and was joyfully caroling to her his views of life. Through the window vines in which the bird was almost meshed the sunlight sifted softly into the stripped, bare and lonely room. Angy felt strangely encouraged and comforted. The roses became symbolic to her of the "lilies of the field which toll not, neither do they spin;" the robin was one of the "two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father;" while the sunlight seemed to call out to the little old lady who hoped and believed and loved much: "Fear ye not therefore. Ye are of more value than many sparrows!"

## CHAPTER II.

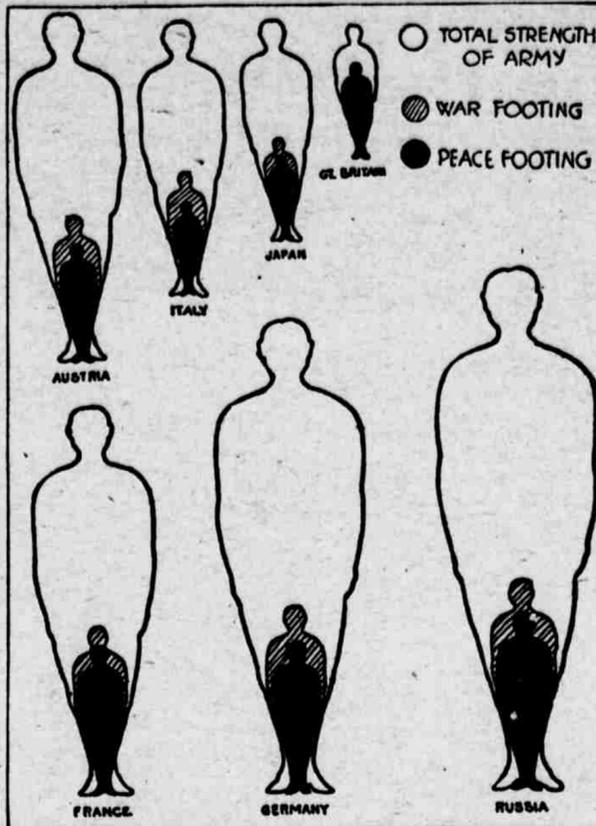
### "Good-by."

When the last look of parting had been given to the old kitchen and the couple passed out of doors, hushed and trembling, they presented an incongruously brave, gala-day appearance. Both were dressed in their best. To be sure, Abraham's Sunday suit had long since become his only, everyday suit as well, but he wore his Sabbath-day hat, a beaver of ancient design, with an air that cast its reflection over all his apparel. Angelina had on a black silk gown as shiny as the freshly polished stove she was leaving in her kitchen—a gown which testified for its voluminous hem to the soft yellow net at the throat that Angelina was as neat a mender and darning as could be found in Suffolk county.

A black silk bonnet snuggled close to her head, from under its brim peering a single pink rose. Every spring for ten years Angelina had renewed the youth of this rose by treating its petals with the tender red dye of a budding oak.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## ARMIES OF POWERS COMPARED



## REAL BATTLE CAPABILITIES OF THE ARMIES OF EUROPE

"Do you know that the contending armies in Europe today are battling upon their peace time footings?" asked a colonel on the general staff of the United States army. "And don't forget that the nation that gets its fighting force up to its full war strength first will gain a material advantage in the present turmoil."

This means that any hasty deductions made upon the basis of fights won and lost up to date may soon prove absolutely misleading.

The question then arises: Which of the struggling armies can reach its war strength soonest, and, with that attained, what are its chances for maintaining that standing in the grueling days to come? The answer is a matter of administrative efficiency first, and then follows naturally the relative merits of the reserve material upon which the nation can draw as battle after battle and disense thin the ranks of those in the field. At present the Germans are virtually fighting alone four other nations, but their initial setbacks are not properly a true index of what is to come in the near future.

Some Figures. As it is necessary to deal with figures it is just as well to begin now as later. These figures, interpreted in the light of additional information have another meaning, one that comes closer to the facts inspiring the aggressive policy assumed by the Kaiser in face of seemingly appalling odds. According to authoritative information the peace and the war footing of the powers named are as follows:

	Peace	War	Reserves	Total
Russia	771,193	1,679,387	5,400,000	8,870,580
Germany	555,938	241,933	5,000,000	6,814,881
France	535,570	700,740	3,250,000	3,950,740
Austria	345,353	629,524	2,500,000	3,625,224
Italy	211,304	371,495	1,500,000	1,871,495
England	206,628	223,688	215,000	435,328
Japan	182,563	264,300	1,000,000	1,284,200

As between France and Germany apart from the latter's superior war footing, the total of the fully trained reserves in the Fatherland would be the most potent factor in a prolonged struggle and also the justification for a vigorous initiative despite early heavy losses. Both Germany and France have in the last two years increased the period of service from two to three years. In France this lengthening of the term with the colors aroused a great deal of opposition, not to say discontent.

Immediately back of these soldiers are the first reserves, men who but recently have finished their full tours of active service and of course are familiar with the latest practices. Now look at the foregoing figures. Germany's peace footing is only 29,895 men stronger than that of France, but upon the first call to arms this moderate superiority immediately jumps to the greater figure of 144,203, giving the Kaiser an advantage of nearly 21 per cent. But this is only the beginning of the difference.

Germany's total reserve of fully trained reserves—men trained with peculiar thoroughness—is today quite 5,000,000, while the admittedly less extensively drilled reserves of France number but 3,250,000 rank and file. Here, as can plainly be seen, the Fatherland leads by 1,750,000—two and a half times the war footing of France, while still having in reserve as many as France would have at best.

Setting aside the question of the relative military value of the training of the German and the French soldiers, those of France carry a magazine rifle of eight millimeters caliber and the German infantrymen report-

ers having a caliber of 7.8 millimeters. Assuming the same propulsive charge, the German gun will carry further and travel flatter than the French weapon, making for better marksmanship at all ranges.

Again, the French rifle is heavier than the German, increasing to that extent the stress upon the man who has to carry it on long marches. The soldiers of both nations carry the same number of cartridges, 120. But the saving in weight in the German musket is offset by other weights he has to carry. Fully equipped the French foot soldier has a total burden of 54.58 pounds, while the German infantryman has to bear 58.75 pounds. As a broad proposition the average German is a sturdier man than his French rival, and this greater tax is wisely laid upon him.

French Equipment. In the French army each company of infantry has the following portable tools: Eight shovels, four pickaxes (double headed), three axes, one folding saw and a pair of wire nippers. The German foot soldier on the other hand does not get off so easily, because each company has to carry 100 small spades, ten pickaxes and five hatchets. Now what does this mean? Simply that the Kaiser's infantrymen are able to entrench themselves quicker than their French rivals, and for that reason could hold an advanced position more securely and guard themselves against attack while there better than the soldiers of the tricolor.

Now let us see what Russia represents as a foe to Germany on the Fatherland's northern border. Unquestionably the czar's army is superior to the Kaiser's in mere point of numbers in peace, in war and in the total available reserves, and so far as personal bravery goes the Russian soldier is unsurpassed. But battles are not won these days by just numbers; training and handling of the men are of supreme importance.

Broadly speaking, it is doubtful if the Russian forces are any better trained than they were when they measured strength with the Japanese in 1904-05. The infantry are armed with magazine rifles of 7.62 millimeter caliber, and as marksmen they are nothing like the equals of the Germans.

How They Compare. Russia is measurably superior to Germany in the matter of infantry, cavalry and artillery in the form of field guns, and Germany, in turn, leads France in the vital feature of artillery. Artillery has played a prime part in all great wars, and the popular idea is that it is upon these guns that the tide of battle turns. In a measure this is so, for the field pieces have to protect or support the infantry; but with this done, the decisive outcome of an action depends upon the conduct and gallantry of the foot soldier, for he constitutes the backbone of any military force.

As a matter of history, the French have led in field ordnance ever since the Franco-Prussian war. The French were the first to adopt the long recoil which made it possible to use higher propulsion charges and to secure better practice against the target, and to them, too, is owed the introduction of the spade upon the trail by which the recoil of the carriage could be checked, thus making it possible for the gun pointer to hold his position and to fire deliberately and rapidly. To the French, also, the world is indebted for the higher development of the shrapnel shell with its withering blast of leaden bullets.

## HIS PALATE WAS FIRE PROOF

Unusually Strong Drink Had But One Drawback, Is Testimony of Confirmed Toper.

Assemblyman Brennan, author of the Brennan cold storage law, said the other day in Albany to the Journal man:

"A recent examination of the cold storage plants in New York city showed that in twelve storage houses alone there were stored 7,300,000

pounds of poultry and meat, 4,500,000 pounds of fish, 2,000,000 pounds of cheese, 6,000,000 pounds of butter and 500,000 cases of eggs

"This food should be labeled as what it is. It shouldn't be sold to the public as fresh food at the price of fresh food. For it isn't fresh food, and though it looks all right, its taste is all wrong—except to such people as are blessed with the palate of Jim Jimison."

"Jim Jimison," Mr. Brennan explained, "was a hard drinker, a thica-

way. One evening Jim stopped at the tavern for a dram, tossed it off, and departed calmly; but after he was gone the tavern-keeper discovered that, in place of applejack, he had given Jim a drink out of the sulphuric acid bottle that was kept to clean the verdigris off the brass taps.

"The tavern-keeper couldn't sleep that night, but the next morning, to his unspeakable relief, Jim dropped in for another dram before breakfast, apparently none the worse for his dose of poison.

"Jim," said the tavern-keeper, "what did you think of that applejack I sold you last night?"

"Oh, it was sea stuff," said Jim; "good, warm'n' stuff. It had only one fault. Every time I coughed it set my whiskers afire."

The First Bread. The "staff of life" was by no means the first item on men's bill of fare. For we know not how many ages human beings lived entirely without bread or anything approaching it.