

Old Lady Number 31

By LOUISE FORSSLUND

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 Tenney Gold mining stock. Their household goods sold, the \$100 auction money, all they have left, will place Abe in the Old Man's home, or Angy in the Old Ladies' home. Both are self-sacrificing but Abe decides: "My dear this is the last time I've had a chance to take the wust of it." The old couple bid good-bye to the little house. Terror of "what folks will say" sends them along by paths to the gate of the Old Ladies' home. Miss Abigail, matron of the Old Ladies' home, hears of the ill fortune of the old couple. She tells the other old ladies, and Blossy, who has paid a double fee for the only double bed-chamber, voices the unanimous verdict that Abe must be taken in with his wife. Abe awakens next morning to find that he is "Old Lady No. 31." The old ladies give him such a warm welcome that he is made to feel at home at once. "Brother Abe" expands under the warm reception of the sisters, and a reign of peace begins in the Old Ladies' home. Abe is the center of the community. The semi-annual visit of Blossy's aged lover, Capt. Samuel Darby, is due. Abe advises her to marry him. For the first time the captain fails to appear.

CHAPTER VII—Continued.

At night, however, she was obliged to admit that he could not be coming; and then, quivering with honest anxiety for her old friend, Blossy dipped into her emergency fund, which she kept in the heart of a little pink china pig on a shelf in her room—a pink china pig with a lid made of stiff black hair standing on edge in the middle of his back—and sent a telegram to Captain Darby, asking if he were sick.

The answer came back slowly by mail, to find Blossy on the verge of a nervous collapse, under the care of all the women in the house.

That letter Blossy never showed to Brother Abe, nor to any one else. Neither did she treasure it in the sentimental trunk beneath the attic eaves. The letter ran:

Dear Betsy Ann: I never felt better in my life. Ain't been sick a minute. Just made up my mind I was a old fool, and was going to quit. If you change your intentions at any time, just drop me a post-card.

SAM'L DARBY, ESQ.

"This, Captain Darby, makes your reflection final," vowed Blossy to herself, as she tore the note into fragments and drowned them in the spirits of lavender with which the sisters had been seeking to soothe her distracted nerves.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Anniversary.

About this time Blossy developed a tendency to draw Brother Abraham aside at every opportunity, convenient or inconvenient, in order to put such questions as these to him:

"Didn't you say it is fully thirty-five years since you and Captain Darby were on the beach together? Do you think he has grown much older? Had he lost his hair then? Did he care for the opposite sex? Was he very brave—or would you say more brave than stubborn and contrary? Isn't it a blessing that I never married him?"

Fearful of the ridicule of the sisters, Blossy was always careful to conduct these inquiries in whispers, or at least in undertones with a great observance of secrecy, sometimes stopping Abe on the stairs, sometimes beckoning him to her side when she was busy about her household tasks on the pretense of requiring his assistance. On one occasion she even went so far as to inveigle him into holding a skein of wool about his clumsy hands, while she wound the violet worsted into a ball, and delicately inquired if he believed Samuel spoke the truth when he protested that he had never paid court to any other woman.

Alas, Blossy's frequent tete-a-tetes with the amused but sometimes impatient Abraham started an exceedingly foolish suspicion. When, asked the sisters of one another, did Abe ever help any one, save Blossy, shell dried beans or pick over prunes? When had he ever been known to hold wool for Angy's winding? Not once since woeing time, I warrant you. What could this continual hobnobbing and going off into corners mean, except—suspicion?

Ruby Lee whispered it first into Aunt Nancy's good ear. Aunt Nancy indulged in four pinches of snuff in rapid succession, sneezed an amazing number of times, and then acridly informed Ruby Lee that she was a "jealous cat" and always had been one.

However, Aunt Nancy could not refrain from carrying the gossip to Miss Ellie, adding that she herself had been suspicious of Abe's behavior from the start.

"Oh, no, no!" cried the shocked and shrinking spinster. "And Angy so cheerful all the time? I don't believe it."

But whisper, whisper, buzz, buzz, went the gossip, until finally it reached the pink little ears at the side of

Miss Abigail's generously proportioned head. The pink ears turned crimson, likewise the adjoining cheeks, and Miss Abigail panted with righteous indignation.

"It all comes of this plagued old winter time," she declared, sharply biting her thread, for she was mending a tablecloth. "Shet the winders on summer, an' yew ketch the tail of slander in the latch every time. Naow, ef I hear one word about this 'arnal foolishness comin' to Angy's ears, or Brother Abe's, or Blossy's either, fer that matter, we'll all have to eat off'n oil-cloth Sundays, the same as weekdays, until I see a more Christian asperit in the house."

She gave the Sunday damask across her lap a pat which showed she was in earnest; and the rebuked sisters glanced at one another, as if to say: "Suppose the minister should walk in some Sabbath afternoon and find oil-cloth on the table, and ask the reason why?"

They one and all determined to take Aunt Nancy's advice and "sew a button on their lips."

Fortunately, too, the February thaws had already set in, and the remainder of the winter passed without any severe strain on the "buttonholes." And at length the welcome spring began to peep forth, calling to the old folks, "Come out, and grow young with the young year!"

With the bursting forth of the new springtide the winter's talk seemed to drop as a withered and dead oak leaf falls from its winter-bound branches; and Abe stood once more alive to the blessings of renewed approval.

Angy went out of doors with Miss Abigail, and pattered around among the flowers as if they were her own, thanking God for Abe's increasing popularity in the same breath that she gave thanks for the new buds of the spring.

The anniversary of the Roses' entrance into the Home drew nearer, and Blossy suggested that the best way to celebrate the event would be by means of a "pink tea."

Neither Angy nor Abe, nor in fact half the sisters, had any clear conception of what a tinted function might be; but they one and all seized upon Blossy's idea as if it were a veritable inspiration, and for the time jealousies were forgotten, misunderstandings erased.

Such preparations as were made for that tea! The deaf-and-dumb gardener was sent with a detachment of small boys to fetch from the wayside and meadows armfuls of wild roses for the decorations. Miss Abigail made pink icing for the cake. Ruby Lee hung bleeding hearts over the dining-room door. Aunt Nancy resurrected from the bottom of her trunk a white lace cap with a rakish-looking pink bow for an adornment, and fastened it to her scant gray hairs in honor of the occasion. Blossy turned her pink china pig, his lid left upstairs, into a sugar bowl.

Pink, pink, pink, everywhere; even in Angy's proud cheeks! Pink, and pink, and pink! Abe used to grow dizzy, afterward, trying to recall the various pink articles which graced that tea.

But most delightful surprise of all was his anniversary gift, which was slyly slipped to his place after the discussion of the rose-colored strawberry gelatin. It was a square, five-pound parcel wrapped in pink tissue paper, tied with pink string, and found to contain so much Virginia tobacco, which Blossy had inveigled an old southern admirer into sending her for "charitable purposes."

After the presentation of this valuable gift, Abraham felt that the time had come for him to make a speech—practically his maiden speech.

He said at the beginning, more suavely at his ease than he would have believed possible, secure of sympathy and approbation, with Angy's glowing old eyes upon her prodigy, that all the while he had been at the Home, he had never before felt the power to express his gratitude for the welcome which had been accorded him—the welcome which seemed to wear and wear, as if it were all wool and a yard wide, and could never wear out.

The old ladies nodded their heads in approval of this, every face beaming; but as the speech went on the others perceived that Abe had singled out Blossy for special mention—blind, blind Abraham—Blossy, who had first proposed admitting him into this paradise; Blossy, who had given up her sunny south chamber to his comfort and Angy's; Blossy, who had been as a "guardian angel" to him; Blossy, who as a fitting climax to all her sisterly attentions had given him today this wonderful, wonderful pink tea, and "this five hull pound o' Virginny terbaccer."

He held the parcel close to his bosom, and went on, still praising Blossy—this innocent old gentleman,—heedless of Angy's gentle tug at his coat-tail; while Blossy burred her absurdly lovely face in the pink flush of a wild-rose spray, and the other old ladies stared from him to her, their faces growing hard and cold.

When Abraham sat down, aglow with pride over his oratorical triumphs, his chest expanded, his countenance wrinkled into a thousand gulleless, grateful smiles, there was absolute silence.

Then Blossy, her head still bowed as if in shy confusion, began to clap her hands faintly together, whereat a few of the others joined her half-heartedly. A sense of chill crept over Abraham. Accustomed as a rule to deferential attention, did he but say good morning, by no means aware that his throne had toppled during the winter, he was still forced to perceive that something had gone amiss.

There is an oxidized bed with black sheets and pillows, black and white striped wall paper, spruce and orange cushions scattered about at random on sofas or on the floor, and finally, one of these very green china parrots, the reason of which is not apparent.—Washington Herald.

As always when aught troubled his mind, "father" turned to Angy; but instead of his composed and resourceful little wife he found a scared-faced and trembling woman. Angy had suddenly become conscious of the shadow of the green-eyed monster. Angy's loyal heart was crying out to her mate: "Don't git the sisters daown on yer, Abe, 'ous than, mebbe, yew'll lose your hum!" But poor Angelina's lips were so stiff with terror over the prospect of the county house for her husband, that she could not persuade them to speech.

Abraham, completely at sea, turned next to her whom he had called his guardian angel; but Blossy was rising from her seat, a baffling smile of expectancy on her face, the rose spray swinging in her delicate hand as if to the measure of some music too far back in youth for anyone else to hear. Blossy had worn that expectant look all day. She might have been delightfully hugging to herself a secret which she had not shared even with the trusted Abraham. She was gowned in her yellow lace, the beauty and grace of which had defied the changing fashions as Blossy's remarkable elegance of appearance had defied the passing of the years.

"Brother Abe,"—in her heedlessness of the mischief she had wrought, Blossy seemed almost to sing—"I never shall forget your speech as long as I live. Will you excuse me now?" She swept out of the door, her skirts rustling behind her.

Abe collected himself so far as to bow in the direction she had taken; then with lamblike eyes of inquiry met the exasperated glances cast upon him.

Not a sister moved or spoke. They all sat as if glued to their chairs, in a silence that was fast growing appalling.

Abe turned his head and looked behind his chair for an explanation; but nothing met his eye, save the familiar picture on the wall of two white kittens playing in the midst of a huge bunch of purple lilacs.

Then there broke upon the stillness the quavering old voice of Aunt Nancy, from her place opposite Abe's at the head of the board. The aged dame had her two hands clasped before her on the edge of the table, vainly trying to steady their palsied shaking. Her eyes, bright, piercing, age-defying, she fixed upon the bewildered Abraham with a look of deep and sorrowful reproach. Her unsteady head bobbed backward and forward with many an accusing nod, and the cap with its rakish pink bow bobbed backward and forward too. Abe watched her, fascinated, unconsciously wondering, even in the midst of his disquietude, why the cap did not slide off her bald scalp entirely. To his amazement, she addressed not himself, but Angy.

"Sister Rose, yew kin leave the room." Implacable purpose spoke in Aunt Nancy's tone. Angy started, looked up, going first red and then white; but she did not move. She opened her lips to speak.

"I don't want ter hear a word from yew, nor anybody else," sternly interposed Aunt Nancy. "I'm old enough ter be yer mother. Go upstairs!"

Angy's glance sought Miss Abigail, but the matron's eyes avoided hers. The little wife sighed, rose reluctantly, dropped her hand doubtfully reassuring on Abe's shoulder, and then went obediently to the door.

From the threshold she looked wistfully back; but an imperious wave from Aunt Nancy banished her altogether, and Abe found himself alone—not with the sisters whom he loved, but with 28 hard-visaged strangers.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Wanted a Little Praise Himself. Following a disastrous fire in a western city, many men and women gathered to look at the ruins. Some of the men, seeing that a wall near which they were standing was toppling, made haste to get out of the way, and narrowly escaped being crushed.

Johnny Brabson, a good Irish citizen, was so near the wall that he could not escape with the others. So, whirling about, he made for a door in the wall, burst through it, and came out on the other side safe, and evidently very proud of his exploit. Women who had shut their eyes and shrieked when they saw his danger now gathered round him in great joy, and cried out:

"Praise heaven, Johnny Brabson, down on your knees, and thank heaven!"

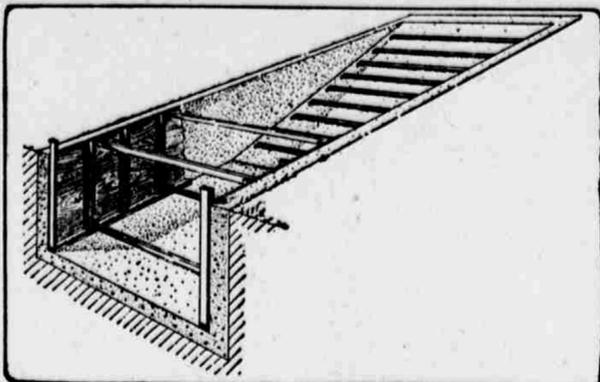
"Yis yis," said he, "and I will, but wasn't it injanyous inn me, now?"—Youth's Companion.

No Landmarks in Space. "There are no landmarks in space; one portion of space is exactly like every other portion, so that we cannot tell where we are. We are, as it were, in an unruined sea, without stars, compass, soundings, wind or tide, and we cannot tell in what direction we are going. We have no log which we cast out to take a dead reckoning by; we may compute our rate of motion with respect to neighboring bodies, but we do not know how these bodies may be moving in space."—Maxwell.

Futurist Window Display. An Oxford street store has turned one of its windows into a futurist boudoir, which is a regular "Midsummer Night's Dream."

There is an oxidized bed with black sheets and pillows, black and white striped wall paper, spruce and orange cushions scattered about at random on sofas or on the floor, and finally, one of these very green china parrots, the reason of which is not apparent.—Washington Herald.

CONSTRUCTION OF CONCRETE MANURE PIT



Shallow Manure Pit.

For maintaining or restoring the fertility of the fields there is nothing better than barnyard manure. By the ordinary methods of piling manure on the ground or storing it in wooden pens or boxes, 30 to 50 per cent of its fertility is lost, according to the U. S. Department of Agriculture. This loss is brought about in two ways: First, by leaching or washing due to heavy rains; second, by fermentation or heating caused by lack of sufficient moisture. Since concrete pits are waterproof, manure may be kept in them as moist as may be necessary and such an enormous waste in the fertility of the manure may thus be entirely prevented. One load of manure from a concrete pit is worth 1½ to 2 loads of manure as usually stored. Moreover, with concrete pits the supply of manure is increased by all the liquid manure, the richest part, from the barn gutters and feeding floors.

Shallow manure pits do very well where the manure can be frequently hauled to the fields. The walls and floor should be 5 inches thick. The clear dimensions of the pit are: Depth, 3 feet; width, 6 feet; length, 12 feet. Dig the trench 3 feet 5 inches deep by 6 feet 10 inches by 12 feet 10 inches. By keeping the sides vertical only an inside form will be needed. Frame the sides and ends separately. For the sides cut the 1-inch siding 12 feet long and nail it to the four 2 by 4 inch uprights 3 feet long and equally spaced. The end uprights for the sides are 2 by 4 inch pieces nailed flat to the siding; the others are also 2 by 4 but are nailed on edge. It is not necessary to cut these uprights to exact lengths; they may be allowed to extend above the siding. Make the siding for the end sections of the form 5 feet 2 inches long and at the ends nail it to the edge of two 2 by 4 inch uprights. Place a single 2 by 4 upright between each end pair. Cut four cross braces, 5 to 10 inches long, from 2 by 4 inch timbers. Have enough sections of woven-wire fencing, 7½ feet long, to cover the bottom of the pit.

Set up the forms on the finished floor so as to allow a 5-inch wall on all sides. Join them by nailing together the 2 by 4's at the corners of the sides and ends. Do not drive the nails home. Cross-brace with 2 by 4's and with 1-inch boards from each central end upright to the second side upright. Quickly begin filling the forms with concrete almost wet enough to pour, and keep it practically the same height on all sides. Puddle the concrete by running a long paddle up and down next to the form. Do not punch the earthen wall. Dirt in the concrete may make a poor wall. If the top of the earthen wall tends to

crumble, hold it back with 1-inch boards braced against the forms. To keep out floor water, the pit may be extended 6 inches above the ground by using the lower half of a 1-foot board to hold back the dirt, by allowing the remainder to project above the ground level, and by adding 6 inches to the height of the inside form. Remove the forms after the concrete has set four days by first drawing the nails in the corner 2 by 4's. The pit may be used after 10 days.

Where the manure must be stored for a considerable length of time, larger pits or basins are required. Such pits are seldom made over 5 feet deep and are wide enough so that the manure may be loaded on a spreader in the pit and drawn up a roughened concrete incline or run. The slope for such a run must not be steeper than 1 foot up to 4 feet out.

In building a manure basin use a team with a plow and scraper to make an earthen pit in which to build a concrete basin of the clear dimensions shown. In laying out the earthen pit, bear in mind that the concrete walls and floor are 8 inches thick and make due allowance for the same. With a spade trim the sides and the deep end vertical.

In order to form a sump hole from

under them. To prevent bulging, cross-brace the forms with 2 by 4 inch timbers. Begin filling with concrete, as for shallow manure pits, and do not stop until the job is completed.

Lay the floor for the bottom and the incline the same as for shallow pits. To give teams a sure footing on the incline, embed in the concrete the turned-up ends of iron cleats bent at right angles, similar to a capital U. Old wagon tires, cut in lengths not greater than 20 inches and turned up 4 inches at each end, will do. Leave 1 inch clearance between the cleats and the concrete, and set them so as not to obstruct the wheelway. Space the cleats 14 to 16 inches. Roughen or corrugate the bottom crosswise every 6 inches by using a 5-foot length of 2 by 4 inch scantling beveled lengthwise to the shape of a carpenter's chisel. To make the corrugations, set the timber with the beveled face toward the incline. Strike the 2 by 4 with a heavy hammer, so as to indent the concrete to the depth of 1 inch.

Cutter for Silage. There are on the market several makes of silage cutters that will give satisfaction, according to Farmers' Bulletin 578, issued by U. S. Department of Agriculture. The capacity of the machine is an important consideration which should not be overlooked by the purchaser. Many persons make the mistake of getting a cutter which is too small, thus making the operation of filling the silo very slow and interfering with the continuous employment of the entire force of men.

It is better to get a machine large enough so that every one will be able to keep busy all the time. The larger cutters are equipped with self-feeders, a labor-saving device which the smaller sizes lack. Other factors to be taken into account in purchasing a cutter are the amount of work to be done and the power available. Of course, for the filling of a very small silo it would not be wise to buy a large machine. Neither would it be advisable to overload the engine or motor by using a cutter which is too large for the power available.

Two types of silage elevators are in use—the old-style chain carrier and the blower. The chain carrier requires less power, but is harder to set up and there is more litter when it is used, especially in windy weather. For these reasons the blower is now fast displacing the carrier.

The blower should be placed as nearly perpendicular as possible so as to reduce to the minimum the friction of the cut corn upon the inside of the pipe and lessen the danger of clogging.

The usual length of cutting varies from one-half to 1 inch. The latter is considered a little too long, since pieces of this length will neither pack so closely in the silo nor be so completely consumed when fed as the shorter lengths. On the other hand, the longer the pieces the more rapidly can the corn be run through the cutter.

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DESCRIPTION WAS ALL RIGHT

Not Just What Jones Was Looking for, But Brown Surely Had Told the Truth.

As Brown landed on the platform he ran full butt into Jones.

"Where bound, Jones, and why such speed?" queried Brown.

"Just off to Seashell-on-the-Mud, and am anxious to get some fruit before I start."

"Fruit? Just the thing! Now here's just off; jump in that carriage. I left a fine pear in the corner."

Jones got in and started searching around.

"My friend said he left a fine pear in the corner," explained Jones, as an old lady sniffed angrily at the way he searched round her.

"Guess he meant that corner, my man," she snapped.

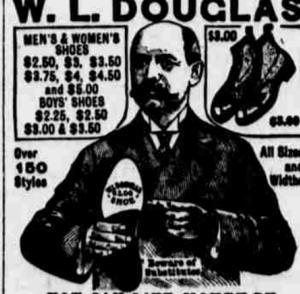
Jones looked and saw a young couple blinking furiously.

The British Hussars. The Seventh Queen's Own Hussars formed from dragons in 1807 was the regiment in which the duke of Connaught served to learn cavalry service, after being in the rifles and artillery. His son, Prince Arthur, and also the Prince Alexander of Teck began their military career in the same regiment.

Every man has a hobby and every woman two or three.

When a man gets fresh he's spolling for a fight.

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