

Little Helen and the Game

A STORY OF MOUNTAIN RAILROAD LIFE

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THIRTEENTH INSTALLMENT.

Synopsis.

Little Helen Holmes, daughter of General Holmes, railroad man, is rescued from imminent danger on a scenic railroad by George Storm, a new boy. Grown to young womanhood, Helen saves Storm, now a fireman, her father, and her friends. Amos Rhinelander, financier, and Robert Seagrue, promoter, from a threatened collision. Seagrue's plan, conceived by Seagrue, steal General Holmes' survey plans of the cut off line for the Tidewater, fatally wound the general and escape. Her father's estate badly involved by his death, Helen goes to work on the road. Helen recovers the survey plans from Seagrue, and though they are taken from her, finds an accidentally made proof of the survey blueprint. Storm is employed by Rhinelander. Spike befriended by Helen, in his turn saves her from the right-of-way contracts when Seagrue kidnaps her. Helen and Storm win for Rhinelander a race against Seagrue for right-of-way. Helen, Storm and Rhinelander rescue Spike from Seagrue's men. Spike steals records to protect Rhinelander. Helen saves Rhinelander from death in the burning court house. Vein in Superstition mine pinches out. Seagrue's plan is foiled. The mine is relocated.

A Fight for a Fortune.

(Copyright, 1915, by Frank H. Spearman.) A bright morning sun beat down in winter warmth on the Superstition mine. Near the mouth of the tunnel stood Amos Rhinelander, now sole owner of the property, giving orders to his foreman. At the loading platform not far away George Storm was entering with Helen Holmes. It was the day after her hazardous flight down the aerial railway, but she looked as refreshed and charming as if she had never known the meaning of the word trouble.

George Storm, her companion, stalwart and young, was disputing with Helen for the possession of a pocket mirror he had fished from her vanity bag, when Rhinelander approached. "I am afraid I am a bit late," he said, looking at his watch. Helen's brows arched in feigned amazement. "What do you mean?" she asked innocently.

He looked with a shade of suspicion at her and at Storm. "I feared this might be an intrusion," he threw the slightest bit of railery into his words. "You two," he added, "seemed so deeply engaged."

Helen flushed the least bit. "Why, not at all," she exclaimed. "We were only waiting for the team to come back from Valley."

"And you found it easier to wait together," continued Rhinelander, unabashed. "However," he went on, sparing the manifest embarrassment of the young couple, "I've something to say to each of you."

They looked at him questioning. He held two papers in his hand. "Helen," he continued, "I've completed, I have pretty thoroughly, my title to the Superstition mine. I never expect to get any stronger claim on a piece of property than I now have on this. Unless," he added, quizzically, "to my lot in the home cemetery after I occupy it permanently. In fact," his face lighted with a smile, "it looked awfully good yesterday as if I shouldn't have any real use for that even. I certainly thought Seagrue, when I said, speaking to Storm, 'while we were trapped in the tunnel, the Superstition mine itself would be our last resting place, but while we were relocating that big vein you, Helen, were getting without the loss of a minute the help necessary to help us out alive."

"That is one reason," he went on, deliberately, "why I have decided over night to convey to you, little girl, with my compliments and best wishes, a certificate for one-third the capital stock of this property." He handed her a paper. "Here it is."

Helen regarded him with astonishment. She took the paper because he had thrust it into her hand—not because she was able to speak or to move from where she stood rooted in surprise.

"But that is not the only reason I am doing it," continued Rhinelander. "Your father, Helen, was my best friend. When I lost him I lost the backing I ever had in life. But it seems, when I think of the way you have stood by me in all the trouble I've had since his death, that you must have been raised up to take his place. If I gave you the whole mine, it wouldn't be too much for what I owe you over and over again."

Helen could only protest that it was not right and that he owed her nothing. To all her appeals, not to do what he was doing, he turned a deaf ear. "No," he persisted. "I know what you are entitled to. Say no more."

"George"—he turned to his assistant—"you, too, have stood by me at every turn of the road since I went into this cut-off fight. You lost your job with the Tidewater line through sticking to me. I could have got you reinstated—you know that, of course, as well as I do. But there was a little selfishness, I admit, in my not doing so. I felt you could be of more aid to me on the front; and my expectations have not in a single instance been disappointed."

"I don't expect to spend all my life in this country. I shall have to leave behind me, when I go east, someone to represent my interests and to guard them. The great wealth that has come to me through this property has come almost overnight. I wasn't suffering for money before I owned it. But I want the man who represents me in this country, for the interests of Amos Rhinelander to have a substantial monetary backing outside his own affairs. This is why, George, I am presenting to you in this certificate, a second one-third of the capital stock of the Superstition mine. Now," he exclaimed, putting up his hands to shut off the protests and expressions of gratitude voiced by his companions together, "I don't want to hear a word further about this from either of you. All Helen and I will ask from you"—he was speaking to Storm—"is to see that our dividend checks are mailed to us promptly."

A man came up to Rhinelander with a letter. He opened the note and read: "Dear Mr. Rhinelander: Please tell Helen Holmes that Larry, known likewise as Lefty (but whose real name was Hyde), has confessed he killed her father."

The warden said that maybe I will be paroled about the 15th. SPIKE.



The Moment Her Coach Pulled Aboard of the Last Box Car She Jumped.

Rhinelander read the note aloud very three were silent. Had they possessed the gift of vision, there might have risen before them at that moment the picture of a great stone quarry in which many men in a tell-tale gang of convicts were moving about their work; they might have seen a man tampering beneath an overhanging ledge and a huge rock, breaking unseen above his head, crushing him to the ground; they would have seen his startled companions running in with the guards to pick the injured convict up. And they would have seen the same man lying on a cot in the hospital, a man sitting beside him taking down his confession, while the warden directed a guard to bring the convict known as Spike into the room; and while the dying criminal spoke on, they would have seen Spike standing at his side as the guard showed him the confession. And looking over Spike's shoulder they might have read the words: "General Holmes in that fight. Spike did not touch him at all."

Rhinelander nodded the letter to Helen. She stood deeply moved. Her two friends respected her silence. She looked up after a time. "I never could believe," she said simply, "that Spike killed my father."

Seagrue, in his apartment, was still chafing over the loss of what he had believed to be a worthless mine, but which had already become known all over Nevada as the richest gold-bearing property on the great Superstition range. He had not yet abandoned his hope of recovering through some clever trick the property that he had parted with for what now seemed a paltry sum, and his mind was set on regaining control of it. He was now studying the bill of sale that signified his loss of the property. He presently took up a pen and wrote out a dispatch:

Amos Rhinelander, Superstition Mine: Quarterly payment Superstition mine due tomorrow. SEAGRUE.

He read the message over the second time, and, seeming satisfied, called a servant and bade him dispatch it. Helen and Helen were with Rhinelander when the telegram was handed to him at the mine. Rhinelander showed it to his companions.

"I think I will draw the money from the bank and go to town with it in the morning," said Rhinelander, studying the substance of the message.

"Why not take him a check?" suggested Storm.

Rhinelander reflected a moment. "That would be all right with any ordinary man. But we're dealing with an extraordinary one. This contract is drawn very precisely and it calls for the payment of these amounts at specified periods. Time is, in fact, the essence of this contract, and if I go down there with a check, Seagrue might refuse it on a technicality. A check would not be a legal tender of the sum stipulated, George, and I cannot afford to take any chances with Seagrue. Especially, since we find the mine is worth millions instead of hundreds of thousands."

Helen intervened. "Let me go with you," she exclaimed, "and I can start Spike for the mine when he leaves the jail. I should hate to see him get mixed up with any more crooks when he gets out."

Rhinelander assented, and writing out an answer to Seagrue's message, read it to Storm before he gave it to a messenger: "Earl Seagrue, Albarque Apartments, Oceanside: Will make payment on time. In on the morning passenger."

Seagrue received the prompt answer without much elation. He continued thoughtful, and as Adams, his servant, was leaving, called him back, asked for his hat and coat, and, accompanied by the man, left the apartment.

Directing his steps up the street, Seagrue made his way to a quarter of the town less noted for its attractiveness than for its reputation as a haunt of men of doubtful character. Having reached the vicinity he desired—a shabby and deserted side street—he looked about to see whether he was observed, and, perceiving no one, started down an obscure alley. He knocked at the door of a weatherbeaten house standing close to the street. A man opened the door. Seagrue, followed by Adams, went inside. "Ward," said Seagrue, addressing the scowling occupant of the room, "I've got a job for you."

The man addressed as Ward, a swarthy, beetle-browed adventurer, scrutinized Seagrue silently at the intimation. "I know you're sore," continued Seagrue, "at the way the last job went," he added, recalling the incident of the stealing of Rhinelander's payroll. "But that wasn't your fault or mine."

his idea to the hardened crook and the promise of ready money and enough of it—whether he succeeded or failed—finally enlisted him.

"You and Adams, here"—Seagrue nodded toward his servant—"can handle the thing without any trouble. If you can't do it, you'll be paid anyway. But if there's any possible chance, I want to see you separate Rhinelander from his money for twenty-four hours."

"There's no time to lose," muttered Ward, picking up a railroad time table. "Are you ready to go, Adams?" Adams nodded. Seagrue supplied both plentifully with money and the two left together.

Seagrue himself remained in Ward's room toying with a drug to which he had become addicted. When he returned to his apartment he looked at the clock and threw himself on the lounge to await news from his emissaries.

Ward and Adams, proceeding to the station, boarded an outgoing passenger to intercept the train from Las Vegas which should bring Rhinelander to Oceanside. Learning from the conductor where the down train would be flagged, they left their own train at a convenient station and buying tickets back boarded the Las Vegas passenger when it stopped.

In the observation car Rhinelander, seated with Helen, was watching the landscape through the window when Seagrue's men coming in paid for seats not far away.

In his lap Rhinelander held a small bag, and from the car with which he retained it, Ward surmised it might contain something of special value. He called Adams' attention to it. It was, in fact, in this handbag that Rhinelander had placed the money with which he was to make his payment to Seagrue. Strapping the bag and looking it when he left the bank, Rhinelander had been careful not to let it go out of his hands.

Ward, while he sat studying out a scheme to take a chance on the proposition and at least get the bag into his own possession, presently spoke to Adams: "The train stops twenty minutes at Clinton Junction," he muttered to his companion. "We can get hold of a bag there some time like Rhinelander's."

No further words were needed to convey his meaning. The morning train pulled into Clinton, Ward and Adams hurried off uptown to a leather goods store. Breaking precipitately in on the proprietor, they pulled and hauled his stock about with small sense of responsibility. Evidently they wanted a bag, but they seemed to have no money to suit it. It was only after much searching and many hard words that Ward's eye lighted on something such as he was looking for. When he saw the right kind of a bag, he grabbed it in such haste that he was about to leave the store when the proprietor rushed him to the door overlooking the little detail of paying for his purchase. Throwing a bill back at the man—twice the price of the article taken—Ward, followed by Adams, ran back to the station and boarded the observation car just as the train started.

The dinner was put on and luncheon called. Rhinelander and Helen, started for the dining car closely watched by Ward. No sooner had the two seated themselves at table than Seagrue's men following took seats directly behind them. Rhinelander placed the handbag at his feet. Ward made no move until Rhinelander became occupied with the bill of fare. While he was trying to tempt Helen with the various delicacies offered, Ward put his foot carefully out, slid Rhinelander's bag away with his toe and, unobserved by the hurrying waiters or the busy diners, pushed the dummy leather bag into place.

The knaves then coolly ordered their luncheon, ate it—somehow hurriedly—and left the dining car ahead of their victim. However, they did not venture back again into the observation car, but taking seats in a coach with the bag hidden on the floor between them, they became absorbed in two newspapers.

When slackening speed warned Ward and Adams that the train was nearing Oceanside, they were in no hurry to start out. In fact, they lagged noticeably in their movements and Helen and Rhinelander left the station and took a taxicab uptown before noticing the change of base that had been played on them.

And just at this juncture blind chance itself took a hand in the little game. Two city detectives in plain clothes had come to meet the train and were refreshing their memories by reading a description of two holdup men expected on it. Scanning the faces of the incoming passengers for such a pair as would fit their search, the detectives noted Ward and Adams getting slowly out of the coach. While the pair did not quite suit the description, the officers, on general principles, crossed over to meet them and

stopped them for examination. A few curt questions and equally voluble answers did not satisfy the plain clothes men, who, after some discussion, insisted that the suspects should accompany them to the station.

Ward's mouth fell when he heard the order. Uselessly he tried to convince the detectives that he and his friend knew absolutely nothing of the holdup in question. To the station they were compelled to go and there were held in cells until the sergeant could send out a man to bring in the victim of the holdup for their further identification.

To complete Ward's chagrin, the precious handbag was checked in under the sergeant's desk. But a suggestion on the part of the sergeant to search the bag itself met with a fierce objection from Ward. "I tell you, you can't do it," he exclaimed heatedly.

The sergeant was unperturbed. "Hand over the key," he demanded. "I've got no key. I tell you I'm in the employ of Earl Seagrue, superintendent of construction of the Colorado & Coast railway. That bag is his property. I'm only his messenger. I don't know even the contents of it, but I want to tell you he will hold you responsible if you touch it."

The sergeant, considering that nothing was to be lost by waiting, ordered the man grudgingly under his desk and ordered the men marched to a cell.

On reaching the hotel to which Rhinelander had taken Helen, she suggested that while he made his payment to Seagrue, she would go to the safety deposit vault—Rhinelander himself was president of the Safety Deposit Vault company—and place their securities away before starting for the jail to intercept Spike when he should be released. In parting they agreed to meet again at the hotel.

Helen went directly to the vault, which she reached just in time to make her deposit of the stock certificates in Rhinelander's box; the watchman was closing the cage when she came out to go to the penitentiary to meet Spike.

It was a long drive, but once there she was not kept long in suspense. In the warden's office she awaited Spike, who, greatly changed, presently entered who, she greeted him with the kindly cheer that had won him over from the company of knaves surrounding Seagrue to her own side of the long-drawn battle for the cut-off. She told Spike just why she had come. Unable to express his feelings in words, he merely put himself at her disposal and left the place of detention in her company.

Rhinelander had found Seagrue in his room. Without wasting words, the two recited about the business in hand. Seagrue showed the agreement and Rhinelander, placing his handbag on the table, opened it to take out the money. Inside he found an odd looking package and thought that Helen must have wrapped the currency up differently after she had taken it from him. He unrolled a bunch of newspapers—astonished at the situation—but could find nothing inside them that looked like currency. The money was gone.

He turned to the telephone. Spike and Helen had reached the rooms at the hotel when Helen heard the ring of the telephone. She answered the call. Listening, dumfounded she did not tell Spike what she heard, but with her face somewhat blanched and Rhinelander's words ringing in her ears, she hung up the receiver. "Get the stock from the safety deposit box," he had directed. "And I will use that as temporary security until I can replace the money."

In the interval, Rhinelander was trying to satisfy Seagrue. He told him he would have ample security there for the payment within half an hour. Seagrue only smiled. And while Helen and Spike were hurrying from the hotel, Rhinelander, worried somewhat by Seagrue's peculiar expression, told him he would give his personal check for the amount.

Seagrue shook his head. "No, Mr. Rhinelander," he said slowly, "that won't do. I must have legal tender, and have it today, or our contract doesn't go."

Helen, with Spike as her strange escort, reached the bank only to find it closed

as she had feared. The watchman, despite her appeals, refused them admittance. But a little obstacle such as that was not a serious deterrent to Spike. He had defied the law too long to be balked now in the interests of justice and fair play. He had been a malefactor with the law against him, and he brushed aside all scruples now in taking the role of a benefactor with the law still against him. The watchman had his way. "If the case is as bad as you say," Spike muttered to Helen, "we've got to do something."

Helen shook her head despairingly. "It may mean millions, Spike," she exclaimed. "What can we do?" In her distress she clasped her hands.

"Do," echoed Spike, scornfully. "Go in and open the box and get your property—there's nothing else to do."

"But how?" cried Helen, wide eyed with perplexity.

Spike tossed his head. It was not high above a pair of swinging broad shoulders and whenever Spike shook his head in that way, Helen knew some suggestion was coming. He bent forward and pointed his finger at her to emphasize his words. "You put the stock in the box, didn't you?" She nodded, a half-frightened assent. "That," he continued stiffly, "was your business. Now, you want to get it out, don't you?" She nodded once more. "That," he declared with much positiveness, "is my business."

A moment later, at the side of the bank, Helen, frightened to death followed Spike through an unguarded door. He led the way hastily and stealthily to the vault and Helen, with her key, opened Rhinelander's box. It was while they were thus feloniously abstracting their own property that the watchman saw them. He turned in an alarm. At the police station where it registered, the sergeant called out the men and they started on the jump for the bank.

Helen, in the interval, had taken the securities from the box and showed them to Spike. As they turned to leave, the watchman, re-enforced by the officers, pounced down on them, Helen, desperate over the situation, upbraided the watchman.

"I told you, I must get into our box," she exclaimed, angrily. "And you refused to let me. I have taken nothing away, but what I put in it two hours ago and this man was only here to help me."

A wordy discussion followed. But Helen and Spike were started for the station, where more development had already taken place. The victim of the holdup, in response to the sergeant's message, had arrived, and on having the suspects, Ward and Adams, paraded with others before him, was unable to identify Seagrue's retainers. In fact, he distinctly declared these were not the men that had eaten all his free lunch and robbed him.

pushed into the group to ask whether he had made a mistake.

"No mistake at all," said Rhinelander heartily and reassuringly, and to the watchman's great relief. "You did exactly right. You didn't know these people. They had no business in there. But they were there not only to get my securities, but of a box, but to get me out of a box!" The watchman stared. "So"—Rhinelander turned to the sergeant in explanation—"there's really nobody to blame, sergeant, except that your men and you have a box of cigars coming from somebody and it might as well be me as anybody else."

The sergeant scratched his head. "This is the queerest mix-up I ever struck," he muttered, perplexed.

At Rhinelander's suggestion he sent for the chief. The moment the latter appeared everything was made right. The chief knew Rhinelander well, and without hesitation ordered the prisoners released. And he returned to his office, after Rhinelander had thanked him, the latter, with Helen and Spike, started away.

Within his own room the chief had a knotted problem. He had been trying in every way to extract some damaging admission from Ward and Adams, but unable to do so, had reluctantly dismissed the pair, satisfied that if justice had her due the two would be behind the bars.

Just outside the police station Helen and Rhinelander—Spike listening—were conferring as to what should be done in the awkward emergency facing them. How could they now save their property from Seagrue's eager clutches? They moved away together slowly, just as Ward and Adams, having got the real handbag from the sergeant, walked out of the station. The two men encountered the halting and perplexed trio, Rhinelander's roving eye fell on the bag as Ward passed him. He eyed out and pointed, and Adams turned nervously. "Stop, titef!" yelled Rhinelander, making for them.

Seagrue's men recognized their victim. Away they dashed. Helen and the two men after them at top speed. Across a city street a block away the hind end of a long freight train was rapidly pulling. Ward and Adams headed for it, Rhinelander's roving eye sprang for and gained the nearest box car. He drew away with them as Helen, Rhinelander and Spike ran up too late.

Putting themselves into the empty box car, Ward and Adams were well pleased with their escape. But they were not yet done with their pursuers.

Farther down the line, at a Santa Fe crossing, a Tidewater passenger train had slowed, and for this Helen, Rhinelander and Spike made. But the excitement and speed were telling on Rhinelander, who was not in the class and training of his companions. He weakened. Spike stopped to help him alone. In that brief interval Helen made the side of a coach as the Tidewater passenger train picked up speed. Her companions could not overtake her, but Rhinelander hastily chartered a passing automobile and away he went with Spike after the two trains. It was a triangular race, but the passenger train, on a parallel track, gained rapidly on the freight.

Helen had already climbed to the coach roof, and, with both trains running, she watched the gap lessening between the passenger and the freight that bore the two thieves on the adjoining track. As she found her own train rapidly overhauling the other, she made up her mind what to do. The moment her coach pulled abreast of the last box car in the long drag she jumped from the top of the coach to the top of the freight car, landed safely, regained her feet and looked over the side of the train for the men she was after.

Within the box car where they had taken refuge, Ward and Adams were trying to open Rhinelander's bag. They had succeeded in negotiating the lock when, to their consternation, Helen, through the open side door, swung down and in on them from the roof. The thieves jumped to their feet. But before Adams was up, Helen had knocked him over again, and Ward jumped at her, she managed to shoot out her foot at the handbag. For a fortunate chance she kicked it cleanly out of the car. Freeing herself from Ward's clutches with an energetic blow, she sprang to the door herself and jumped after the bag from the fast-moving car to the ground. As soon as she could regain her feet she ran back to search for her hard-won prize.

Adams, when Helen pushed him over, had struck his head against an iron bar and lay on the car floor unconscious. Ward turned to him the minute Helen was gone. "Wake up!" he shouted. "We've got to get out of here."

"What's up?" demanded Adams, groggily.

"We're left, man. Shake yourself and get out of here before you get pinched. Waiting their chance when their train slowed down in passing the next station the two men jumped out of the boxcar. Down the line Ward saw the bridge they had passed when Helen sprang from the car. "That girl can't be very far off yet," he muttered. "She may be hunting for the bag. If we get there quick enough, we can get hold of it ourselves."

Helen, running as fast as she could, searched the right-of-way keenly. Help was nearer to her than she was aware of. But she had eyes for nothing beyond her search and, finally, hardly a stone's throw from the bridge itself, she saw the bag lying on the gravel.

The nearest station was to the north. Helen began to retrace her steps, thinking to telephone or to get someone in touch with Rhinelander from there. Listening on, she heard her name called, and, looking up, was astonished to see Spike waving his hand at her from the bridge just ahead. He and Rhinelander, following the train in the machine, had seen her spring from the boxcar.

She started to run forward to join Spike. But Ward and Adams had come up. Seeing Helen approach, they hid, and when she passed them, they seized and overpowered her and dragged the bag from her hands.

Not without stout resistance on her part. She fought the two with blows and screams, and Spike, hearing the commotion ran to where he could slip over the side of the bridge and drop to the tracks. Shouting loudly as he sprang to his feet, he ran to where Ward and Adams were fighting Helen, who had again got her hands on the bag. But when Spike reached the scene the encounter was short.

Ward, the more powerful of Seagrue's men, engaged him furiously, and, as a boxer, would have put him out, had not Spike clenched and slammed the big fellow heavily to the ground. He jumped at Adams before Ward could come back and the two crooks, seeing the game lost, took to their heels.

Spike turned to see what damage had been done to Helen. She had the bag safely in hand and they started together to join Rhinelander. He was waiting for them eagerly. Helen waved the bag before his eyes and Rhinelander, more elated at the victory than at the mere recovery of his money, clasped his nervous little protégée in his arms in a fervor of congratulation.

The bag was now committed to Spike for safekeeping, and Rhinelander headed the car for the city in an effort to reach Seagrue's quarters quickly with the payment. Burning the tires all the way into town, he pulled up with a jerk before Seagrue's apartment and the three alighting from the car, hastened up to his rooms.

Seagrue, expecting the return of Ward and Adams with their loot, caught his breath when he faced Rhinelander and his escort at the door. Rhinelander he could account for. Helen, he was not at a great loss to account for; but to see the craning neck, square jaw, straight nose and cold-gray eyes of Spike in the twilight of the hallway was too much for even Seagrue's poise. When they pushed their way in upon him, he made hardly any attempt to resist. "I wasn't looking for you," he stammered.

Rhinelander laughed. "No! I understand. However, it's all right. A couple of your men Seagrue had this bag in hand"—he held up the leather grip for Seagrue's inspection—"to bring to you." Rhinelander's eyes were sparkling with the zest of victory. "They were detained, Seagrue," he went on, enjoying to the full the consternation of the breathless rascal before him. "In fact, the two met with a little accident." He nodded toward Helen as the little accident, herself. "The police are looking for the pair now," explained Rhinelander, jestingly. "But we thought it only neighborly to bring the bag in, ourselves. Especially since you seem to consider that our title to the Superstition mine rests on your receiving the actual cash today for the second payment."

While speaking, Rhinelander had gone to the table, thrown the bag open and was tossing the packages of currency out. "There's your money, Seagrue—\$5,000. Count it, Seagrue, and give me a receipt."

(To Be Continued.)

Uncle Foggy's Philosophy.
The oyster is sort of a piscatorial nut. You cannot reform the world by yelling at it.
A motion to adjourn can always get an enthusiastic second.
Social immorality is composed of sour things said in a sweet way.
When a man has wheels in his head, the spokes stick out of his mouth.
You have often heard of a mere bagatelle, but did you ever see one?
Every school boy who has his normal brain believes that the devil wears the arithmetic.
A damn has no tangible value, and yet many a man has tempted old fellow thinks his son-in-law is not worth one.
The average old maid is unable to determine whether a bachelor or a rat is the lowest form of animal life.

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