

# THE FAMILY STORY

## A BLESSED MORTGAGE

Mrs. Munroe was in ecstasies of delight. She had secured a new cook at the most ridiculous wages. Of course, she had not told the new girl, but it was quite true that she paid her not half what she had been compelled to pay the cook who had just left her. But when Almira Pollers, a fresh, pleasant-looking young country girl, had applied for the place and had accepted Mrs. Munroe's offer of \$2 a week to start with, her new mistress did not think it necessary to mention that the proffered sum was very low indeed.

"Of course, you shall have more as you improve, Almira, but you know so little about fancy cooking I scarcely feel able to pay you more at the start," Mrs. Munroe had, smiling sweetly on Almira, who did not know that very little fancy cooking was ever done in that household. And so Almira took up her burden, and for the first time in nineteen years of her life began to earn wages.

The Pollers had always been farmers and owned their own place, but Almira's father had somehow managed to get behind and a mortgage had been fastened upon the farm. The man who held the mortgage was very well satisfied to receive a good interest every year and renew Peter Pollers' note, but it came to pass that it was hard to pay even the interest. This particular year the crops had mostly failed. It lacked but a few weeks until the interest was due, when Almira, the eldest of the flock—there were ten in all—made up her mind to go out "to service." Her determination created a great commotion in the family. None of the Pollers women had ever worked out, and the idea was very distasteful, but Almira eventually carried the day. Had her education been thorough enough she would gladly have taught school, but the little Pollers had appeared at such frequent intervals that Almira was obliged to stay at home most of the time to assist her mother, and her education was limited.

So, not without some inward struggles, she had decided that the only way she could help along would be by exercising her chief gift, cooking. Mrs. Munroe's advertisement in the Weekly Gazette had caught her eye, and she was very happy when she secured the situation. The wages were not large, but she could save all the money for her father, and there would be one less to feed at home. That counted for something.

Mrs. Munroe's family consisted of herself and a brother. Mr. Munroe had died several years before and his widow was quite wealthy. Her home, situated in an aristocratic suburb of the city, although small, was handsome and well appointed, and she had sufficient income to keep it up well. Mrs. Munroe liked to call herself economical, and we cannot deny she was in some things. She dressed elegantly and gave largely to her church, but there never was a closer woman in some respects than she. The shop people dreaded to see her come in, for although she always purchased the best, she invariably haggle at the price until she got the goods for less than their marked price. At the groceries it was the same way, and woe to the servant who wasted a scrap of anything or presumed to eat more than the mistress thought necessary. After the first table Mrs. Munroe removed any delicacies she considered unnecessary for a servant's coarse appetite without the slightest compunction. Her brother Tom, who paid a handsome sum for the privilege of sharing her home, once saw this performance and remonstrated with her, but to no avail.

"It would be casting pearls before swine," she remarked to his intense disgust, as she replaced a dish of lemon jelly in the closet and substituted a saucer of molasses.

Tom Birney was one of those big hearted convivial fellows who, left with more money than they needed, succeeded in getting rid of it in different and unprofitable ways. He was not really bad, but he drank a good bit and never had done anything useful in his life. He had been put in his father's office, but he was extremely weak in his arithmetic, and succeeded in mixing up the figures so badly that it took an expert to untangle them. After that his father had not tried to make a business man of him, but said that as Tom had been cut out for a gentleman he should be one.

But this was exactly what poor Tom was not cut out to be—that is, if we agree to the accepted meaning of the word—a man of refined manners. He loved horses and enjoyed the society of horsemen; liked better to hear a robust German girl sing funny songs

at the garden than to hear Patti at the Grand. If he ever yielded to his sister's importunities to accompany her to a dancing party he was sure to step on his partner's toes, to tear their dresses by his awkwardness, and drink too much champagne at supper. In fact Tom, although kind-hearted and honest, was very ill at ease and out of place at society, and at last, after making himself very conspicuous at a New York dance, his sister vowed she would never ask him to go with her again. She told him this very emphatically the morning after the ball, as she left him to eat his late breakfast alone.

Tom was feeling very badly and indulging in a severe case of "katzenjammer," the result of too frequent visits to the punch bowl, but looked up when Almira came in with his breakfast and noticed that she was looking pale.

"What is the matter, Almira?" he asked.

"Nothing, Mr. Tom," replied Almira, moving toward the door quietly.

"I say there is something wrong; out with it, Almira," continued Tom, wishing to help her if she was in trouble of any kind. Almira made no reply and Tom sprang up and obstructed her way.

"Say, you're working too hard, and Sister Eleanor pays you beastly small wages, I'll be bound. Maybe it's a new gown or a bonnet you're grumbling after—eh, Almira? Here, take this and get it." And before Almira could speak the impulsive Tom had plunged his hands into his pockets, brought out a lot of coin and pushed it into her hands.

"How dare you?" she demanded, so choked up she could scarcely articulate. "Have I ever given you any reason, Mr. Tom, to treat me with such disrespect?"

"Disrespect?" repeated Tom, very red and astonished. "Do you think I meant any disrespect to you, Almira? I swear I respect you more than any other woman I know; I only thought you were pining for some of the pretty things most girls like, and why shouldn't I do some good with my useless money?"

Almira saw that he was honest in his speech and was appeased, but when he asked anxiously, "If it isn't a gown or hat, what in heaven's name is it?" she burst into tears, and forgetting that she was Mrs. Munroe's servant-girl and that Mr. Tom was her brother and a rich man, forgetting all save the trouble that was wearing on her and making her pale and thin, she poured out her woes into his sympathizing ear.

She told him about the mortgage on their farm, how it had been renewed from year to year when the interest was paid. They had grown so accustomed to that they had never thought of losing the place until Mr. Pollers, on taking the interest so hardly earned and increased by Almira's savings, had been informed that his creditors needed the money and must have it on the farm.

The blow had fallen like a clap of thunder from a clear sky. The thought of leaving the old homestead was insupportable, and yet where could Peter Pollers expect to raise the money to cancel the mortgage?

Almira told her story, punctuated by sobs, and Tom listened attentively. When she had finished, he asked, "Is it a large sum, Almira?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Tom, \$2,000!" she said, sadly.

"Hum!" said Tom, pulling his mustache and looking very hard out of the window. "Couldn't your father get some one to pay the man and take up the mortgage?"

"Suppose—suppose—I take it up, Almira?" ventured Tom, still looking out of the window and getting very red again. Astonishment and rapture appeared on the girl's face at his words.

"Do you mean it, Mr. Tom? Oh, you are too good!" she cried.

"Rosh!" said Tom, brusquely. "It's simply a good investment. Don't accuse me of being good, Almira; I'm incorrigibly bad, I am. But" (hearing footsteps approaching), "run on. I'll drive out and see your father to-day and get the mortgage." And without giving her a moment to express her thanks, he hurried on.

Not long after this Almira noticed that Tom was drinking steadily. He took what meals he ate at home alone. Mrs. Munroe declaring she would not and could not lend him her countenance. The girl, as she waited on him, felt a great deal of pity for this man, who seemed so alone and was wasting health and fortune in dissipation, and at last one morning when he was looking unusually used up and his hands

were trembling so that he could hardly hold his cup she again forgot the difference in their stations and spoke out. "Mr. Tom," she said, "I'm sorry for you."

"What! Sorry for me? What do you mean, Almira? I'm having a jolly good time. A short life and a merry one—that's my motto."

Almira shook her head and looked at him steadily. "Do you never think how much good you might do instead of throwing yourself into little better than a beast?"

"Humph! That's pretty strong language, I must say," he growled.

"But it's true, Mr. Tom, if you keep on you'll sink lower and lower—oh, it's dreadful to think of it." Almira shuddered as she picked up her tray and left the table.

"Hold there," said Tom, "you don't understand it, Almira. It's got such a hold on me. How can I shake it off? I've got no one else to help me if I try," and, weakened and unnerved as he was, the tears started to his eyes. "Tell me what to do."

"You can get down and pray to God to help you," said Almira, solemnly, "and you can go to the cure. They say it's wonderful what they can do. Be a man, Mr. Tom, and try it," she urged.

Tom sat irresolute for a moment, then rose and grasped her hand. "I will try," he said, "and if I come out ahead it will all be owing to you. But it will be hard, Almira. I know, for I tried once, only I couldn't stick it out. But I'll try again, if only to show you—"

He stopped abruptly and rung her hand and rushed out of the room. If Mrs. Munroe had known that her brother set such value on Almira Pollers' good opinion she would have been horrified. She reported that brother Tom had gone to a sanitarium because she had lectured him into it, and was quite satisfied as the weeks lengthened into months and Tom still remained there.

In truth he was having a terrible fight with the demon who had so nearly claimed him as his own. But at last he "came out ahead," as he himself explained it.

When he returned home he walked straight through all the handsome rooms down to the kitchen, where Almira was alone at work. The look on his face even before he spoke, told her that he had conquered.

"Oh, I'm so glad," she faltered, putting her toil-worn hand into the one he held out. "I knew you could do it."

"You had faith in me, did you, Almira?" he asked, still holding her hand and looking curiously at her beaming face. Almira nodded assent.

"Well, I'm cured now—wouldn't touch a drop of it if there were gallons and gallons of the very finest flowing around me. But will it last? I can't tell, and I've got to have somebody to help me if that dreaded thirst comes on again. I've got to have a wife who will love and believe in me and keep me from falling. You're the only one who had faith in me, Almira, and you're the only one I want for a wife. Say yes, Almira."

"Oh, Mr. Tom," she cried, trying to draw her hand away, "you can't mean it—why—I'm—only your sister's cook."

"That has nothing to do with the case. You're the noblest girl I know, and I want you and only you. Can't you try to love me enough to marry me, Almira? I'll try to be a good husband, I swear."

"How can I help loving you," murmured Almira. "I've nearly worshipped you since you lifted that heavy load from my poor father's shoulders, and if you think I am good enough for you—"

"Put on your bonnet right away and we'll find a license and a parson. Mrs. Munroe might say some things—unpleasant things—to Almira Pollers that she would not dare to say to Mrs. Tom Birney." And in spite of Almira's remonstrances she was marched off, and so expeditions was Tom that inside of an hour they were married.

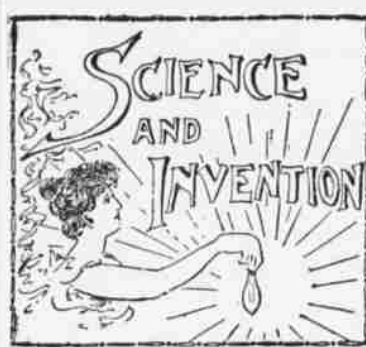
Mrs. Munroe, when she was notified of the happy event, gave full sway to her rage in the privacy of her own room. When kind friends offered condolence she sighed and wiped a few imaginary tears with her handkerchief.

"Brother Tom was always the black sheep of the family," she said. "We never could make a gentleman of him. I suppose we should be thankful he's done no worse. The girl is really quite capable and may be able to keep him straight."

The usual order of things was reversed when Mrs. Tom Birney on her wedding day made her father a present, and it was nothing less than the mortgage on his farm. And Almira said, as they all drew around the fireplace and watched it turn to ashes, that it was a blessed mortgage after all, for it led her indirectly to her Tom.—Toledo Blade.

Tommy—Say, Mollie, I wish I had ten cents to get some candy with. Mollie—Go and ask father who Socrates was and what is meant by the differential calculus. He's got company, and I shouldn't wonder if he gave you a quarter.—Boston Transcript.

"Do you have a telephone in your house?" "No; I sometimes have to work at the office at night, and if I had a phone at home my wife would call me up every thirty minutes to see if I was there."—Chicago Record.



### Cattle Plague in Africa.

A terrible pestilence is raging in Africa, not only among domestic cattle, but among certain species of wild cattle; and it attacks also the buffalo, giraffe, wart-hog, eland and several other species of antelope. Captain Lugard, writing from Gaborones, in Bechuanaland, says that near villages, hundreds, even thousands of carcasses lie about. Between Gaborones and Bulawayo there are reported to be four thousand wagons stranded because their oxen are dead.

### Wind and Walking.

The Falkland Islands, and other regions in the South Temperate Zone, are remarkable for the high and violent winds that blow across them. A recent visitor to the Falklands has noted the fact that the inhabitants of those islands, in consequence of being habitually compelled to brace themselves against the wind in walking, have acquired a peculiar gait, so remarkable that a native Falklander can be readily distinguished by his manner of walking. On account of their gait they are called "kelpers."

### Edison's New Light.

One of the results of Mr. Edison's experiments with the invisible X-rays discovered by Professor Roentgen is the production of a new kind of lamp. Like the ordinary incandescent electric lamp it consists of a glass bulb exhausted of air. This bulb is coated on the inside with a substance which fluoresces brilliantly at the touch of the X-rays. By means of wires sealed in the ends of the bulb, and furnished with proper terminals inside, an electric current is sent through, and X-rays are thus produced within a fluorescent shell. When the current flows the lamp shines with a mild, pleasing light, and without perceptible heat.

### Horseless Carriages.

The recent horseless carriage race from New York City to the Ardley Country Club on the Hudson is regarded by those interested as having proved that such self-driven vehicles are well adapted for use in cities. There was a French carriage entered in the contest, but the prize was carried off by an American carriage. The Scientific American says that the manner in which the horseless carriages dodged back and forth in front of and around cable-cars and wagons "demonstrated beyond argument that the horseless carriage is much more capable of control than the ordinary horse and carriage."

### Camphor Becoming Scarcer.

Most of the world's supply of camphor comes from Japan and Formosa. Of late years the demand has begun to exceed the supply, and the question has arisen how the latter can be maintained. One of the reasons why camphor is becoming scarcer and dearer is said to be that it is extensively used in the manufacture of celluloid. At present camphor is mainly produced from the so-called camphor-tree, which attains a gigantic size in Japan, one specimen recently measured being 115 feet tall, and having a trunk over 14 1/2 feet in diameter. The tree is common in China, but as yet the production of camphor in that country is very limited. The camphor-tree is a member of the laurel family, and is related in genus to the cinnamon-tree. It is said that camphor can be produced from other species of trees. In Borneo a very aromatic camphor is obtained from the natural deposits of gum on the trunks of a species of tree indigenous to that island and Sumatra. Borneo camphor is rare and very costly.

### A Terrific Sea-Fight.

The Prince of Monaco has recently announced his intention to send his yacht on an expedition of discovery among the haunts of the sperm-whale. This leads Mr. Frank T. Bullen to relate in Nature some of his experiences with whales, and he tells a story of a fight of sea-monsters in the Strait of Malacca which reads like a romance. The fight occurred in a smooth sea on a moonlight night, and Mr. Bullen watched it from the deck of a ship with the aid of a night-glass. His attention was first attracted by a commotion in the water, which he supposed might be caused by a volcanic disturbance of the sea-bed. Examination with the glass showed a very large sperm-whale engaged in deadly conflict with a monster squid, or devil-fish, whose tentacles encircled the whale's body. "The livid whiteness of those writhing arms which enlaced the cachalot (whale) like a nest of mighty serpents stood out in bold relief against the black, boulder-like head of the aggressor." The aggressor was the whale, squids being a favorite prey of sperm-whales. "Presently the

whale raised itself half out of the water and we plainly saw the awful head of the gigantic mollusk. At a distance, something under a mile, appeared about the size of one of the largest oil-casks, which held 300 tons. Like the rest of the squid it was of a peculiar dead white. In it gleamed two eyes of inky blackness about a foot in diameter. To describe the wonderful contortions those two monsters is far beyond powers. All around the combatants were either smaller whales or immense sharks who were evidently assisting in the destruction of the squid, and taking a full share of the feast. Mr. Bullen says the encircling tentacles usually slipped off the whale's body, the fight ended in an evident triumph for the whale.

### THE FATAL SHEARS.

What They Did in a Way of "Getting Even."

There was a hard look in John Warwick's eyes, but it was also a look of triumph. He bent over his desk and worked steadily for an hour without saying a word to any of his associates. Finally, one of the boys asked what had happened.

"Oh, it's only a little domestic squabble," he said, "but I guess it will all be right."

Upon being pressed to relate the nature of the trouble, Warwick said: "My wife got a pair of bloomers last week, intending to go out to-day in a 50-mile ride. Now, I have already declared that I would not permit my wife to be seen in public with a rig that kind upon her person, and I proceeded early this morning to show her I was a man of my word. I got her out of those bloomers and locked them in my trunk. Here," he concluded, angrily slapping his hip pocket, "is the key."

Every man in the office congratulated Warwick upon the stand he had taken. His employer, a crusty old fellow who seldom spoke to the young men in his service, came around and told him, in an undertone, that his salary was to be raised at once, as it was evident that he was a person of sterling worth.

When the day's work was ended, John Warwick went home with a light heart. The announcement of his prospective reelection, would patch up friendly relations with his wife, and vision of future happiness flitted before him. But, alas, the door was locked, and the place seemed to be deserted. He sat down upon the porch and waited for an hour, but the woman he loved did not return. Then he thought he would put on his old overalls and wander around in his little garden. He felt that he needed exercise.

The key to the kitchen door was under the mat, and he was soon rummaging the clothes closet in search of his overalls. They could not be found. At last he entered his wife's sewing room, and there, upon the floor, in the southern extremities of the room, that had in days gone by served him so well and faithfully. They had been cut off at the knees.

John Warwick buried his face in his hands and wept in wild despair. Cleveland Plain Dealer.

### The Army Rifle in Hunting.

Something for sportsmen to consider seriously, if they intend to purchase one of the new 30-caliber army rifle is the great penetration of the bullet. One of the bullets would kill a man through a 4-inch spruce tree, or a cypress a mile and more away. No ordinary tree can be depended on to stop one of these bullets, and it might easily travel half a mile through dense woods and hit a man far out of sight with deadly effect. "Field and Stream" says that the next Legislature of the great game States should pass a law prohibiting the use of a jacketed bullet, because of the danger to human beings. Another argument it offers in favor of such a law will have great influence on the men who do not wish to wound without killing the game. "This class of bullets is useless for large game unless soft-pointed," it says, "as it rarely kills instantly, but allows the game to die from internal hemorrhage, and in terrible agony often to reach." When such a rifle is used for big game a bullet that mushrooms should be employed. The mushrooming bullet will kill anything, as it goes clear through an elk, moose or deer, and the force of the impact will knock a running grizzly down.—New York Sun.

### Perpetual Motion?

Perpetual motion has been the dream of the inventor almost ever since the first invention of any kind was perfected. Pliny says that in his time there were machines which the inventors claimed would work, without stopping, for an indefinite length of time, and in the patent office of every government of the world there are hundreds of devices for securing this end. One authority states that in the patent office at Washington there are over 1,000 such appliances, for each of which the inventor hoped success. The perpetual motion machines, however, have never succeeded, and never will until men succeed in overcoming friction, the inertia of matter and gravitation, and also in finding material that will never wear out.

Nothing tires a man more than to be grateful all the time.