

Current Literature.

WHY SHOULDN'T HE?

"Is it wrong to kiss?" asked a timid maid... But no answer she got save the wavelets played... A roundelay gay as they kissed her feet.

MISS MATILDA JANE AND THE MINISTER.

Bramleigh is a sleepy looking town. The village street is draped with drowsily drooping elms. The sea is just far enough away to whisper as sleepily as the wind in the leaves.

When the clock strikes nine the whole world prepares for bed, and if a light is seen glimmering from one of the windows for more than half an hour after that time it is safe to conclude that either some one is ill in the house, or some one has a bean in an advanced stage of courtship.

My landlady, Mrs. Bragdon, lives a mile away from the village, but nearly every whisper that is breathed there finds its way to the farm—the thrilling news that Miss Peter Talpey is going to have her sitting room newly papered, that the minister bought his new coat up to Boston, that John Snow went home with Lucy White from the last evening meeting, and the still more thrilling news that Miss Oliver Norton and Mrs. Lemuel Stacy have fallen out and do not speak to each other.

"Spare time isn't what ails me," grumbled Alfonso, the tow-headed son of the house. "I ken't get a minute for set in the store; that's why you don't hear no news."

"Cat's foot! you don't get no news when you do go to the corner evenin'. You don't set in the store, noway. You just dangle round Cyrus Parker's gate to see if you can get a glimpse of Miranda. But, Lor! if you ken find out anything that's a-goin' on in the world, you might ez well go down along ter night. There'll be pumpkins to cut evenin' by 'n' by 'n' there won't be no gittin' of then."

So, making himself very brilliant as to his feet, and very much perfumed as to his head, Alfonso set off down the road as soon as his evening chores are accomplished. The light of his lantern flashes from beneath the branches of the trees, and we hear him singing in a very jolly and confident strain, as he disappears round the corner: "He'll carry you through."

"Well, I don't know as I shall be carried through of that boy don't bring no word of anybody or anything," says his mother, seating herself by the fire with her knitting work. There is a trestle table in the air, and the scarlet glow of the open fire is exceedingly grateful to the senses. The hired girl and the hired man are courting in the kitchen. Pussy cat washes her face on the hearth rug. The crickets are piping pensively under the floor. I am absorbed in the fortunes of Captain Francasse, just the witching, wonderful sort of a story to read by the firelight of a long evening, and Mrs. Bragdon, who likes company, looks miserable to the last degree.

I look up, and, catching a glimpse of her woe-begone face, am touched with real pity. I know with what delight I may fill her soul if I choose to reveal a secret which I have proudly concealed since my first year's sojourn in Bramleigh—a delicate tale, which, for a wonder, has not been whispered around the hearth sides of the village nor discussed under the dim, religious light.

I put aside my book, and say rashly, before I have really decided to tell: "Mrs. Bragdon, did you ever know what broke off the engagement between Miss Matilda Jane Snow and the minister?"

her knitting work at once and clasps her hands in a touching attitude of expectation. "No, I couldn't never find out for certain. Everybody thought it was properly strange, after they'd been goin' together for so long. Marshy, the girl that used ter work over to the Snows, told me that they'd set up together a good many nights, 'n' he used ter bring her peppermints and religious books with his 'n' her name writ in 'em. But Lor! Matilda Jane bez always bin hev'in' a bean, ever sence she left off pantalettes. Once 'twas the school-master that comes from over Bonny Big way. Folks said they was a goin' to get married right away, 'n' then he disappeared like a thief in the night, 'n' weren't never seen in these parts any more. Nobody knew just why that didn't come to nothin', but I heard that Matilda Jane said (you know she's a real active professor) that she couldn't feel herself justified in hev'in' a man that didn't enjoy gospel privileges no more 'n' he did. Then 'twas Deacon Tompson when he was a widower. He used to go over 'n' sing hymns with Matilda Jane 'most every evenin', 'n' she baked up a lot of plum cake 'n' was partial to his little girl July in her Sunday school class, 'n' he took her to ride over to Sandy Point graveyard, where his first wife was buried. But that didn't come to nothing neither. They were both ov 'em temp'ry, 'n' fell out about suthin'." Matilda Jane hain't no beauty, but she's a good housekeeper, 'n' a fast rate good woman, though she may be a trifle sot. All the Snows is sot. I know 'em root 'n' branch, 'n' if they ken't hev their own way they're dreadful liable to fire up. This slick-looking minister, Parson Whitcomb, wanted her fur her money, they say. He was younger 'n' she, 'n' a p'cter of a man, with red cheeks 'n' curly hair. But, Lor! she hain't got much money; she let that good-fur-nothin' brother ov hers waste a good pile that belonged to her on his seduction. He was a lazy soul, but was called, as he said, to be a missionary 'n' of he can make himself agreeable to the heathen, I s'pose it's as well as he could do. His room's better 'n' his company here." Mrs. Bragdon pauses, out of breath, and regards me with earnest appeal.

"I can tell you why she did 'n' marry the minister," says I, with the air of profound mystery and deep importance which is the characteristic of the real "Bramleigh gossip." She gives a great start, removes the spectacles from her well polished forehead, draws her chair several inches nearer my own, allows the cat to play with the ball of her knitting work with the most reckless indifference, and exclaims, "You don't say!" in a tone of mingled surprise and rap-ture.

Whereupon, after the usual preliminaries, the exhortations to eternal secrecy, the hesitations and deliberations which, somehow, seem to heighten the enjoyment of the expectant listener, I begin my tale: "The first year I visited Bramleigh, I used to go and see Miss Matilda Jane very often, you know. I went past her house on my way to Morrill's meadow, where the orchards grow, and, stopping at the gate to admire her flowers one day, she came out and presented me with a lovely bouquet of spice pinks and lavender. Then, one day, when I was heated with my long walk, she invited me into the house to have a glass of her raspberry shrub, and I accepted the invitation with pleasure, for it looked very cool and inviting inside the wide breezy old hall.

"Gracious good!" said Matilda Jane, "I shouldn't never get my breath again if I walked as fur as Morrill's meadow. I wish you would always drop in here and rest awhile whenever you take a walk in this direction. I see so few strangers that that my eyes fairly ache for the sight of one, and when I have time to be, I'm dreadfully lonesome."

"So I sat with her some time, trying to make myself agreeable; but, as the lady was not a little deaf, and I was not aware of it at the time, we did not get on very well at first."

"Deaf as a post—deaf as the back-side of a meetin' house ov 'week days," assented my listener, warmly.

"But I called again and again, and after awhile we became very good friends. I liked the quaint, old house, with its large, low ceiled rooms, the huge fireplaces filled with evergreen boughs, the old-fashioned furniture and ornaments brought from over the sea by sailor relatives, the house plants in the wide window seats, and the scriptural tiles in the chimney piece. Then the Max cat and the parrot were sources of unending amusement."

"Didn't you never see the parson—Matilda Jane's boan—when you was there?" asks Mrs. Bragdon, breathlessly impatient for the denouement of the story.

"Why, yes; I'm coming to that presently," says I, with wicked deliberation, as I stroke the back of the tortoise-shell cat, who has seated herself in my lap, and is looking delightedly in the warm glow of the fire.

"Her father, old Cap'n John, didn't take no fancy to him at first, so I didn't know as he came to the house much in them days; that's all," apologizes she, becoming sufficiently composed to pick up her knitting work.

"Not long before I left Bramleigh that fall, one bright, frosty afternoon, I went over to the Snow woods on an autumn leaf expedition and called to see Miss Matilda Jane, as usual, on my way home; but, finding the minister, Mr. Whitcomb, seated in very close proximity to his lady-love, I thought it best to make my excuses and take an immediate departure."

"No, indeed; you musn't think of going," said she, with energetic decision. "You musn't take off your hat and stop to tea, for I'm going to be all alone this evening. Brother Whitcomb's got to go home and tend a prayer-meeting, and pa's going over to Tim Ramsdell's to see his new-fangled corn sheller. Do take pity on me, for the crickets are singing louder than ever to-night, and I shall be lonesome enough to die."

ter the village by nine o'clock, or whenever you feel as if you must go." "These melancholy autumn days, when everything in nature reminds us of our own sad decline, make us more prone than ever to seek the companionship of a congenial spirit," remarked the minister, in his most solemn tones.

"His cheeks were more like the red, red rose than usual, and he had brought as gifts to the object of his affection oranges and the Missionary Herald."

"Miss Matilda Jane was extremely unconscious and matter-of-fact, though her toilet bore marks of more than ordinary consideration. "You'd better wait long enough to just taste a cup of tea, too, Brother Whitcomb," said she. "I won't be any time preparing it. The tea kettle is ready to boil now. And if you are not there in time, can't one of the deacons open the meeting?"

"He shook his head plaintively. "We are too prone to shut our eyes to the voice of duty, too prone to follow our own inclinations 'n' stray away from the straight and narrow path. No; we must follow duty, even though it leads us away from our dearest companions, glancing with solemn fondness at Miss Matilda Jane."

"I wouldn't never 'n' hed a man in this world that courted me just as ef he was exhortin' a sinner!" exclaimed Mrs. Bragdon, warmly.

"He did not follow duty immediately, however," resumed I, "but stood irresolute, with his hat in his hand, for a few moments, then concluded to follow Miss Matilda Jane into the kitchen instead; and, though he did not make his adieu to either Captain John or me, I supposed he was hastening toward home and the 'missionary meetin', when, in the course of an half hour or so, Miss Matilda Jane announced that tea was ready."

"Laf. Brother Whitcomb went home, after all, did he?" inquired the lady, looking somewhat disturbed, I fancied. "I thought he had decided to stay. Strange, he didn't come out and say good night."

"Why, didn't he?" said Captain John; "he went out toward the kitchen, and that's the last I saw of him."

Miss Matilda Jane seemed slightly absent-minded for a moment or two, but soon recovered herself, and was as bright and talkative as ever. "Now I'll make haste and get my work done up, and we'll have a good long evening together," said she. "Ethan wants to go to the store, so he has got the milking done already, and everything will be out of the way beautifully by half past six."

"The brightest of fires was blazing on the hearth, and we dispensed with a lamp in order to enjoy it to the fullest extent. It was a delightful evening. Miss Matilda Jane, who is a good story teller, told me of the quaint events which had ever happened in the old town. But the wind came up at length, the tree boughs creaked weirdly outside, and we were startled by strange noises during the whole time."

"Some one is certainly pounding on the back door," I insisted more than once. "I hope you won't be scared, but folks have always said that this house is haunted," said Miss Matilda Jane, cheerfully. "It's nothing but the wind howling through the empty garret, though, and the rats tumbling in the walls. They do carry on outrageously when it grows quite still at night. It's their noise that you hear now."

"Impossible!" said I. "Do let us be brave and open the back door!" "Oh, I'm not in the least afraid. Of course I can't hear it as distinctly as you do, but I'm pretty sure there is no one there."

"Here a voice made itself heard with great distinctness. "It's the parson, tew, by golly! That's his voice, though it's so kinder shaky 'n' lunny," said Ethan, rushing bravely and nimbly forward as an angry appeal to be let out reached our startled ears."

"Why, he must have followed me there when I went after butter for supper, and I locked him in mistake," said Miss Matilda Jane, looking distressed and rather awestricken, but laughing at the same time in spite of herself. "He said that he had something to say to me in private, I know, but pa was in such a squizzle for his supper that I forgot all about it afterward."

"It is not consoling to have one's misery laughed at, so I discreetly remained in the background when the unfortunate man emerged from his prison—which was like a veritable cell, stone floor and all. I could not distinguish the words which fell from his lips; but, as there were an abundance of them, uttered in by no means his usual smooth, drawing tone, I suppose they must have been more expressive than polite, for I heard Miss Matilda Jane say, with cool distinctness, after a little pause, "Well, if you have got such a temper as this, you may as well go your own way for all me. I've seen enough—more than enough of you, sir."

"And if you haven't any more sense than this, I shall be very glad to do so, madam," was the quick reply. "Allow me to wish you good night."

"Ethan, light your lantern and go with Mr. Whitcomb to the barn and help him harness his horse," commanded the lady, turning to follow me with stately dignity to the sitting room."

"N' he never come ag'in," says Mrs. Bragdon, whose face is all aglow with happy excitement. "I knowed all the time that they must 'a' had some kind of a quarrel, 'n' I kin see just exactly how 'twas, now, as if I'd a ben there myself. Probably he follered her into the dairy to pop the question—it's an awful retired place 'n' she's so dretful deaf 'n' absent-minded that she didn't neither see nor hear him. She's most inconvenient s'ry motioned, tew, fur such a person, 'n' I s'pose she come out 'n' locked him in 'fore he had time to think, he bein' kinder flustered like, under the circumstances. I don't wonder nobody didn't hear him for so long, for that dairy is a mile away from the front part of the house, three steps down from the old back kitchen. Well, well, I hope Alfonso won't bring no more news to-night, for I shan't sleep a wink as 'tis—I know I shan't; 'n' then it's kinder provokin' 'n' seech dull times to hev everything at once!" —Lippincott.

What an Oregonian Saw. There has been a good deal said about Spokane county, and there is room for a great deal more, but I have heard nothing of that lively little place, Sedalia. Passing through Cheney to Spokane Falls, thence to Cottonwood, with a party of ten of us, we finally pulled up at Sedalia, the property of Mr. Harvey Brace; found him as busy as a bee cutting and stacking hay, having three teams and six men busy as nail drivers putting up his winter's feed for his horses, of which he has some fine ones. Brace is a comical-goes and full of life and business, and a whole-souled man; in fact, he reminds me of the itch in a country school—he sets them all scratching to keep up. He is a go-ahead, and bound to make money. We staid all night with him; he fed and lodged us in good style, doing the housework himself as neat and tidy as any woman in Spokane county. After supper he hitched up his pair of stallions and gave us a spin around his ranch. Taking in the location of that vicinity, it is the prettiest located place we have seen in this upper country. First, a better site for an inland town don't exist anywhere, as there are seven leading roads that center at his place—the road to the Big Bend of the Columbia, the road to Camp Spokane and one to Cottonwood, one to Medical Lake, one to Cheney, one to Lake Creek, one to Willow Creek country, one to Sprague and one to Walla Walla, all making Sedalia the central location of all that immense travel which is increasing daily, and being located in the richest agricultural country in Spokane county. I am informed by a neighbor that he receives applications for store sites, a lot for blacksmith shop, etc., but he is not in a hurry to decide what step to take—whether to survey off a town site and have a population of a couple of thousands in a year or two, go slower, and have capital come in, men of means. Brace is a long-headed customer, and looks a good ways ahead.

After leaving Sedalia we went west by the Lindy ranch, saw some splendid brood mares and a lot of fine cattle, principally milk cows. We passed on, still west, to Mr. Yarwood's ranch, an old California; he has in one hundred acres of crop this year, but it wants rain. From there we traveled through a beautiful country for miles, and never saw a house of any kind till we struck Wilson Creek; there we found quite a large settlement, and more are coming—in fact, the whole country from Sprague, Sedalia and the Big Bend is alive with emigrants, and all seem to work back toward Sedalia and Sprague, but the day is not far distant when every inch of that beautiful country will be settled up and improved.

Being out five days we returned toward Sprague, landing at Sedalia on the sixth day, and we never saw better land in any country than we did after leaving Sedalia and that vicinity. The barley on Brace's ranch is four feet high and many spouts higher, and is very thick on the ground. His oats and wheat are grand—the best we saw on our trip. A party of married men with their wives, eight in number, had just landed, and were eating their supper when we drove to Sedalia. It reminded us of a busy little burg, but the cook soon got supper for all hands—his help and all.

This last party were taking the same trip as we were—looking for homes for themselves,

and families. We partook of a sumptuous meal, at which I counted twenty-six that Mr. Brace would have to give supper, lodging and breakfast to. But he went at it with a will, like a cooper and a barrel; when it came time to retire for the night he gave the house to the ladies, and the men to the barn. Everything passed off very pleasantly, the ladies being very complimentary to the cook in the gentlemanly manner in which he treated them—in fact, one lady wanted to pitch her tent on a corner lot on Main street and go no farther, as it was the prettiest place she had seen. But Mr. Brace would not have it that way.

On our arrival at Sprague, we were all glad to hear the iron horse; so we could get back to our families and tell them what we had found. Sprague is a lively shipping point for the Big Bend and the Great West, and the day is not far distant when it will be the metropolis of this upper country. The next morning we took the train for Portland, some going back to Willamette Valley, some to Salem, and the others in the vicinity of Portland—all of us to a man will come to Spokane county next spring, and some this fall. The most of us will locate near Sedalia.

I assure you, Mr. Editor, and your readers of Spokane county, you have a splendid country, and lots of people will follow us next spring. I will recommend to them the Sedalia country, as they will get splendid land and get in an enterprising locality.—Cor. Cheney Tribune.

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