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"But, Aunt Maria," said her mistress, "how can you teach your child when you don't know one letter from another?"

"How I teach him? I jest make him take de book an' set down on de do' an' den I say, 'Moses, you take yo' eye from dat book, much less leggo him, an' I skins you alive.'"

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OLIVER OCTOBER
by **GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON**
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OLIVER AND JANE

SYNOPSIS—Oliver October Baxter, Jr., was born on a vile October day. His parents were prominent in the commercial, social and spiritual life of the town of Rumley. The night that Oliver October was born a gypsy queen reads his father's fortune and tells him what a wonderful future his son has before him, but adds that his son will never reach the age of thirty, that he will be hanged for a crime of which he is not guilty.

CHAPTER II
Ten Years Later

Ten years passed, years of change and growth—Rumley had not stood still during the decade. It was the proud boast of its most enterprising citizen, Silas Link, that it had done a great deal better than Chicago; it had tripled its population.

Oliver Baxter, Sr., owned one of the new business "blocks" on Clay street. It was known as the Baxter block, erected in 1896.

Mary Baxter died of typhoid fever when young Oliver was nearing seven. Her untimely demise revived the half-forgotten prophecy of the gypsy fortune-teller. People looked severely at each other and in hushed tones discussed the inexorable ways of fate. It was the first "sign" that young Oliver's fortune was coming true.

Of an entirely different nature was the agitation created by the unrighteous behavior of Josephine Sage, who had finally succumbed to the lure of the stage, leaving her husband and child, in order to gratify her life's ambition. Half the women in town, on learning that she was going to Chicago for a brief visit with her folks, went around to the parsonage to kiss her good-by. Excoriation and a stream of "I told you so's" were bestowed upon the pretty young wife and mother when it became known that she was not coming back.

Herbert Sage was stunned, bewildered. . . . She wrote him from Chicago at the end of the first week of what was to have been a fortnight's visit to her mother. She was leaving at once for New York, where she had been promised a trial by one of the greatest American producers. A month later came a telegram from her saying she was rehearsing a part in a new piece that was sure to be the "hit of the season."

"You will be proud of me, Herby," she wrote, "because I will take mighty good care that you never have any reason to be ashamed of me or for me to be ashamed of myself. You know what I mean. I don't suppose I will say my prayers as often as I did when you were around to remind me of them, but I will be a good girl just the same."

That was four years ago. Her confidence in herself had been justified, and, for all we know, the same may be said of Herbert Sage's confidence in her. She had the talent, the voice, the beauty, and above all, the magnetism, and so there was no holding her back.

For two successive seasons she appeared in a Chicago theater, following long New York runs of the pieces in which she was playing.

Finally, in one of her letters announcing a prospective engagement in London, she put the question to him: "Do you want to get a divorce from me, Herby?" His reply was terse and dignified but manifestly sincere telegram: "Neither do I, so we'll stick till the cows come home. Sailing Friday. Will cable. Much love."

She made a "hit" in London in the big musical success of that season. They liked her so well over there that they wouldn't let her go back to the States.

She was greatly missed by little Oliver October. For some reason—perhaps she did not explain it herself—at any rate, she did not go to the trouble of speculating—she had taken a tremendous fancy to the child. This small boy of five or six was the only being in town with whom she could play to her heart's content, and she made the most of him. Her own tiny baby, Jane, interested but did not amuse her.

Oliver was always to have a warm corner in her heart for the gay Aunt Josephine, but new diverting games reduced his passionate longing for her to a mild but pleasant memory. Perhaps, too, her own daughter had something to do with Josephine's fading from Oliver's mind.

For Janie Sage, at the age of six, was by far the prettiest and the most sought after young lady in Rumley. Oliver was her chosen swain, and

many were the battles he fought in her defense.

The time came when Oliver October Baxter, age ten, had to be told what was in store for him if he did not mend his ways. For, be it here recorded, Oliver not only possessed a quick temper, but a surprisingly sanguinary way of making it felt.

He was a rugged, freckle-faced youngster with curly brown hair, a pair of stout legs, and a couple of hard little fists, with which he made his temper felt.

It was after witnessing a particularly ferocious battle between Oliver and Sammy Parr, that Joseph Sikes and Silas Link decided that the boy must be warned of the fate that awaited him if his awful temper was not curbed.

And so it came to pass that young Oliver October learned what was in store for him if his "fortune" came true. In the presence of his father, his good friend, Mr. Sage, who had opposed telling the boy, and the Messrs. Link and Sikes, he was made to realize the vastness of the dark and terrifying shadow that hung over him.

When they had finished, he cleared his throat. "I wish my ma was here," he said, his lip trembling.

"Amen to that," said Mr. Sage, fervently.

"Amen!" repeated Mr. Link in his most professional voice.

Mr. Sage laid a hand on the boy's



"Yes, Sir," said Oliver, "I do."

shoulder. "Do you say your prayers every night, Oliver?"

"Yes, sir—I do."

"Well—er—if Brother Baxter doesn't mind, and if you gentlemen will excuse me, I think I will go upstairs with Oliver and—listen to his prayer."

A little later on, the tall, spare pastor sat on the side of young Oliver's trundle bed and talked in a confidential whisper.

"I am going to tell you something, Oliver, and I want you to believe it. Nobody on this earth can foretell the future. All that talk about your being hung some day is poppycock—pure poppycock. Don't you believe a word of it. I came upstairs with you just for the purpose of telling you this—not really to hear your prayers. Now don't you feel better?"

"Yes, sir," said Oliver. "I do."

"What I want you to do, Oliver, is to go on—leading a—er—regular boy's life. Do the things that are right and square, be honest and fearless—and no harm will ever come to you. Now, turn over and go to sleep, there's a good boy."

And the kind-hearted minister went downstairs feeling that he had given the poor lad something besides the gallows to think about.

It is not the purpose of the narrator of this story to deal at length with the deeds, exploits, mishaps and sensations of Oliver October as a child. He was seventeen when he left Rumley high school and became a freshman at the state university. The last of the three decades allotted to him by the gypsy was shorn of its first twelve months when he received his degree. As Mr. Sikes announced to Reverend Sage at the conclusion of the commencement exercises, he had less than nine more years to live at the very outside—a

gloomy statement that drew from the proud and happy minister an unusually harsh rejoinder.

"You ought to be kicked all the way home for saying such a thing as that, Joe Sikes." Turning to the slim, pretty girl who walked beside him across the June-warmed campus, he said comfortingly: "Don't mind this old cranker, Jane dear."

A word in passing about Jane Sage. Slender, graceful, slightly above medium height, just turning into young womanhood, she was an extremely pretty girl.

She adored Oliver October. There had been a time when she was his sweetheart, but that was ages ago—when both of them were young! Now he was supposed to be engaged to a girl in the graduating class—and Jane was going to be an old maid—so the childish romance was over.

Late in the fall of 1911, young Oliver, having passed the age of twenty-one, packed his bag and trunk, shook the dust of Rumley from his feet, and accepted a position in the construction department of a Chicago engineering and investment concern.

Early in 1913 he was sent to China by his company on a mission that kept him in the Orient for nearly a year and a half. A week before Christmas, 1914, the Rumley Dispatch came out with the announcement—under a double head—that Oliver October Baxter was returning from the Far East, where he had been engaged in the most stupendous enterprise ever undertaken by American capital.

When he arrived, he was met at the depot by a delegation.

"I can't believe my eyes—no, sir, I can't," cried old Oliver, quaveringly as he wrung his son's hand. "You're back again, alive and sound."

"You bet I'm alive," answered Oliver October, laying his arm over the old man's shoulder and patting his back. "It's mighty good to see you, and it's wonderful to be back in the old town again. Hello, Uncle Joe! Well, you see they haven't hung me yet."

"And they ain't going to if I can help it," roared Mr. Sikes, pumping Oliver's arm vigorously. "Not on your life! It's all fixed, Oliver. We've got you the appointment of city civil engineer of Rumley."

"You needn't worry about that, father. I'll not accept the position."

Mr. Baxter brightened. "You won't? Good for you! That'll show Joe Sikes and Silas Link they can't run everything."

Presently they drew up in front of the Baxter residence, and as they did so an uncommonly pretty girl opened the front door.

"Hello, Oliver!" she cried.

"Hello, Jane!" he shouted back, as he ran up the steps. "Gee! It's great to see you. And, my goodness, what a big girl you are."

He was holding her warm, strong hands in his own; they were looking straight into each other's eyes.

"You haven't grown much," she said slowly. "Except that you are a man and not a boy."

"That's it," he cried. "The difference in you is that you're a woman and not a girl."

"Come in," she said, with a queer dignity that she herself did not understand.

When he came downstairs, after having unpacked his bags and scattered the contents all over the room, he found the "company" already assembled. As might have been expected, the guests included Rev. Mr. Sage, Mr. Sikes and Mr. Link, and one outsider, the mayor of Rumley, Mr. Samuel Belding.

"What's this I hear?" demanded the latter sternly, as he shook hands with the young man. "Your father's just been telling us you won't accept the distinguished honor the city of Rumley has conferred upon you. What's the matter with it?"

"The truth of the matter is," Oliver answered seriously, "I have other plans. I'm going over there in February with the Canadians. It's all settled. I'm to have my old job back when the war is over."

"But it's not our war!" cried Mr. Sikes.

"It's everybody's war," spoke young Oliver out of the very depths of his soul. "We will be in it some day. Oh, I'll come back, never fear. You see, Uncle Joe, I've just got to pull through alive and well, so that I can be hung when my time comes."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What Am I?

I have scattered breadcrumbs, tin cans, Sunday supplements, paper plates, paper bags, chicken bones and fruit skins from the wilds of Maine to the tip of Florida.

I have hacked forest trees and left campfires burning from the California coast to the Atlantic seaboard.

I have hooked apples from New England orchards, walnuts from the Willamette valley and oranges from our southern states.

I have rolled rocks into the sapphire depths of Crater lake and thrown tin cans into gurgling brooks in every state in the Union.

I have seen all, heard all, know all and in my weak way have destroyed much.

I am the American tourist who through careless and thoughtless acts brings dishonor to responsible, respectable and careful fellow travelers—Old Colony Memorial.

Most advice is good, but you are given no will power with it.

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Nothing So Plebeian

Caller—Are your little ones playing store?

Mrs. Newrich (haughtily)—Store? I should say not. My children never play anything but bank.—Boston Transcript.

One can't rear children properly if one is selfish. They soon discover it.

Failed to Get Away

"What are you in for, my good fellow?" asked the prison visitor.

"For being found out," sighed the former bank cashier, who had kept up his pecuniations for years before the officials got wise.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Fortunate the man whose hobby is his job.

Demand

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Settling Grudge in China

In full view of shopkeepers and passing pedestrians in the international settlement in Shanghai a Chinese member of a criminal gang was backed to death with meat cleavers by two other Chinese. It is believed he was the victim of a rival gang's vengeance. Despite the fact that many persons witnessed the incident no one attempted to help the victim or to call the police.

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The Reason

Blake—What makes that policeman so fat?
Drake—Too much traffic jam.

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