

AUNT NAN'S MISSION

By M. QUAD.

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Being she had never married, and being she had reached the age of forty-five, most of the people of the village of Millville spoke of Miss Spooner as Aunt Nan, and she raised no objection. She had an income, and she lived alone. It was said of her that she was a disappointed woman. She was, but not in the sense that she had loved and lost. So far as any one knew she had never loved at all, though several widowers had cleaned their muddy feet on her doormat and tried to interest her in affairs matrimonial. Just what was the matter with Miss Spooner was that she was a woman with a mission, and did not know exactly what that mission was. Up to the age of thirty she had thought it was to convert the heathen of China and Africa, but the returns were so uncertain that she had finally decided that she was on the wrong track. Then it dawned on her to take up the temperance question, but here she was handicapped. Old Sol Pritchard was the only one in the village that got drunk, and his wife said that she would rather have him come home drunk than sober, as he broke fewer dishes.

There is nothing more discouraging than feeling that you have a mission and having that mission dodging you and keeping you in suspense. The only thing that can be done, however, is to wait. Miss Spooner waited, and at length her mission hove into view. It was in the form of a tramp. It called at her house for something to eat. She sat it down at the table and bade it fill up. While it was doing so she ran into a neighbor's to see if that neighbor couldn't spare an old coat, and when she returned the tramp had departed; also her watch and chain and other things.

Miss Spooner was justly indignant. She gave the alarm, the fellow was overhauled, and before night he was in jail at the county seat, six miles away, on a three months' sentence. The justice of the peace, the constable and others applauded her action, and for two or three days she felt that she had done her duty. Then the still small voice began to whisper to her. She had tempted the wayfarer. He had probably been driven to tramps by misfortune. He might have been an honest man up to this time. In fact, she made a dozen other excuses for him, and all at once it dawned on her that here was her long sought mission. There would be more joy over saving one tramp than in sending a million tracts to the heathen. She recalled that the man looked lonely and downcast, as if he realized that the world was against him, and she wasn't quite sure that he didn't have tears in his eyes as he sat down to the spread.

You probably know how conscience works when it gets out of leading strings, and it is useless to relate that within a week Aunt Nan was asking admission to the county jail. She had a friend in town and had driven over to tell her all about it and to stop for a few days. She began with the tramp by begging his pardon. He would have been no tramp at all if he hadn't taken his cue from this. He pleaded sudden impulse and stoutly asserted that he had turned about to restore the property when arrested. It was the only theft he had ever committed. He had been poor, but honest.

There was a second visit and a third. The tramp grew more mellow at every visit. He was ready to and did promise everything asked of him, including truth, sobriety, industry, economy, ambition and excelsior. Then Aunt Nan went home and enlisted the aid of her minister in the mission. They worked for a pardon, but failed to get it. No one else seemed to have a spark of sympathy for a down-trodden man who wanted to climb up. Then came a mental struggle in which the minister did not participate. It was all Miss Spooner's secret. She wanted that tramp out of jail that he might lose no time beginning a new life.

When Miss Spooner visited the jail again she carried a couple of files with her, and they were left there. She had convinced herself that her mission was greater than the law. It took the tramp two nights to file through the bars, but on the third night, as the spinster sat alone in her house with swelling heart, he entered by the back door. She was expecting him. She was to give him \$10 to go far away and make a new start. He was to keep her in his thoughts as he climbed up and write her once a fortnight. The money was ready for him, as well as a package of provisions. She was giving him sisterly advice as to his future conduct when all of a sudden she was in the air. Before she could scream a second time there was a gag in her mouth, and then her hands and feet were tied, and she was helpless.

Then the tramp hummed a cheerful tune as he began a search of the house. He got her jewelry again; he got \$50 from a bureau drawer; he got her Sunday dress and her silver spoons

and forks. She had some currant wine down cellar, and he drank three bottles and sat down beside her and delivered a brief lecture on missions and ended by calling her an idiot. Then he walked out and went over and stole the minister's horse and buggy and drove away. Three days later Aunt Nan called on the good man to ask:

"Parson, do you really believe I had a mission?"

"If you did you made a fool of it!" was his blunt reply as he thought of his lost horse and buggy.

Reed and Strout.

Thomas B. Reed served in the navy during the civil war, and in 1865 he returned to Portland to practice law. One of the strongest men at the Portland bar at the time was A. A. Strout. Before beginning the trial of a suit it was Strout's habit to inquire of every juror as to the state of his health and impress each with the idea that the lawyer was solicitous of that juror's personal welfare. Reed and Strout were constantly antagonizing each other, though they were very good friends. In nearly every case of importance Strout and Reed were on opposite sides. It was annoying indeed for the suave Strout to hear Reed drawl out before the opening of a case:

"Well, your honor, Brother Strout having finished his morning task of shaking hands with the jury, we may now, I hope, proceed with the business of the court."

Grote and His Wife.

The wife of the historian Grote must have been an extraordinary woman. She rode without a saddle, she was not afraid to put off in a boat without a man, and she was plucky enough to marry her lover without permission and return home without saying a word about it. Sydney Smith described this lady and her lord in his happy fashion, "I do like them both so much, for he is ladylike, and she is a perfect gentleman."

FACTS IN FEW LINES

Tanning material is made in Sicily from acorn cups.

Mail orders for merchandise are practically unknown in China and the east in general.

Canada waters yielded last year about 20,000,000 lobsters, half of which were canned.

A Swiss journal announces that Lucheni, the murderer of the late empress of Austria, has become mad after a stroke of paralysis.

As byproducts from Sicilian tanneries there are 140,000 tons of ox hair annually exported to France, whence the larger portion is reshipped to the United States.

Not counting those engaged in lobster fishing, 700,000 men and 1,439 vessels of 40,827 tons, valued at \$2,841,875, were engaged in the Canadian fisheries in 1907.

Until a few years ago Mohammedans were greatly opposed to photography, but now they have taken it up seriously, and some photographers of real merit are found among them.

In the public offices of Italy smoking is permitted during business hours to all who do not come in contact with the public. They are restricted to cigars and cigarettes, however, the pipe being strictly forbidden.

The three great industrial nations—England, France and Germany—each consume about 80 per cent of the manufactured goods produced at home. The United States sells only 5 per cent of manufactured goods abroad.

At a recent municipal celebration in Covina, Cal., in which a barbecue was given to mark the advent of an electric railway, coffee was served from an urn holding 250 gallons, or 5,000 cups; beans were cooked in a pot holding 200 gallons.

Spoiled by the Cook.

Cardinal Manning, the famous English churchman, was gaunt of face. The great ecclesiastic's appearance was so ascetic that he seemed to have been almost starved. Once in Liverpool he visited a convent, and the cook knelt to him for a blessing, which she got.

"May the Lord preserve your eminence," said she, and then, looking at his thin face, she added, "and, oh, may God forgive your cook!"

An Entertaining Catbird.

Nothing escapes the eye of our pet catbird, for he is curiosity personified. He wants to know the why and wherefore of everything that is a little strange and does not rest until he has found out. When let out in a room he will carefully examine every nook and corner. He is an inveterate joker and delights to play jokes on his fellow prisoners, while his sense of humor is almost human at times. The pin cushion is a constant wonder and delight to him. He flies to it as soon as let out of his cage and either pulls the pins all out or drives them into the cushion as far as possible. If he pulls them out, he hops to the edge of the table and drops them on the floor, flinging his tail and uttering a note of great satisfaction when they strike the floor.—Suburban Life.

THE FASCINATION OF FORBIDDEN FRUIT.

By HENRY S. SPICER.

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Being junior member of the firm of Bunker & Co. of New York, whose business involved some correspondence with olive oil merchants in Italy, I concluded to learn the Italian language in order to be able to write those in their own tongue from whom we bought oil. I inquired of a friend for a teacher. He told me that he could recommend one, a young woman, a native of Italy, but there must be one condition attached to her giving me lessons—I must promise not to make love to her. Somewhat surprised that such a promise should be exacted, I asked a reason for it, but received no satisfactory reply. As I had no intention of making love to any one, I readily agreed to the terms. It is only too true, however, that such a promise was very inconsiderate on my part, for several episodes in the past had demonstrated my extreme susceptibility to the Goddess Love and her subtleties. But my word had been given and in all the verities I was placed upon my honor.

Miss (or, rather, Signorina) Aboni turned out to be a teacher in the New York public schools. She was about twenty-five years old, with the dark hair and eyes prevalent among her countrymen and, unlike most Italian women, possessed a very sweet voice. No language is musical when rapidly spoken and in a rough voice, but as Miss Aboni spoke Italian to me slowly and softly it was very melodious.

Now, I verily believe that if it had not been for the promise I had made I might have taken lessons of Miss Aboni for an indefinite time without danger to my bachelorhood. I should not have thought of making love to her. But all the while she was instructing me my mind, instead of being on the Italian language, was on the question, "Why was I pledged not to make love to my teacher?" That we wish to do what we are forbidden to do is a curious psychological condition for which I cannot account. I can more readily understand why one should dislike to do what he is compelled to do, and yet this condition is by no means so universal as the other. However this may be, I was soon seized with an uncontrollable desire to make love to my teacher. I resisted till I had been some time under her tutelage, then made a break.

The pain expressed in her face told me that I had in some way hurt her, and a sudden sensation of shame told me that I had dishonored myself. I stammered an apology, promising not to break my word again, a condition like that laid down by the poet when he says it is "weakness to be wroth with weakness." The poor girl could only accept the apology and hope that I would be stronger in future.

But I was tampering with a passion, and the passions usually master conscience. The only safe way out of the matter was to acknowledge myself beaten in the first encounter and avoid a second by ceasing to take lessons of Miss Aboni. This course occurred to me, but I persuaded myself that it would be more manly to conquer myself than to ingloriously run away. I continued to receive instruction, but there had come a feeling of constraint between me and my teacher. I went on conquering myself, as I persuaded myself I was doing, listening to the melodious Italian sentences as they glided from my teacher's lips. Then, too, we frequently read from the same book, and this compelled us to sit side by side, a dangerous position for those who are forbidden to be lovers.

One day while thus looking over the same page I suddenly found my hand resting on my teacher's waist. I can only assert that I did not put it there; it put itself there. Then another unfortunate circumstance led to a fatal step. Feeling a tress softly graze my cheek, with my hand—the hand not on her waist—I turned her face to mine and kissed her on the lips.

I shall never forget the shudder that passed over her frame. I know at once that I had done something terrible. But terrible things cannot usually be undone. Whatever it was, it must stand. One thing was certain—I had given my word and broken it.

"I am beneath contempt," I cried.

"No. I have made a mistake."

"What mistake?"

"Instead of exacting a promise I should have taken you into my confidence. But you were a stranger to me, and if you told—"

"Well, if I told, what then?"

"I would lose my position; we would starve."

"We? Who are we?"

"I and my husband. Married women are not permitted to teach in the public schools of New York. My marriage has been kept a secret."

The announcement that she was a wife fell like a lead on my heart. What had started in a desire to break in upon forbidden ground had resulted

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The husband of her who passed under her maiden name was an invalid and supported by his wife. I did not see her after the denouement for three years. Then, learning of her husband's death, I renewed the acquaintance, not for the purpose of taking lessons, but to offer her my heart and hand, an offer which was accepted.

Notwithstanding that I would not now exchange my wife for a throne, I still maintain that she would not now be my wife had I not given a promise not to make love to her.

How He Felt.

He was an Englishman of the ultra sort and recently arrived, but he was striving strenuously to catch up with American idioms and New York slang. He had made some progress. He loomed up in the breakfast room of his hotel the other morning after a too convivial evening and encountered one of his companions.

"How do you feel, old chap?" asked the latter.

"Feel?" repeated the Englishman.

"Feel? Oh, yes, I see what you mean, old fellow. Well, really, don't you know, I feel like one and six."

"Like what?"

"Like one and six, as you chaps say here. No! Hold on, there! I mean 30 cents, you know; feel like 30 cents. Yes!"—New York Globe.

Convenient.

"Providence," said the deacon, "sho' do look after de cullud race."

"How come?" demanded Brother Dickey.

"Well, hit's disaway; De nigger baby, ez dey say, walk too soon."

"Sho do?" assented Brother Dickey.

"Dat makes him bowlegged."

"Now you talkin'!"

"An' bowlegs is de mos' convenient legs in de worl' fer climbin' a tree w'en a possum's on de top limb!"—Exchange.

Church Directory.

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