

OLD LADY NUMBER 31

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More than one faded, fragrant romance is revealed in the chapters of this homely little story. Through it runs like a golden thread, the tender devotion of the aged husband and wife.

CHAPTER I.

The Tea Table.

Angelina's slender, wiry form and small, glossy gray head bent over the squat brown teapot as she shook out the last bit of leaf from the canister. The canister was no longer hers, neither the teapot, nor even the battered old pewter spoon with which she tapped the bottom of the tin to dislodge the last flicker of tea-leaf dust. The three had been sold at auction that day in response to the auctioneer's inquiry, "What am I bid for the lot?"

Nothing in the familiar old kitchen was hers, Angelina reflected, except Abraham, her aged husband, who was taking his last gentle ride in the old rocking chair—the old armchair with painted roses blooming as brilliantly across its back as they had bloomed when the chair was first purchased forty years ago. Those roses had come to be a source of perpetual wonder to the old wife, an ever-present example.

Neither time nor stress could wilt them a single leaf. When Abe took the first mortgage on the house in order to invest in an indefinitely located Mexican gold mine, the melodeon dropped one of its keys, but the roses nodded on with the same old sunny hope; when Abe had to take the second mortgage and Tenady Gold became a forbidden topic of conversation, the minute hand fell off the parlor clock, but the flowers on the back of the old chair blossomed on none the less serenely.

The soil grew more and more barren as the years went by; but still the roses had kept fresh and young, so why, argued Angelina, should not she? If old age and the pinch of poverty had failed to conquer their valiant spirit, why should she listen to the croaking tale? If they bloomed on with the same crimson flaunt of color, though the rockers beneath them had grown warped and the body of the chair creaked and groaned every time one ventured to sit in it, why should she not ignore the stiffness which the years seemed to bring to her joints, the complaints which her body threatened every now and again to utter, and fare on herself, a hardy perennial bravely facing life's winter-time?

Even this dreaded day had not taken one fraction of a shade from the glory of the roses, as Angelina could see in the bud at one side of Abraham's head and the full-blown flower below his right ear; so why should she droop because the sale of her household goods had been somewhat disappointing? Somewhat? When the childless old couple, still sailing under the banner of a charity-forbidding pride, became practically reduced to their last copper, just as Abe's joints were "loosening up" after a five years' siege of rheumatism, and decided to sell all their worldly possessions, apart from their patched and threadbare wardrobes and a few meager keepsakes, they had depended upon raising at least two hundred dollars, one-half of which was to secure Abe a berth in the Old Men's home at Indian Village, and the other half to make Angelina comfortable for life, if a little lonely, in the Old Ladies' home in their own native hamlet of Shoreville. Both institutions had been generously endowed by the same estate, and were separated by a distance of but five miles.

"Might as well be five hundred, with my rheumatiz an' yer weak heart," Abraham had growled when Angelina first proposed the plan as the only dignified solution to their problem of living.

"But," the little wife had rejoined, "it'll be a mite o' comfort a-knowin' a body's so near, even ef yer can't git tew 'em."

Now, another solution must be found to the problem; for the auction was over, and instead of two hundred dollars they had succeeded in raising but one hundred dollars and two cents.

"That air tew cents was fer the flour-sifter," inwardly mourned Angelina, "an' it's wuth double an' tribble, fer it's been a good friend ter me fer nigh on ter eight year."

"Tew cents on the second hundred," said Abe for the tenth time. "I've counted it over an' over. One hundred dollars an' tew pesky pennies. An' I never hear a man tell so many lies in my life as that air auctioneer. Yew'd 'a' thought he was sellin' out the empery o' Rooshy. Hy-guy, it sounded splendid. Fust off I thought he'd raise us more 'n we expected. An' mebbe he would have tew, Angy," a bit ruefully, "ef yew 'd 'a' let me advertise a little sooner. I don't s'pose half Shoreville knows yit that we was gwine ter have a auction sale."

He watched the color rising in her cheeks with a curious mixture of pride in her pride and regret at its consequences. "It's no use a-talkin', conse-

er, pride and poverty makes one easy bedfellers."

He leaned back in the old chair, creaking out a dismal echo to the auctioneer's "Going, going, gone!" while the flush deepened in Angy's cheek. Again she fastened her gaze upon the indomitable red roses which hung a pendant earring on the right side of Abraham's head.

"Yew wouldn't 'a' had folks a-comin' here ter bid jest out o' charity, would yew?" she demanded. "An' anyhow," in a more gentle tone—the gently positive tone which she had acquired through forty years of living with Abraham—"we hain't so bad off with one hundred dollars an' tew cents, an'—beholden ter nobody! It's tew cents more'n yew need ter git yew inter the Old Men's, an' them extry tew cents 'll pervide for me jest bewtiful." Abraham stopped rocking to stare hard at his resourceful wife, an involuntary twinkle of amusement in his blue eyes.

With increased firmness, she repeated, "Jest bewtiful!" whereupon Abe, scenting self-sacrifice on his wife's part, sat up straight and snapped, "Haow so, haow so, mother?"

"I'll buy a postage stamp, won't it?"—she was fairly aggressive now—"an' thar's a envelop what wa'n't put up ter auction in the cupboard an' a paper bag I kin iron out—ketch me a-gwine ter the neighbors an' a-beggin' fer writin' paper—an' I'll jest set down an' write a line to Miss Halsey. Her house hain't a stun's throw from the Old Men's; an' I'll offer ter come an' take keer o' them air young 'uns o' her'n fer my board an' keep an'—ten cents a week. I was a-gwine ter say a quarter, but I don't want ter impose on nobody. Seeln' that they hain't over well-ter-do, I would go fer nothin', but I got ter have somethin' ter keep up appearances on, so yew won't have no call ter feel ashamed of me when I come a-visitin' ter the hum." Involuntarily, as she spoke, Angy lifted her knotted old hand and smoothed back the hair from her brow; for through all the struggling years she had kept a certain, not unpleasant, girlish pride in her personal appearance.

Abraham had risen with creaks of his rheumatic joints, and was now walking up and down the room, his feet lifted slowly and painfully with every step, yet still his blue eyes flashing with the fire of indignant protest.

"Me a-bunkin' comfortable in the Old Men's, an' yew a-takin' keer o' them Halsey young 'uns fer ten cents a week! I wouldn't take keer o' 'em fer ten cents a short breath. Thar be young 'uns an' young 'uns," he elucidated, "but they be tartars! Yew'd be in yer grave afore the fust frost; an' who's gwine ter bury yer—the taown?" His tone became gentle and broken: "No, no, Angy. Yew be a good gal, an' dew just as we calculated on. Yew fine the Old Ladies'; yew've got friends over thar, yew'll git erlong splendid. An' I'll git erlong tew. Yew know"—throwing his shoulders back, he assumed the light, bantering tone so familiar to his wife—"the poor-house doors is always open. I'd jest admire ter go thar. Thar's a rocking chair in every room, and they say the grub is A No. 1." He winked at her, smiling his broadest smile in his attempt to deceive.

Both wink and smile, however, were lost upon Angy, who was busy dividing the apple sauce in such a way that Abe would have the larger share without suspecting it, hoping the while that he would not notice the absence of butter at this last home meal. She herself had never believed in buttering bread when there was "same" to eat with it; but Abe's extravagant tastes had always carried him to the point of desiring both butter and sauce as a relish to his loaf.

"Naow, fur's I'm concerned," pursued Abe, "I hain't got nothin' agin the poorhouse fer neither man ner woman. I'd as lief let yew go than 'stid o' me; fer I know very well that's what yew're a-layin' out fer ter do. Yes, yes, mother, yew can't fool me. But think what folks would say! Think what they would say! They'd crow, 'Thar's Abe a-takin' his comfort in the Old Men's hum, an' Angelina, she's a-eatin' her heart out in the poor-house!'"

Angelina had, indeed, determined to be the one to go to the poorhouse; but all her life long she had cared, perhaps to a faulty degree, for "what folks would say." Above all, she cared now for what they had said and what they still might say about her husband and this final ending to his downhill road. She rested her two hands on the table and looked hard at the apple sauce until it danced before her eyes. She could not think with any degree of clearness. Vaguely she wondered if their supper would dance out of sight before they could sit down to eat it. So many of the good things of life had vanished ere she and Abe could touch their lips to them. Then she felt his shaking hand upon her shoulder and heard him mutter with husky tenderness:

"My dear, this is the fust chance since we've been married that I've had to take the wust of it. Don't say a word agin it naow, mother, don't yer.

I've brought yer ter this pass. Lemme bear the brunt o' it."

Ah, the greatest good of all had not vanished, and that was the love they bore one to the other. The sunshine came flooding back into mother's heart. She lifted her face, beautiful, rosy, eternally young. This was the man for whom she had gladly risked want and poverty, the displeasure of her own people, almost half a century ago. Now at last she could point him out to all her little world and say, "See, he gives me the red side of the apple!" She lifted her eyes, two bright sapphires swimming with the diamond dew of unshed, happy tears.

"I'm a-thinkin', father," she twittered, "that naow me an' yew be a-gwine so fur apart, we be a-gittin' closer together in speret than we've ever been afore."

Abe bent down stiffly to brush her cheek with his rough beard, and then, awkward, as when a boy of sixteen he had first kissed her, shy, ashamed at this approach to a return of the old-time love making, he seated himself at the small, bare table.

This warped, hill-and-dale table of the drop-leaves, which had been brought from the attic only today after resting there for ten years, had served as their first dining-table when the honeymoon was young. Abe thoughtfully drummed his hand on the board, and as Angy brought the teapot and sat down opposite him, he recalled:

"We had bread an' tea an' apple sass the day we set up housekeepin', dew yew remember, Angy?"

"An' I burned the apple sass," she supplemented, whereupon Abe chuckled, and Angy went on with a thrill of genuine gladness over the fact that he remembered the details of that long-ago honeymoon as well as she: "Yew don't mind havin' no butter to-night, dew yer, father?"

He recalled how he had said to her at that first simple home meal: "Yew don't mind bein' poor with me, dew yer, Angy?" Now, with a silent shake of his head, he stared at her, wondering how it would seem to eat at table when her face no longer looked at him across the board, to sleep at night when her faithful hand no longer lay within reach of his own. She lifted her teacup, he lifted his, the two gazing at each other over the brims, both half-dressed, half-comforted by the fact that love still remained their toastmaster after the passing of all the years. Of a sudden Angy exclaimed, "We fergot ter say grace." Shocked and contrite, they covered their eyes with their trembling old hands and murmured together: "Dear Lord, we thank thee this day for our daily bread."

Angy opened her eyes to find the red roses cheerfully facing her from the back of the rocking chair. A robin had hopped upon the window sill just outside the patched and rusty screen and was joyfully caroling to her his views of life. Through the window vines in which the bird was almost meshed the sunlight sifted softly into the stripped, bare and lonely room. Angy felt strangely encouraged and comforted. The roses became symbolical to her of the "lilies of the field which toil not, neither do they spin;" the robin was one of the "two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father;" while the sunlight seemed to call out to the little old lady who hoped and believed and loved much: "Fear ye not therefore. Ye are of more value than many sparrows!"

CHAPTER II.

"Good-by."

When the last look of parting had been given to the old kitchen and the couple passed out of doors, hushed and trembling, they presented an inconspicuously brave, gala-day appearance. Both were dressed in their best. To be sure, Abraham's Sunday suit had long since become his only, everyday suit as well, but he wore his Sabbath-day hat, a beaver of ancient design, with an air that cast its reflection over all his apparel. Angelina had on a black silk gown as shiny as the freshly polished stove she was leaving in her kitchen—a gown which testified from its voluminous hem to the soft yellow net at the throat that Angelina was as neat a mender and darning as could be found in Suffolk county.

A black silk bonnet snuggled close to her head, from under its brim peeping a single pink rose. Every spring for ten years Angelina had renewed the youth of this rose by treating its petals with the tender red dye of a budding oak.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Boys Will Be Boys.

Does the modern small boy really care whether candy is a trifle shopworn or not? Will strawberry cream soda gurgles less deliciously down his gullet because it foams in a semiopaque glass? Can he resist the lure of highly rouged candy, and will he postpone gluing his jaws together with a stick of licorice while he conducts an autopsy to detect the presence of lampblack in it? If he has attained all this mastery over his elemental nature, as the council of the Housewives' league would have us believe, he must have become a most insufferable young prig. Alas for the days of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn!

Average Consumption of Water.

While the average amount of water used daily in the cities of the United States varies from 50 to 150 gallons per capita, there is an almost uniform consumption of a little more than half a gallon by each person for drinking purposes.

Japan's Hard Working Women

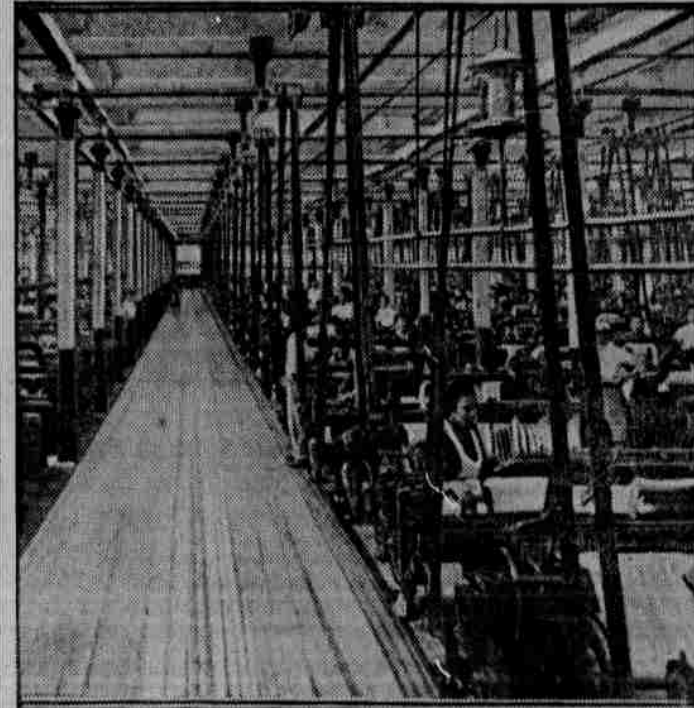
G LADLY though I would linger on the more beautiful and romantic aspects of Japan, the Japan of the iris and cherry blossom, of violet lake and pine-clad mountains, of maple trees running in autumn like tongues of flame along the hillside, of little fishing villages crowding the romantic shores of the inland sea, of Fuji, snow-powdered and aloof, hanging as it were in midair 'twixt earth and sky—it is of another and less lovely Japan I must speak today. Modern industry has laid its hand already on this race, writes Violet Markham, in the Westminster Gazette, and the pressure is not likely to grow less heavy as time goes on.

The hand-to-hand struggle with a somewhat reluctant nature in wringing from her the means of subsistence for a population of 53,000,000 people is a severe one. Japan is a mountainous country, and though certain great tracts of rich alluvial plain exist, such districts are the exception. Every inch of possible land is cultivated, and the series of terraces carried up the hillsides tell their own tale, showing, as in China, how no available pocket of soil has been overlooked. Rice is the staple food of the people, and from end to end of Japan the rice fields are the salient feature of the landscape.

But behind the rice fields of Japan stands the shadow of the needs of the

ing this term they seldom leave the compound, and cannot, save under very exceptional circumstances, break their indentures. Sunday, of course, is not kept in the far East; the principle of one day's rest in seven does not obtain there. The cotton factories work day and night on shifts of 12 hours each, and there are two holidays in the month, more, one suspects, for the needs of the machinery than that of the human beings. The average daily wage of the female silk spinner is 30 sen (say 14 cents), and of the female weaver 25 sen. But from this sum nine sen is deducted daily for food.

Compounds and factories alike vary in cleanliness and comfort. Some factories are well constructed and well ventilated and filled with machinery coming from Oldham. Others are dirty, dilapidated and ramshackle. It is the same with the compounds. When a factory has to provide accommodation for 1,000 or 2,000 women operatives we may well scrutinize the conditions, even when the altogether simple standard of life in the far East is taken into account. The Japanese have no beds, but sleep rolled up in quilts on the floor. In one compound I visited, I saw 24 girls asleep in a dormitory 24 by 13 feet, and this is no uncommon state of affairs. Phthisis is a disease which is beginning to play havoc in the cotton mills, and when



COTTON MILL IN KOBE

Japanese people. There seems nothing grown but rice, and yet, even so, any failure of the crop means famine and starvation for whole districts. Japan, in a word, is hard put to it to make both ends meet, and the position to which she has arrived among the great nations of the world strains the slender resources of her people almost to the breaking point. Matters are not made more easy from the fact that monopoly and protection direct her national and commercial policy.

Bounties for Industries.

The establishment of factories and industries in Japan is a matter which causes the government much preoccupation. It is sought by bounties to foster and encourage infant industries, and in Manchuria there is much grumbling over the preferential position Japanese control of the railway achieves for Japanese goods. So far the number of operatives, male and female, in Japan is but small—793,885—as compared with her total population of 53,000,000. But the statistics published by the Economical and Financial Annual of the department of finance, 1913, afford much food for reflection when taken in conjunction with the actual conditions of life and labor revealed by a visit to a Japanese mill. According to these returns there are in Japan 395,196 male operatives over fourteen years of age, and 427,676 women. Under fourteen years of age there are 12,192 males and 48,821 females employed.

The dominant industries in Japan are cotton and silk, and they absorb the largest proportion of the workers, namely, 448,243 persons, male and female. In raw silk, cotton spinning, and cotton weaving we find employed 45,496 men and 293,468 women. In the thirty-two Japanese cotton mills for which returns are given the average number of working days per annum was 325, and the average number of working hours per day was 22.44. The two great centers of industrial activity are Tokyo and Osaka. I penetrated, not without considerable difficulty, into various cotton mills in Japan.

Women and Children in Factories.

Generally speaking, Japanese women engage in the cotton trade work under contracts essentially servile in character. They are indentured for a period of three years, and live in compounds attached to the factory. Dur-

as in many cases, girls employed on the day and night shifts use the same dormitories and no proper ventilation is possible, it is easy to understand the spread of this dread scourge.

The Japanese women are fragile little creatures, whose appearance does not encourage the idea that they can be tossed without protection into the fierce stream of industrial competition. These girls, drawn as they are from the farming and fishing class, often return home utterly broken in health at the end of their indentures. Some factories cater for the health and even amusement of their operatives. In one compound I saw a theater and also a shrine erected to the memory of those who died in the mills. Hospitals, unfortunately, are necessary adjuncts, some clean and well-managed, others slack and dirty. In one compound there would be a strip of garden nicely kept with flowers, in another a dank, depressing yard. Even at the best, who could wish for a young girl to spend three of the best years of her life under such conditions? But the Japanese daughter has few rights over her own person. If her family is poor, up to the present she has resigned herself to the fate to which her parents may consign her, being practically sold by them either to factory, geisha house, or the deeper degradation of the Yoshiwara.

That the girls themselves are beginning to revolt against such conditions is a healthy and desirable sign of the times in Japan. The difficulty of obtaining cheap labor may lead to a reform of factory life from within. Though living-in is the rule for women, it is not invariable, and I saw one factory where a large proportion of women lived out. Here arose the different evil of the employment of married women, this particular factory having a nursery attached where the women left their babies. But unquestionably there was a less coarse, hopeless look about the women who lived out and had some redeeming influences of home in their lives than what one noticed about the listless girls of the compounds. This circumstance struck me very forcibly in a very dirty match factory, where all the girls lived at home. Despite the conditions under which they worked and the long hours, the women did not look anemic or ill nourished.

WHAT THEY WRITE ON

WAR CORRESPONDENTS SEEM TO USE ANYTHING HANDY.

Magnificent Work Being Done in the Field on Seemingly an Endless Variety of Strange Materials.

"About these war correspondents," said the patient investigator. "What I want to know about them is this: Can they never, by any chance, find a table of any sort to write on?"

"A table?" echoed the listener. "Why, I suppose they can. If they don't write on tables, what do they write on?"

"Ah," said the investigator, "that is just the point. What do they? It strikes me that one of the curious developments of this war is the variety of articles that these correspondents use for writing desks.

"The record is obtained from current journals. You will observe that I have here a pile of French, English, and American newspapers. After studying them for half a day I am in a position to supply some interesting facts about war correspondents.

"I find," the investigator continued, "that Correspondent No. 1 began his story this way: 'I am writing this on the bottom of an upturned coal scuttle which belonged to the train dispatcher at Senlis.'"

"Correspondent No. 2 starts out this way: 'I am writing this story on the top of a battered tea canister.' Correspondent No. 3 had found a tin wash basin somewhere, and was using that for a writing desk. Correspondent No. 4 had been lucky enough to find a refuge in the cellar of a house and was writing on a champagne case. No. 5 was less fortunate. He had to make shift with a flat-bottomed beef tin. No. 6 was heroically scribbling with the flap of a soldier's knapsack for a desk!"

"It is discouraging to the rest of us," said the listener, "to think what splendid stuff those fellows turn out under such adverse conditions. It is certain that the writing desk does not make the writer."

"Conversely, it is equally certain that the writer is everywhere capable of making his own desk. Listen to this chap: 'I have been in a trench all day, and am writing this on the saddle still buckled to the back of a dead horse belonging to a wounded officer.' Something thrilling about that, eh?"

"Thrilling?" said the listener. "It's magnificent."

"And what about this? 'I am writing these dispatches on a heap of saints and angels dislodged from the cornice of a bombarded cathedral.'"

"I don't approve of that," said the listener. "If I had written on the remains of those saints and angels I shouldn't tell it."

"Oh, I don't know," said the investigator. "Not many people get a chance to write war correspondence on thirteenth-century angels. It is only natural that those who do should like to talk about it."

Words Not Adequate.

Human emotions may be portrayed with words, Anger and every emotion are common qualities, generally understood. But the external spectacle, the Zambesi that leaps over a 400-foot precipice, the active volcano, the geyser that hurls boiling water into the heavens, the hurricane, the battle, flood, earthquake, conflagration—these elemental things cannot be portrayed by the finest artifice. They must be seen, heard, realized through an impact of the senses before they gain full meaning. In a measure the gas well at White Point comes under the head of spectacles which cannot be portrayed. No man can imagine the million devils who toss that thick, gray slime into the atmosphere as if it were the froth of eggs!—Corpus Christi Caller.

Slit Pocket to Show Gun.

Can a revolver plainly visible through a slit in a hip pocket be classified as a "concealed deadly weapon?" This is a question that stumped Police Judge Keffer when Ernest Snead was arraigned before him on this charge. Snead said in court he discovered the revolver on a table. He knew it belonged to Constable Ernest Jones and stuck it in his pocket to keep until Jones should appear, he said. Sent out on an errand, Snead forgot the weapon was in his possession until near the city hall.

He slit his pocket so that the revolver was exposed. He believed this would excuse him. It enabled a policeman to see the firearm and caused his arrest. A conviction means a prison sentence and fine.—Atlantic City Dispatch to New York World.

Myrtle Reed's Tribulations.

What would have become of Spencer's "Data of Ethics" if he had had two dressmakers in the house while writing it? What of Tadema's "Spring" if a passing wind had blown his bunch of false puffs or his coronet braid onto the wet point of the temple gates, What of "Crossing the Bar" if Tennyson's side combs and his hairpins had suddenly dropped and his transformation pompadour had soaked up every drop of ink in the house before he could get it off his desk? What of Elizabeth's prayer in "Tannhauser" if a frowsy maid had suddenly burst in upon the inspired Wagner with the cry: "Please, sir, little Willie has fell down the wall!"—From Myrtle Reed's posthumous book, "A Woman's Career."