

# Old Lady Number

## 31

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"The Story of Sarah"  
"The Ship of Dreams"  
Etc.

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### SYNOPSIS.

Captain Abraham Rose and Angelina, his wife, have lost their little home through Abe's unshrewd purchase of Tensley Gold mining stock. Their household goods sold, the \$100 auction money, all they have left, will place Abe in the Old Man's home, or Anny in the Old Ladies' home. Both are self-sacrificing but Abe decides: "My dear this is the first time I've had a chance to take the wust of it." The old couple bid good-by to the little house. Terror of "what folks will say" sends them along by paths to the gate of the Old Ladies' home. Miss Abigail, matron of the Old Ladies' home, hears of the ill fortune of the old couple. She tells the other old ladies, and Blossy, who has paid a double fee for the only double bed-chamber, voices the unanimous verdict that Abe must be taken in with his wife. Abe awakens next morning to find that he is "Old Lady No. 11." The old ladies give him such a warm welcome that he is made to feel at home at once.

### CHAPTER IV—Continued.

But what was this? Blossy, leading all the others in a resounding call of "Welcome!" and then Blossy drawing her two hands from behind her back. One held a huge blue cup, the other the saucer to match. She placed the cup in the saucer and held it out to Abraham. He trudged down the few steps to receive it, unashamed now of the tears that coursed down his cheeks. With a burst of delight he perceived that it was a mustache cup, such as the one he had always used at home until it had been set for safe-keeping on the top pantry shelf to await the auction, where it had brought the price of eleven cents with half a paper of tacks thrown in.

And now as the tears cleared away he saw, also, what Anny's eyes had already noted, the inscription in warm crimson letters on the shining blue side of the cup, "To Our Beloved Brother."

### CHAPTER V.

#### The Head of the Corner.

Everybody wore their company manners to the breakfast table—the first time in the whole history of the home when company manners had graced the initial meal of the day. Being pleasant at supper was easy enough, Aunt Nancy used to say, for every one save the unreasonably cantankerous, and being agreeable at dinner was not especially difficult; but no one short of a saint could be expected to smile of mornings until sufficient time had been given to discover whether one had stepped out on the wrong or the right side of the bed.

This morning, however, no time was needed to demonstrate that everybody in the place had gotten out on the happy side of his couch. Even the deaf-and-dumb gardener had untwisted his surly temper, and as Abraham entered the dining-room, looked in at the east window with a conciliatory grin and nod which said plainly as words:

"'Tis a welcome sight indeed to see one of my own kind around this establishment!"

"Why don't he come in?" questioned Abe, waving back a greeting as well as he could with the treasured cup in one of his hands and the saucer in the other; whereupon Sarah Jane, that ugly duckling, explained that the fellow, being a confirmed woman hater, cooked all his own meals in the smoke house, and insisted upon all his orders being left on a slate outside the tool-house door. Abe sniffed disdainfully, contemplating her homely countenance, over which this morning's mood had cast a not unlovely transforming glow.

"Why, the scallawag!" He frowned so at the face in the window that it immediately disappeared. "Yew don't mean ter tell me he's sot ag'in yew gals? He must be crazy! Sech a handsome, clever set o' women I never did see!"

Sarah Jane blushed to the roots of her thin, straight hair and sat down, suddenly disarmed of every porcupine quill that she had hidden under her wings; while there was an agreeable little stir among the sisters.

"Set down, all hands! Set down!" enjoined Miss Abigail, fluttering about with the heaviness of a fat goose. "Brother Abe—that's what we're all agreed to call yew, by unanimous vote—yew set right here at the foot of the table. Aunt Nancy always had the head an' me the foot; but I only kept the foot, partly becuz thar wa'n't no man fer the place, and partly becuz I was taw sizable ter squeeze in anywhere else. Seem's as Sister Anny is sech a little mite, though, I guess she kin easy make room fer me t'other side o' her."

Abe could only bow he thanks as he put his gift down on the table and took the prominent place assigned to him. The others seated, there was a

solemn moment of waiting with bowed heads. Aunt Nancy's trembling voice arose—the voice which had jealously guarded the right of saying grace at table in the Old Ladies' home for twenty years—not, however, in the customary words of thanksgiving, but in a peremptory "Brother Abe!"

Abraham looked up. Could she possibly mean that he was to establish himself as the head of the household by repeating grace? "Brother Abe!" she called upon him again. "Yew've askt a blessin' fer one woman fer many a year; supposin' yew ask it fer thirty!"

Amid the amazement of the other sisters, Abe mumbled, and muttered, and murmured—no one knew what words; but all understood the overwhelming gratitude behind his incoherence, and all joined heartily in the Amen. Then, while Mrs. Homan, the cook of the week, went bustling out into the kitchen, Aunt Nancy felt that it devolved upon her to explain her action. It would never do, she thought, for her to gain a reputation for self-effacement and sweetness of disposition at her time of life.

"Son, I want yew to understand one thing now at the start. Yew treat us right, an' we'll treat yew right. That's all we ask o' yew. Miss Ellie, pass the radishes."

"I'll do my best," Abe hastened to assure her. "Hy-guy, that coffee smells some kind o' good, don't it? Between the smell o' the stuff an' the looks o' my cup, it'll be so temptin' that I'll wish I had the neck of a gi-raffe, an' could taste it all the way down. Anny, I be afraid we'll git the gout a-livin' so high. Look at this here cream!"

Smiling, joking, his lips insisting upon joking to cover the natural feeling of embarrassment incident to this first meal among the sisters, but with his voice breaking now and again with emotion, while from time to time he had to steal his handkerchief to his old eyes. Abe passed successfully through the—to him—elaborate breakfast. And Anny sat in rapt silence, but with her face shining so that her quiet was the stillness of eloquence. Once Abe startled them all by rising stealthily from the table and seizing the morning's newspaper, which lay upon the buffet.

"I knowed it!" caviled Lazy Daisy sotto voce to no one in particular. "He couldn't wait for the news till he was through eatin'!" But Abe had folded the paper into a stout weapon, and, creeping toward the window, despatched by a quick, adroit movement a fly which had alighted upon the screen.

"I hate the very sight o' them air pesky critters," he explained half apologetically. "Thar, thar's another one," and slaughtered that.

"My, but yew kin get 'em, can't yew?" spoke Miss Abigail admiringly. "Them tew be the very ones I tried ter ketch all day yiste'day; I kin see as a fly-ketcher yew be agoin' ter be wuth a farm ter me. Set down an' try some o' this here strawberry preserve."

But Abe protested that he could not eat another bite unless he should get up and run around the house to "joggle down" what he had already swallowed. He leaned back in his chair and surveyed the family: on his right, generous-hearted Blossy, who had been smiling approval and encouragement at him all through the repast; at his left, and just beyond Anny, Miss Abigail indulging in what remained on the dishes now that she discovered the others to have finished; Aunt Nancy keenly watching him from the head of the board; and all the other sisters "betwixt an' between."

He caught Mrs. Homan's eye where she stood in the doorway leading into the kitchen, and remarked pleasantly: "Ma'am, yew oughter set up a pancake shop in York. Yew could make a fortune at it. I hain't had sech a meal o' vittles sence I turned fifty year o' age."

A flattered smile overspread Mrs. Homan's visage, and the other sisters, noting it, wondered how long it would be before she showed her claws in Abraham's presence.

"Hy-guy, Anny," Abe went on, "yew can't believe nothin' yew hear, kin yew? Why, folks have told me that yew ladies—what yew hittin' my foot fer, mother? Folks have told me, a twinkle of amusement in his eye at the absurdity, "that yew fight among yerselves like cats an' dogs, when, law! I never see sech a clever lot o' women gathered together in all my life. An' I believe—mother, I hain't a-sayin' nothin'! I jest want ter let 'em know what I think on 'em. I believe that thar must be three hundred hearts in this here place 'tild o' thirty. But dew yew know, gals, folks outside even so fur 'er ter say that yew throw plates at one another!"

There was a moment's silence; then a little gasp first from one and then from another of the group. Every one looked at Mrs. Homan, and from Mrs. Homan to Sarah Jane. Mrs. Homan tightened her grip on the pancake turner; Sarah Jane uneasily moved her long fingers within reach of a sturdy little red-and-white pepper pot. Another moment passed, in which the air seemed filled with the promise of an electric storm. Then Blossy spoke hurriedly—Blossy, the tactician—clasping her hands together and bringing Abe's attention to herself.

"Really! You surprise me! You don't mean to say folks talk about us like that!"

"Slander is a dretful long-legged critter," amended Miss Abigail, smiling and signing in the same breath. "Sary Jane," inquired Mrs. Homan sweetly, "what's the matter with that pepper pot? Does it need fillin'?"

And so began the reign of peace in the Old Ladies' home.

### CHAPTER VI.

#### Indian Summer.

Miss Abigail had not banked in vain on the "foresightedness of the Lord." At the end of six months, instead of there being a shortage in her accounts because of Abe's presence, she was able to show the directors such a balance sheet as excelled all her previous commendable records.

"How do you explain it?" they asked her.

"We cast our bread on the waters," she answered, "an' Providence jest kept a-sendin' out the loaves." Again she said, "'Twas grinnin' that done it. Brother Abe he kept the gardener good-natured, an' the gardener he jest grinn'd at the garden sass until it was ashamed not ter flourish; an' Brother Abe kept the gals good-natured an' they wa'n't so niasy about what they eat; an' he kept the visitors a-laughin' jest ter see him here, an' when yew make folks laugh they want ter turn around an' dew somethin' fer yew. I tell yew, ef yew kin only keep grit enough ter grin, yew kin drive away a drought."

In truth, there had been no drought in the garden that summer, but almost a double yield of corn and beans; no drought in the gifts sent to the home, but showers of plenty. Some of these came in the form of fresh fish and clams left at the back door; some in luscious fruits; some in barrels of clothing. And the barrels of clothing solved another problem; for no longer did their contents consist solely of articles of feminine attire. "Biled shirts" poured out of them; socks and breeches, derby hats, coats and negligees; until Aunt Nancy with a humorous twist to her thin lips inquired if there were thirty men in this establishment and one woman.

"I never thought I'd come to wearin' a quilted silk basque with tassels on it," Abe remarked one day on being urged to try on a handsome smoking jacket. "Dew I look like one of them sissy-boys, er jest a dude?"

"It's dretful becoming," insisted Anny, "bewtiful! Ain't it, gals?"

Every old lady nodded her head with an air of proud proprietorship, as if to say, "Nothing could fall to become our brother." And Anny nodded her head, too, in delighted approval of their appreciation of "our brother" and "my husband."

Beautiful, joy-steeped, pleasure-filled days these were for the couple, who had been cramped for life's smallest necessities so many meager years. Anny felt that she had been made miraculously young by the birth of this new Abraham—almost as if at last she had been given the son for whom in her youth she had prayed with impassioned appeal. Her old-wife love became rejuvenated into a curious mixture of proud mother-love and young-wife leaning, as she saw Abe win every heart and become the center of the community.

"Why, the sisters all think the sun rises an' sets in him," Anny would whisper to herself sometimes, awed by the glorious wonder of it all.

The sisters fairly vied with one another to see how much each could do for the one man among them. Their own preferences and prejudices were magnanimously thrust aside. In a body they besought their guest to smoke as freely in the house as out of doors. Miss Abigail even traded some of her garden produce for tobacco, while Miss Ellie made the old gentleman a tobacco pouch of red flannel so generous in its proportions that on a pinch it could be used as a chest protector.

Then Ruby Lee, not to be outdone by anybody, produced, from no one ever discovered where, a mother-of-pearl manicure set for the delight and mystification of the hero; and even Lazy Daisy went so far as to cut some red and yellow tissue paper into squares under the delusion that some time, somehow, she would find the energy to roll these into spools for the lighting of Abe's pipe. And each and every sister from time to time contributed some gift or suggestion to her "brother's" comfort.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

#### How the Rain Bore Holes.

When rain falls it does not actually soak into the earth, but bores its way in, forming tiny tubes, says the *Rehoboth Sunday Herald*. These tubes are so small that it would be impossible to insert a hair in one of them without bursting its walls. Sometimes the tubes are bored down to a depth of four or five feet. When the surface dries the water evaporates from the tubes, just as it would from a pipe. If the tube is twisted it takes longer for the water to evaporate.

If one takes a rake and stirs the ground after each rain he breaks the tops of the tubes and the water will stand in them for months. In this way the farmers of the West, on semi-arid lands, store the rainfalls one year and raise a crop of wheat every other year, there being sufficient water in two years, but not enough in one, to raise a crop.

#### Church, State and Poor.

A book on "The Church, the State and the Poor" has been written by an English vicar. The book is comprehensive, tracing the subject of prerogation days. The author regrets that during the growth of collectivism, under which he classifies what is called "Christian socialism," the church has trusted too much to the state to better the conditions among the poor. Now there is a revival of interest in the welfare of the poor on the part of the church. The writer's contention is that a firm belief in the Christian creed is the only inspiration and guide to any effort to solve "the social problem."

## For Southern Climes or Winter Gayeties



VIYING with each other in show-cases of the big shops, hats intended for the tourist and sojourner in southern climes, and millinery for women who are content to enjoy the gayeties of winter at home, are dividing attention and honors. There are fewer of those for the tourist, but they sing of spring and flowers and bid the attention of everyone—for awhile.

The majority of sales will go to the home-staying contingent, and brilliant and lovely are the head coverings which one can imagine at the reception, the concert, the lecture and at afternoon tea, not to speak of all the jeweled and feathered and flowered ornaments that make up so much of the attraction of the theater and dance.

Three adorable hats are shown in the picture given here, one of them designed for wear in the South. Whether one needs a summertime hat or not it is interesting as a thing of beauty and a premonition of spring. It is a pretty turban, to be set square on the head (no sidewise tilt), which is something new as to pose. The coronet is of fine hemp braid in light

JULIA BOTTOMLEY.

## Afternoon Gown of Taffeta



A PRETTY and simple afternoon dress of taffeta silk which will commend itself to the woman who likes an odd style is shown in the picture given here. It manages to be very unusual without being bizarre, and very noticeable without losing refinement.

The model, in its outlines, suggests nothing so much as the silhouette of a Japanese lady. This is a very clever management of modes of the present, and the West, into a semblance of those of the Orient. The gown is especially adapted to small and youthful figures—if they be prettily curved. It is not a dress for the angular young girl.

A changeable taffeta should be chosen for a dress of this kind, since the trimming is of the same material as the gown. The two-color effects and the play of light in changeable silks is a substitute for decorations. Instead of embroidery or braid, or other applied trimmings, ruchings, made of full box platings of narrow strips of silk, are wonderfully effective. And there is no silk quite so well adapted to making ruchings as taffeta.

The composition of the gown is so simple and so plainly set forth in the picture that it hardly needs description. The wide girde, swathing the

JULIA BOTTOMLEY.

#### Handkerchief Collar.

A pattern is sold which shows how a rolling lingerie collar may be cut from a 13-inch handkerchief, and as almost everyone has a choice handkerchief or two stored away some place, one of these patterns could be bought to make the heliroom useful. The work of making such a collar is very simple, as, naturally, the outside edges of the handkerchief form the outside edges of the collar. Wires can be neatly fastened into these handkerchief collars so that they may be rolled in any desired way.

## READY FOR STERN WAR

### WEST INDIAN ISLANDS ARM FOR DEADLY STRIFE.

Take the Prospect of Being Involved in the European Conflict Very Seriously—Forces Like Those of Comic Opera.

A cargo of war tales has arrived from the West Indies. Every native there sleeps with his gun under his pillow.

Little specks of island that no one ever heard of north of the tropic of Cancer are throwing up towering earthworks and barefooted natives, yesterday's nobodies, are today generals; roustabouts are soldiers; every town has a guard; every island distrusts every other island. Ten thousand rusty flintlock muskets rule the land, and from the sea come tales of strange men-of-war threading in and out among the islands, always seeking and never finding one another.

"Every native on the island of St. Lucia is happy these days, for he 'totes' a gun, rides on a bicycle and marches behind a brass band, and the government pays for it all," says the purser of a West Indian steamer recently docked in New York.

"Some of the strangest looking bicycles I ever saw have been commandeered by the authorities. Some of them are the old high-wheel affairs that our daddies rode; some of them have no tires; most of them are red with rust and all of them squeak. I heard the troops coming two blocks away. The arms they carry are in the same class.

"At Barbadoes, every negro and Chinaman on the island has joined the army. They have what they call a 'life guard,' to protect the place. What they are afraid of I don't know, but I heard that they have been told the kaiser was planning to send his fleet over to capture the possession.

"That was enough for those natives. They threw up a line of breastworks and they fire a cannon every time a ship is sighted. They have burnt up a lot of powder that way, I understand. Whenever that old cannon cuts loose the army come likety-split for the shore. They line up behind the breastworks with their muzzle-loaders and their derringers and you've got to show them that you don't mean any monkey business.

"At Dominica, near St. Thomas, the natives have built a little fort just to fight the German navy when it does come over. There are not enough white men in Dominica to hold a meeting and not many more colored. In the center of their fort they have planted a tall flag pole. Every morning at daylight a man pulls himself up to the top of that flag pole and sticks there, looking out to sea. He is looking for the German navy. Two hours later he comes down and another man takes his place. This has been kept up every day for weeks, from dawn till darkness.

"English, French and German warships chase each other around the island, and it's no wonder the natives are shifty. At St. Lucia there were 19 ships tied up, all afraid to stir outside the harbor."

#### History of the War.

"When the history of this war comes to be written," is a constantly recurring journalistic phrase, as if the story of this great conflict could ever be written. You may be fairly certain that no one under the rank of an archangel, in close touch with omniscience, will ever write the full history of the world war. Down below there isn't the knowledge, and there isn't the time. There will come sectional accounts. But if in the fullness of time a world syndicate succeeds in getting some million tons of print within covers, the public will (one hopes) be thinking of something else.

Yet the literature of the war as a personal drama is the domain of the private soldier, and the best letters from the front have been written by the private soldier. On that side of the literature of war the editor of the *Book Monthly* has his eye. He is a specialist on the "Epistles of Atkins," and already he has been gloating and gleaming with some thousands of soldiers' letters before him.—*London Chronicle*.

#### The New York Standard.

"New York is mighty hard on clothes. Of course I'm a good deal of a stranger, and I haven't many invitations, and so don't need so large a wardrobe as I did in Dallas, but still I have to dress better than I did there. The standard is higher. There never is a time when you can just put on any old thing. In New York people dress up to go to market, or to early church. When John takes me to the theater I've got to look nice, or I couldn't enjoy the play. If I walk down the avenue in a suit that isn't just right, I am self-conscious and pessimistic. I see nothing but the reflection of my 'tacky' self in the big windows. I simply must dress well, if it takes all my time. Isn't the war news awful? I've read only the headlines, but won't it be funny if next year we have to get our fashions from Berlin?"—*From the Atlantic*.

#### Silk From Seaweed.

A French scientist has succeeded in making artificial silk from the "silime" of the seaweed which is thrown up in immense masses on the coasts of Normandy, Scotland, Norway and Canada. The fabric is of excellent quality and can be produced much more cheaply than any other form of silk.