

The Force Of Example.

By VIOLA ROSEBORO.

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It was in the old time, and it was the old story. A man and a maid sat under a tree, a little stream at their feet and the lush summer all around. The land was wild and beautiful. The cultivated fields to be seen by a bird above their heads were only little, irregular islands grouped through the sea of forest. Near the pair—that is, not half a mile away—stood the largest and best farmhouses within many miles. It had a frame addition built in front of the older log structure, a big, rough, grassy yard, and at one side a garden equally divided between flowers and vegetables.

Two stout dames sat on the back gallery, one knitting, one with folded hands. "I tell you, Betty," said the idle one, "I don't give my approval to the way you're lettin' Lucindy carry on. That gal is the talk of the county."

"Now, Sist' Emmy," replied the other in an aggrieved, long suffering tone, "that's a terrible way to talk. It's unjust. The talk of the county," she repeated, "during into a little unusual figure of utterance, 'sounds as if the poor child had done somethin' disrespectful, and goodness knows, I don't know sense which there's a law afore she's ready."

"The trouble with that gal," said Sist' Emmy, "is that she's not ready to get married when she's ready." It was the belief of her relatives that Mrs. Emmeline Simms persisted in saying "gal" for the express purpose of mortifying and irritating them and that she particularly loved to so designate Lucinda, Lucinda being the source of certain innovations in the family English.

"There she sits out there," said Mrs. Simms, pointing to the pair visible as small blots under the distant feathery walnut tree, "a-lettin' that poor fool spark her and as like as not a-lettin' him 'pint the day ag'in, and then she'll go kick over the traces once more at the last minute. And, talk about bettin' the talk of the county, do you reckon, Betsey Ann, that anything is a goin' to be done about the footstool that gal broke off her wedding after they've begun to bake the cake? Do you?"

"Now, Sist' Emmy," began Lucinda's mother, exactly as before, "you know there was mighty little cake baked. You'd best come and hadn't fairly got to the fruit cake, and Lucindy never let it get that far afore, and she won't ag'in, 'cept she goes through with it. You forget the feelin's of a girl. They don't allus know their own minds. Ethan Simms is only your nephew by marriage, and Lucindy's your own blood niece, and my feelin's is hurt, Sist' Emmy."

"Betty Ann, don't begin like that. You know I'm as fond of Lucindy as if she was my own child, but you never did have no goverment, and I do say that to have all this courtin' startin' up ag'in with that eejit—I think the man's dropped, whether he's taken or not. I don't allus know their own minds. Ethan Simms is only your nephew by marriage, and Lucindy's your own blood niece, and my feelin's is hurt, Sist' Emmy."

Of course her own caprices were also being discussed by Lucinda and her lover under the walnut tree. Truth to tell, those caprices had always furnished them with conversational material, a commodity which otherwise they often must have lacked.

For four years they had been "courtin'," and three times a wedding day had been set. The last time, only three months before, the usual retreat by the unstable Lucinda had been delayed, as we have already learned, until publicity and general condemnation were its well merited portion.

Lucinda now stood under the walnut tree a lamentably attractive and appealing figure of a culprit. She was only a slip of a thing, though 19 years were quoted warningly to her. There were few unmarried girls in the settlement so old.

and forth, every dressed dish, while children and dogs of all colors and sizes appeared and disappeared on every side. Mrs. Todd, Lucinda's mother, treated Ethan with an effective hospitality intended to atone for what he might call the "staid indifference shown by her sister."

It shows how absorbing and delightful a topic was Lucinda's misconduct that this afternoon it had displaced the natural theme of the hour, and that a good one too. Mrs. Simms and Ethan were stopping overnight with the Todds on their way to a wedding. Lucinda was to go with them, and on the morrow the drive were to set out. A horseback journey of 35 miles more was the price, or the premium, for this social experience.

"If you had any proper shame," said Mrs. Simms that night after the candle was out, taking an unfair advantage of the fact that she was sharing Lucinda's bed, "you'd be too humbled to show your face at a weddin', and with Ethan too. I'd never show my face with you if Milly Anson wasn't my own cousin's stepdaughter and her cousin's family all been so dreadful thin skinned about the way Sarah's kin treats her. Now, praise the Lord, this is the last upstittin' botheration Sarah'll have to have with Milly, and she's been trial enough for a more adidle pated fly-up-the-creek than that nasty faced gal this settlement ain't never seed. Howsomers'?" Mrs. Simms asked, adding, remembering her text, "'tain't becomin' in me to talk long's she ain't never done nothin' to ekal my own flesh and blood niece. I tried hard enough yesterday to get that fool of a boy to go on with me to old Squire Humm's for the night, but he jest vowed that he'd come here or nary a step to no weddin' would he stir. He ain't no respect for himself. I can see what use a woman's got for sich a sort of a man."

This bait failed of a bite. Mindful of the morning's early start, Lucinda was successfuly giving her exclusive attention to the business of getting to sleep. She was not going to disturb herself. She might shed tears of repentance when with Ethan. She had none to spend for Aunt Emmy's delectation. Probably she comprehended that Aunt Emmy was well pleased at the worst. She adored Lucinda and loved dearly to see her have her own way. Her vanity was gratified for the whole sex at the darling with which the girl risked at the loss of a lover and kept him, and she had an unsurpassed opportunity for the dear joy of hectoring her younger sister, the poor lady without "goverment." In fact, she was never better pleased in her life.

The sun was just rising next day, when the three horses were brought up to the great wooden block by the front gate. And such a day as it was, all gold lighted blue and gold steeped dewy greenness!

"What's keepin' Lucindy? Does the gal think we're jest a-goin' to the fork of the road and that she's got halfen the day to spend puttin' a ridin' skirt over her head?" fussed Mrs. Simms as she gathered up the copperas dyed cotton folds of her own traveling costume and gave a final adjusting punch to the saddlebags.

"Lucindy! Lucindy! Come out here!" called her mother sharply, desiring to demonstrate her denied powers of familiarity discipline. "What air you doin' keepin' everybody waitin'? Put down that baby. You're only gettin' him ready to cry when he sees you're a-goin'. You, Rose, take that baby round to the kitchen. Now, pick up that snack basket and come along."

"She ought to be goin' to her own weddin', oughtn't she?" said Ethan to the sympathetic mother as he lifted his bright faced, springing sweetheart into the saddle. No horse blocks for them, if you please.

"I wouldn't be goin' if it was my own. I'd be stayin', and I'd have to lose all this year's blessed ridin'," said she. The small saying was afterward remembered and was quoted for many years among the Todds as if it were a witicism, but now it passed without more notice than an irrelevant speech.

"Well, bless you, honey," said her mother as she settled her skirts for her. Surely it was not to be expected that government should always prevail and compass be the rule of life.

banquet. Even Ethan did not know she was a beauty, but thought it by some special warping of perception that she seemed so to him. Truly, with the world as it is, and a bit of a girl with her life to shape with such a host of biddings and forbidings upon her, who expects her to rise to fair dealing, with free and sovereign soul? Certainly Lucinda did not expect it of herself. She never dreamed of such a thing. She vaguely intended to marry Ethan some time if—maybe—but in the meantime she had no notion of permitting that she should be the only other woman in the world, not while she had eyes and such long lashes as well and was really very fond of the good Ethan. Why then? What affection! He was the most entertained man in seven counties. More over, he won the game. But this is anticipating.

The travelers went 25 miles the first day and then, all unannounced, descended upon a "neighborhood" of the night. Returned peddlars could not have been more heartily welcomed. Much squawking and fussing among the chickens roosting in the apple trees in the back yard followed their arrival and testified eloquently as to the supper that they were to enjoy. But our business lies now at the end of the journey.

Truly, Mrs. Simms had expressed herself with her customary insight and exactness when she called Milly Anson a pesty faced, adidle pated fly-up-the-creek. On all sides it was felt as an especial evidence of providential consideration that Milly had got a husband—or the promise of one. Here, again, I see strange evidence of the absence of just consideration for the masculine part of the race. No one could regard it as good fortune for a man to have Milly Anson as a wife, for in immediate female relatives alone were occupied with his fate.

Milly was now swimming in all the importance of the occasion—an importance which often unduly elates the most pleasing woman and which affected Milly in a way and degree well fitted toadden any observer, especially if she were an unmarried woman.

The most famous cake-maker of the town, who had been lodging in the kitchen for a week, was by no means unmarried, and she had the toleration born of a large experience of brides elect, yet even she found Milly unendurable.

"I have been asked to bake the cake at eleven o'clock this mornin' I married my first husband," said she afterward, "not only for my own kin, but among the Glesses and Simmonses, and down to Strathboro and over the Ridge, and I've seen a heap of foot gyls, but I'll gin up that Milly Anson that week was a notch beyond any 'em. I stood her jest as long as I could, and at last I broke out on her. It was jest the day before the thing was to come off, and she kep' teeterin' and titterin' in and out, a-jarrin' the floor and makin' my heart come in my mouth for fear my last big pound cake in the oven would fall, and I'd told her more'n a dozen times that every kin to stay in the house; but, no, sir, she would keep comin' to say how strange her feelin's was and that she knew she never could farn Tummas' ways and she never would 'a' done it if Tummas hadn't pestered her into it. Tom Simmonses—bless you! And lastly she bounced in on to me, catchin' hold of me, and me with my hands all in the flour, and says she, 'Oh, Cousin Liz, I'm s'posed to gettin' up a-cakin' for you, 'ow, it's my conviction that she'd made up her mind then as to what she was goin' to do and was sure enough gettin' a little fidgety, but in course I never had no such reflection then, and I'd had all I could stomach.' Milly Anson says I 'there's no need of your bein' any bigger eejit than the Lord made you. Stop a-catchin' on to me! I'm comin' out with your pertenses. If I Tom Simmonses'll marry you, you're fool, but you better have a thankful heart, and I reckon you have. As for bein' skeered, I wish you was skeered enough to break your appetite and stop you from eatin' them snowballs fast as I git the frost on 'em. You're a livin' example of the truth of the Bible and the wisdom of King Solomon,' says I, 'for he tells how the youth is disquieted for three things—ya, four—which it cannot bear,' says I, 'for I see that quatin the Bible ag'in, he says that he never more'n anything else—a servant when he's reigned! I went on, 'a fool when he's filled with meat, an handmaiden that's heir to her mistress and an ojeons woman when she's married or thinks she's goin' to be. It's the same thing. And now, if you think I made that up outen my own head, you go and read your Bible long enough and you'll farn better. At any rate, git back to the house, and don't you step your foot into this kitchen ag'in,' says I, 'for,' says I, 'holerin' after her—she'd done starvin', tryin' to keep me from takin' a joke—if you does,' says I, 'm'ry a table will I set for you. I'm tellin' you the truth, and you know what things is likely to be withouten me,' says I."

The famous cake-maker had relieved herself, but truth and Scripture still failed to make a new Milly, as a little time was to show. It was the afternoon of the wedding day when Lucinda arrived. The ceremony was to be performed that evening. The house was already full of guests and was like a hive of swarming bees, such a buzzing and hurrying and scurrying were there, for toilets were in the making, and many a white dress, brought like Lucinda's own, in saddlebags, must now be laced out. The kitchen quarters filled with never so much anxiety and turmoil of their own.

of infringement—Milly Anson of all people to imitate her? At least such guests as could leave that night took themselves away. Out trio were not among them. Till morning they must spend the weary, broken, dream haunted hours in the midst of the shattered household. They kept apart and spoke little. Lucinda writhed to see how plainly her aunt and Ethan recognized the special shame for their little party in this bigger sin and how plainly they showed their recognition. She denied to herself that she existed, and then its justice and denouement Aunt Emmy and Ethan for a "pair of nincoms, goin' round with their heads hangin' 'bout somethin' they had nothin' in this mortal world to do with." Yes, it was true. For once other considerations outweighed Aunt Emmy's appetite for sensation, and she was humbled.

Lucinda got up at dawn. She was pale, and her mouth was shut with a firmness quite absurd on such a beautiful little face. Before the sun rose she succeeded in getting hold of Ethan. She dragged him out of doors and into the dewy grass for private converse. The sleepless left his eyes when she faced him and said fiercely, "I want to go to Strathboro and git married just as soon as you can saddle up."

The poor man's head whirled. A hundred things seeming to demand consideration and time sprang to his mind, and with his arms ached to catch this small amazon off the ground and to his breast. But he was a wise one, was Ethan. He held himself quite still, as he might if a bird had lighted on his head, until he could answer quietly that he'd go right off and see about the horses.

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The men, more or less unhappy and agitated, tried to keep out of the way and staid chiefly out of doors. Despite intermittent decorous efforts to save himself for the great moment, the bridegroom was painfully conspicuous among those forming a marked and solitary man by reason of his "store" looks.

Robert Simms was exactly the sort of man who would say to himself, upon such an occasion as this, "I'm a little hard to bear, but now, as the common fate of bridegrooms, he gazed at that long tailed, brass buttoned line coat with heavy hooped collar. He was sadly depressed about his love affair. He was an excellent fellow, and there is evidence of it in the fact that he had moments of sympathy with Lucinda's reluctance to marry him.

"Marvel is that she ever thinks she will," he would say to himself, but final reflections always supported him in his desires, as is the way with final reflections, and he would conclude that nothing better than wedding him was likely to come to her. That he argued it out with his passion shows the reasonable temper of the man. And who would have liked him better for arriving at any other conclusion? Certainly no woman.

"Bright found him sitting alone on the fence, smoking and meditating means for bringing Lucinda to the altar. "If it was once done," he said to himself as he brought his long legs to the ground, knocked the ashes out of his pipe and returned it to his pocket, "she'd be better content nor she is now, but she is that skittish and she sees through me that quins that I don't know what sort of devices to fall upon."

In the house the candles were now lighted. Sleek ringleted young women came forth in groups; family potatoes disappeared; the store clothed bridegroom was followed a moment by the arriving parson, and then he, too, became invisible. The air was tense with expectation. Low, eager talk about tucks and embroidery, "fine swiss" and "sloek stockings" was drawing the women's heads together. Finally this died out. The parson was spirited away to the fatal upper regions. Still no bride and bridegroom. The delay was extraordinary. Opticians that it was outrageous were brewing for supper, you see, was still to come. An odd timeliness was in the air. In fact, to make a long story short, Milly Anson had chosen this hour to declare that she would not be married to Thomas Simmonses—not she!

Years, revellings, corporal shakings, threats of immediate death from her father, given with a truly awful sincerity, when all availed nothing. Milly was a weak creature and had capacities for submissiveness to be found in no other. She had long dreamed of following in Lucinda's footsteps. The morality which had been thrust upon Lucinda by the gospel served community shows before her as a prize to be achieved, and, moreover, there was a half cover and most respectable refuge in the men's tails about that acted as a belovus upon the flame of folly in Milly's bosom. At last she had seized her opportunity. She was capping all that had ever been heard of reluctant maidens. When the storm broke over her, she was frightened. Things did not seem exactly as she had forecast. "Tummas," for instance, was unbecomingly inexpressive and inactive amid all these violent energies; but, partly because she was frightened, she clung tenaciously to the one thing that in all the confusion she seemed able to grasp—the course of conduct marked out in happier moments. Her poor little aborted power of reasoning had of course left her at the first onslaught, and now to give way seemed to her darkened consciousness to be abandoning her only plank amid the whirling waters.

Imagine Lucinda's feelings. A well of bitterness were they within her as she sat trying to look unconcerned, while the company ebbed and surged about her in compressed but delicious excitement. But even now from all sides she felt eyes turning upon her. To be forever bracketed with this fool was sickening. And peeping her other emotions was undeniably a sense

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