

IN THE SHELTER OF THE STRIPES.

Continued from First Page.

"There, sonny! You can't do it better. Nobody could."

Virginia Rannels did not think that her part in the ceremony required special preparation, but two persons disagreed with her. One was the minister.



She was indeed a pleasant picture to contemplate.

tor's wife, who had been a dressmaker in her earlier days, and the other was Beantassel. The minister's wife insisted that there should be as much art to a flag drapery as to any other article of dress, and Beantassel urged the importance, even to a goddess, of appropriate pose. Rannels, to whom his granddaughter was incomparable in appearance, even when in a sunbonnet and with her hair in hand or when wearing a broom while the great coils of her hair were hidden by a dusty towel, at first pookpooked at both, but he afterward became their ally, and he erected in his sitting room a section of a flagstaff, with halyards, and he revealed in the rehearsal, conducted behind drawn shades by Beantassel and the minister's wife, for Virginia in her starred and striped drapery and liberty cap and mass of unbound rippling hair was indeed a pleasing picture to contemplate. She herself declared that all the preparations were nonsense, and that she could not understand why so much fuss was being made about so small a matter, but Beantassel dragged from his theatrical recollections the old saying that the smaller the part the more perfect the actor should be. Several times Virginia repeated of her promise and declared that she could never, never stand motionless beside the flagstaff while the entire Declaration was being read, as Beantassel's pictorial sense had planned, but her grandfather and the minister's wife insisted that the dignity of the occasion would be marred were she to sit during the reading.

"But I can't stand quiet so long; no body could," she protested.

"Oh, yes, you can," said Beantassel. "You'll be so close to the platform rail that you can lean against it as hard as you like and nobody'll be any the wiser. I've done it myself on the stage for half an hour at a time when I was set for a statue, and I hadn't a scrap of the splendid repose that you're so full of."

"But I'll know that a lot of people are staring at me all the while. That they are old acquaintances won't make any difference. 'Twill be awful! I shall be frightened out of my senses."

"You shan't do anything of the sort," said Beantassel, "for here's one sure cure for stage fright, and it's this: when you're not speaking, let your eyes give all your mind to them that bein' spoke."

"And you'll have grand lines to listen to that day, dear," added the minister's wife.

"Written by a Virginian, too," added the grandfather, "the man your grandfather's a man of the cloth."

"And," ventured Beantassel, with a sly look at the rehearsing goddess, "they'll be read by the finest looking man in all Farway or in all this state, I believe," a statement which caused Virginia to raise her head and shoulders slightly and to color noticeably as she twitched a fold of her drapery into a new position.

"But of course some of the girls will try to make me laugh and spoil the dignity of the affair," said Virginia.

"They'll not have the chance," Beantassel replied. "I've set the stage—the platform, I mean—so that you'll be surrounded by thirteen old ladies, to signify the thirteen original states. The girls that stand for the newer states are to be on another part of the platform."

Half an hour before sunrise on the morning of the Fourth all the church bells rang as a signal that the populace should assemble near the flagstaff and platform. In less than five minutes thirteen aged matrons, dressed in blue and preceded by the Grand Army post, after playing "Yankee Doodle," ascended the goddess of Liberty from her home to the platform, while the Grand Army veterans, with their drummer, brought up the minister and the reader of the Declaration, and the Sons of Veterans collected the young women in white who represented the newer states.

The managing committee—Howtree, Beantassel and Rannels—all in their Sunday clothes, and Beantassel with his stepfather's mink, were already on the platform. They doffed their hats to the goddess and her escort and again as the newer states blushed and giggled their way up the platform steps, but when Sam approached Rannels said to Beantassel:

"Look at him. I never saw a finer appearing young man outside of Virginia."

"Huh!" said Howtree, who had overheard the remark. "He ain't even a patch to the goddess."

Beantassel, with in hand, made haste to call the platform and general populace to order and to announce the opening prayer. Afterward, although he bowed his head reverently, he kept one eye on his watch to see that the venerable clergyman's patriotism should not cause the prayer to overrun the time allotted to it. No sooner had "amen" sounded than Beantassel sprang to his feet and shouted:

"Reading of the Declaration of Independence by Samuel Howtree, Esq."

Then he stood aside a moment to contemplate the picture which he credited largely to his own stagecraft. It certainly was impressive. At the platform rail, near the flagstaff and against the eastern glow of dawn, stood Virginia in the glory of her nation's standard and her own beauty, all enhanced by the plain blue gowns and white hair of the thirteen matrons around her. Near the foot of the flagstaff and beside the old lady which was to be used as a cannon wheel, Howtree and Rannels, the latter gazing adoringly at his granddaughter, while Howtree feasted his eyes on Sam. As the young man arose and bowed to the goddess, then to the old thirteen and the newer thirty-three and to the multitude, he was in appearance highly creditable to himself and the maker of his new clothes. Beantassel, fearing that the presence of Virginia Rannels might embarrass the reader and fearing also to say so, had again and again urged upon Sam the old stage injunction that an actor should always play directly at the person whom he most fears.

Sam had not read more than 200 words before Beantassel became satisfied that the principal actors in his little play were entirely equal to their parts, for each looked entirely self possessed and self forgetful; so he crossed the minister of his stepfather and allowed the charter of our liberties to pass into one ear and out through the other, while he dropped into day dreams of what ought to happen after the curtain fell—that is, after the leading lady and gentleman had left the stage. They looked as if they were made for each other. Nobody, Beantassel told himself, could imagine either of them marrying any one but the other. No one aside from themselves knew why, in earlier years, they had quarreled instead of marrying or why they had never been brought together again.

"He deserves her," said Beantassel to himself as the reading progressed. "He's unobtainable! The Declaration, especially at first, as if she was a goddess sure enough. I wish she'd look at him a minute, just one minute; but darn her obstinacy, she don't look anywhere except across people's heads. An' yet she's bearin' ev'ry word. She couldn't look so all-fired killin' handsome if she was thinkin' about herself."

Then he looked at his watch and toward the east. Evidently the sun was very near the horizon, so the reading must be nearing its end. Beantassel had his eye on the closing words "Our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor," and had perceived Virginia to commit them to memory, so that action might be immediate at the proper instant. But some possibilities had not been taken into account. The morning breeze came in little gusts. The town flag, to which the halyards had already been fastened, was large, and no one had known enough to arrange it ball fashion, so he shrank out when it reached the top of the staff. At Sam's last word Virginia seized the halyard and began to pull, but the flag, dithering outward, exerted a force which was too much even for the strength of a young woman whose arms had never lacked exercise.

Sam sprang quickly to the girl's assistance, and he was so little taller than she that his hands seemed to rest upon her own. "Bang!" went the old anvil, the life and drum struck up "The Star Spangled Banner," the people cheered, and Beantassel brought the minister of his stepfather to the position of "present arms," when a wild puff of the contrary wind wrapped and twisted the great flag around the goddess and her volunteer assistant.

Beantassel dropped the minister of the Revolution and tugged at the leech of the flag. After some seconds of bare effort he, but he alone, suddenly perceived Virginia in Sam's arms and being kissed, as he instinctively asked the raising were something that might be attended to at any time in the indefinite future.

"Why don't you unlose that flag?" roared Howtree from beside the anvil.

"I'm doin' it as fast as I can," lied Beantassel loudly as he put all his weight on the sacred rag and held it firmly about his couple.

"Bang!" roared the anvil again; then there was such a commotion within the flag that Beantassel was obliged to loose his hold. The capricious wind did the rest—the flag floated free and disclosed the two figures with their hands on the halyards. Beantassel again seized the minister of his stepfather and brought it to the waiting position, but he also emitted a wild yell and began to dance a jig and to otherwise comport himself in a manner entirely out of keeping with the dignity of the occasion.

"Look at her! Look at Virginia!" exclaimed Rannels.

"Look to that touchhole!" roared Howtree. "Do you want my hands to be blown off?"

"Pahdon me, sah," replied Rannels, feeling with his thumb for the touchhole, but keeping his eyes fixed upon his granddaughter, "but gentlemen have been willin' to risk their heads bein' blown off for less satisfin' sights than this."

"Please don't imagine that I'm a mis-sin' any of it," said Howtree.

"How could you?" murmured Virginia to Sam, her eyes looking heavenward, yet with all of heaven in her face.

"My hands happened to rest on yours, dear," replied Sam softly as he continued to haul up the flag, "and there was more than ten years of waitin' in 'em, an'—you know the rest."

Meanwhile Beantassel's ecstasy had been intensifying. The play—his play, which he had dreamed out—had been a grand success thus far, but the best thing in it had been seen only by himself, the sun and the angels. A good play should have a strong denouement before any spectators as possible. As the flag reached the top of the staff and Sam united the halyards fast a clement and Virginia replaced the liberty cap that the capricious flag had snatched from her, Beantassel dropped the minister of his stepfather and whispered excitedly to the minister; then he and the minister approached Sam and Virginia, to whom Beantassel said:

"Folks as wish strong an' proud as you two ought to run the risk of gettin' separated again. You're both of age. There's no marriage license required in this state. What do you say?"

Sam seemed to grow several inches while he extended his hands into which Virginia slowly placed her own as she dropped her eyes.

"The forty-six states will please rise up!" shouted Beantassel; then he leaned over the rail and yelled:

"Howtree! Rannels! Come up here, both of you, quick!"

The two old men obeyed the order and then stared wildly at each other as they heard the minister say:

"I pronounce you man and wife. What God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

"Except for a second," said Howtree, putting his son aside and taking his dear daughter in his arms.

"And another," said Rannels, taking Virginia from Howtree and pressing his lips to her forehead.

"And one more, even if Sam kills me for it," said Beantassel, kissing by nose, and the Bible says the laborer is worthy of his hire."

Then the forty-six states precipitated themselves upon Virginia, while Howtree and Rannels, arm in arm, like two schoolgirls, walked aside and talked to each other until a villager who was a stickler for regularity went upon the platform and complained that the national salute to the flag had not been completed.

"You're dead wrong," said Beantassel. "That flag got more salutes, an' better ones, an' right inside of itself, than any other flag in the world ever got. I heard 'em—yes, an' I see 'em too."

"I don't understand you."

"Don't, eh? Well, I s'pose not. Better ask Sam here. He can tell you all about it he will."

Meanwhile the forty-six states had been dispersing and resolving themselves into news hounds, so within five minutes every one in Farway knew that Sam and Virginia had been married, and the general astonishment was so great that the pots of coffee and tea were forgotten and only the small boys paid any attention to the trays of sandwiches that had been brought to the grounds. Every one hurried to congratulate a couple that were too dazed and happy to show a trace of the embarrassment peculiar to newly married people.

Then Beantassel proposed and organized a wedding procession which everybody joined and of which Beantassel, with his stepfather's mink on his shoulder, took command. Around the bride and groom he arranged the forty-six states as a guard of honor, with



"Why don't you unlose that flag?" roared Howtree.

Howtree, Rannels and the minister dithered behind them, the villagers to follow as they liked. Placing the Grand Army's fife and drummer in front, he told them to strike up a wedding march the instant he should give the command "forward."

"That beats us," said the fife. "We don't know any wedding march."

"Considering all that's happened to-day, Mr. Beantassel," said Sam Howtree, "why wouldn't 'The Star Spangled Banner' be about the thing?"

"Of course. Forward, march!"

The happy couple were escorted by devotional ways, so that the new pairs confined to their homes by sickness were compelled to stand until the village photographer had taken a picture and all the girls had secured bits of the bride's parlor attire in lieu of the traditional bride.

After the festivities of the day had ended and the three originators sat smoking together at Howtree's front door Beantassel said:

"Well, boys, we wanted to get up a celebration that would be remembered for all time, an' I reckon we done it."

"We?" echoed Rannels gently. "I don't see that we did anything, but my Virginia."

"An' my Sam," added Howtree quickly. "Between the two of 'em they done it all."

Beantassel knocked the ashes from his pipe so vigorously that the stem broke as he said:

"They did, did they? Well, all I've got to say is that you're mighty nice taken if you think it was doin' nothin' to lose a twenty-four foot flag from dappin' loose from two young people that's so took up with each other that they won't do nothin' to help you."

COADJUTOR NAMED.

Rome, Sept. 2.—The propaganda, after a lengthy sitting, decided to recommend the pope to appoint the Right Rev. John M. Farley, D. D., auxiliary bishop of New York, as archbishop of New York, in succession to the late Rev. Michael Augustine Corrigan, bishop of Los Angeles, Cal., as coadjutor to the Most Rev. Patrick William Riordan, archbishop of San Francisco.

Cardinal Gotti, prefect of the propaganda, presided. The other cardinals present were: Serafino Vannutelli, Vincent Vannutelli, Satolli, Steinhilber, Solinas, Crestoni, Vivesy, Tuto and Martinelli. The discussion lasted four and a half hours.

Fire Leveling a Forest.

Saltinas, Sept. 2.—A forest fire is reported near the Los Burros mining district in the southern part of Monterey county. It is spreading rapidly and has swept more than 4000 acres of timber and grazing lands. The fire is supposed to have been started by hunters.

AN EDUCATED FOOL

By J. A. BOLLES

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It was in the day when public waterworks and electric lights were unknown in the larger New England villages. It was some forty years ago, when large wells, deep and encircled by strongly placed stone, were the main dependence for water for private use and even for the extinguishment of fires.

Consequently the announcement that old Peleg Williams was preparing to dig a well at the rear of his roomy building, wherein he kept the principal store in the flourishing village of Shavemust, furnished a topic for earnest local discussion. Everybody knew why he had heretofore refrained from digging a well—because there was an extensive underground ledge back of his building—and everybody, too, had an opinion as to whether it was feasible to try to put a well in so difficult a place and as to how much the undertaking would cost, even if it proved to be successful.

Peleg of course decided the probably largest more than did his neighbors, who risked nothing except their reputation as shrewd calculators concerning the result. He was a hard headed, close fisted fellow, and he approached the unenviable task with deliberation and caution.

At last he concluded that the wisest thing for him to do was to consult Rube Whitney, a well known manipulator of the time honored divining rod, by which it was then believed minerals and water could be discovered beneath the surface of the earth.

Accordingly one morning Rube, a shrewd specimen of humanity, strange enough in appearance to be a wizard, came to the store building in his hands the best forked stick of witch hazel which he had been able to procure after a diligent search in the woods. On Rube's multitudinously wrinkled and cadaverous visage was a grave and mysterious expression, well befitting the important role he was about to assume. A large number of villagers who had heard that Rube was to exercise his occult skill had gathered in the store and now gazed on the sage with curiosity and awe.

Rube looked at the crowd with pride and was encouraged by the admiration revealed in their countenances. Only one face betrayed uneasiness. It was that of the new schoolmaster, a recent graduate of Bowdoin college. This young man laughed in an incredulous way.

Bloodless as Rube's aged face ordinarily was, it now flushed with indignation. Never before had his assumptions as a minister of the divining rod been questioned by a young master.

"I see, John Hollenbeck, that you don't believe that I can find water with this here stick."

"Of course I don't," answered Hollenbeck, who was an outspoken fellow, often too outspoken for his own good, as he acknowledged to himself in his cooler moments. "It's nothing but a superstition. Only people unacquainted with true science believe in it. Learned investigators who have given the phenomenon attention are satisfied that it is simply due to a strong impression on the mind acting through the agency of the nerves and muscles."

"Big words, big words," growled old Peleg, who, like many another practical man devoid of scholarship, had a great contempt for what he called bookish theories. "You want to show your learnin'," he continued, "but you'll find out, young man, that college don't teach everything worth knowin'."

He had handled the rod for forty years and had never made a mistake. I can count up a dozen instances in a mile where he has found water for people. There's the case of Widow Simpkins. Only six months ago he used the rod in her garden, and the diggers struck water only five feet down. The only trouble was that the well was too shallow and the water not cold enough for her."

Hollenbeck was well aware that he was braving popular prejudice, but he was not the man to let a matter drop to avoid disagreeable controversy.

"With or without a divining rod one can usually find water at a reasonable depth," he answered, "so that this skill would prove nothing unless it could be shown that in the majority of instances water was encountered where from the nature of the soil or the rock formation or from the elevation of the land it was not to be expected except in certain exceptional spots. As for Widow Simpkins' well, it was dug on low ground near a brook where any child would know digging would probably soon reach water."

"The last remark was so pertinent that it nonplused Williams, and on account of his stubborn nature this made him angry."

"What's the use of talkin' longer? We've got the facts, and you've got the facts," declared Peleg. "We've plain but sensible folks around here and need no instructions from educated fools. Come, Rube; let's begin the search for water."

Reaching the plot of ground at the rear of the store, Rube Whitney stopped, and the others gathered about him in a circle.

"We all pretty well agreed," said Rube, "that the underground ledge is extensive here, but there may be a thin place in the ledge or a rift in it where water runs, and if so the rod will surely plint out the spot for a well."

"You know what you're about, Rube, there's no doubt o'er that," emphatically exclaimed a farmer whose bushy hair had not felt the shears for months.

"I'll show you whether I know any thing and whether that upstart schoolmaster is right," replied Rube.

"The educated fool! I don't want to see him around my store again," remarked Williams.

Whitney carefully placed the two prongs of the rod between the balls of his thumbs and began to walk to and fro, with rod suspended about a foot from the ground.

For fifteen minutes the rod remained motionless, and as Rube by that time had apparently walked over every part of the plot the spectators began to think that the search for water would be in vain.

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around it for some time, and then it began to vibrate. "It bends, it bends," was the cry.

Rube's face, which had become anxious, now lighted with triumph. He stopped, and the rod bent yet more from its original perpendicular and constantly trembled.

"Here's the spot," he cried. "I have seen the rod bend more than it does now. It'll be no shallow well, but I know water will be found at a reasonable depth."

A stake was driven into the ground where the divining rod indicated that it should be placed. Peleg delayed commencing the work on the well for a month.

In the meantime John Hollenbeck had his attention particularly attracted to Mr. Williams' only daughter, Mildred. He had been introduced to her when he first came to the village, but soon after she went away on a long visiting trip in the west.

It was during her absence that Hollenbeck exchanged the angry words with her father about the virtue of the divining rod. On her return the young man met her at church and social gatherings. She was a handsome girl, too, and in graciousness her demeanor was in marked contrast with that of her grandfather.

One evening Hollenbeck walked home with her, not without fear that he might meet Mr. Williams and be treated in an unsatisfactory manner.

As the two neared the house the schoolmaster saw the dreaded parent standing by the front gate. It was too late to retreat, and, assuming an air of unconcern, he approached with the unsuspecting daughter.

"Good evening," said Hollenbeck.

"Good evening," grunted the old man. "Ain't you where you don't belong?"

"I hope not," responded John pleasantly.

"I'd rather see you somewhere else. I hope you'll take the hint and keep away hereafter."

Hollenbeck's face flushed. "I will bid you good-night here then," he said to Miss Williams, and, turning on his heel, departed.

Mildred did not have to wait for an explanation. Her father gave her a scolding, telling her that Hollenbeck was a conceited, unmanly upstart—an educated fool, in fact—and forbidding her to cultivate his acquaintance.

INTERESTING FACTS

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on the roof of Topoka Hall, crashing through it and coming to a standstill beside the stove, frightening several staves out of their wits, but not injuring any of them.

Williams descended the well. Not a particle of water was in sight.

"I give up!" he shouted in disgust as he ascended the ladder to the surface of the ground.

The explosion occurred at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, but Hollenbeck and Mildred, who had gone on an excursion with a party of friends to a neighboring village, did not learn of their good fortune until later.

Much disgruntled, Williams retired to bed early in the evening, but his wife was taken suddenly ill before his eyes could close, and he arose in the darkness to get some medicine for her.

He searched for a candle in a bureau drawer where candles were kept by his wife and, finding one, lighted it.

It began to sputter in a strange way and to throw out sparks.

Mrs. Williams screamed. "For mercy's sake, father, what's the matter?"

"The next moment a ball of fire rose from the candle and struck the ceiling. Smoke and sparks filled the room. "Oh, dear me, the house will burn down! What shall we do?" cried Mrs. Williams, rising in bed.

Another yell went up, and did Peleg, realizing now that he held no common candle, but a roman candle, bolted toward the nearest open door as fast as his rheumatic leg would permit him to go.

Gaining the outer air at last, Williams held the candle while three more balls soared and the darkness was beautifully illuminated.

Standing with only his nightshirt on, his eyes blinking and his mouth uttering unmeaning sounds, Peleg presented a grotesque spectacle. As the last ball sped on its way and a shower of sparks fell he heard a whirling and, looking in the direction of the sound, beheld his daughter and Hollenbeck, who had just returned from the excursion.

Peleg fled into the house and, thrusting only his head from the door, cried: "Providence is a-fer'n' me. You have caught the girl, schoolmaster! I've had enough of wells and fireworks. She's another cured day! I hope I shall never see you again!"