Observer.

MORO, OREGON :

FRIDAY.....Oct. 5, 1906

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The Mothers' Wooing

By ALICE LOUISE LEE

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"THERE ain't a better manager in the county than Betsey Anew," said her neighbors and immediately added, "but may the good Lord deliver me from being managed by her." Those were also her son Zed's sentiments, but Providence had so far turned a deaf ear to Zed. Indeed, it seemed to delived him still further into her hands after she and Eliza Willet laid their heads together for the fourth time.

Mrs. Willet was apprehensive as to the successful outcome of this fourth interfamily campaign. Mrs. Agnew was hopeful with the hope of one who has unlimited confidence in herself.

"But, Betts," argued Eliza Willet, "the others wan't so contrary. I can't do nothin' with Atulky. She won't hear to reason, and Zed ain't no better, is he?"

Mrs. Agnew clicked her teeth and her knitting needles simultaneously. Her tone was decisive. "Elizy Willet,

SHE THREW A BIG CAKE ON HER SON'S PLATE.

I hain't reached my time of life to set down in peace and have folks say: 'This time Mis' Willet and Mis' Agnew has got their hands more'n full. Zed and Atulk will be too much for 'em.' Them's the words that Mis' Lansin' used to Asy Clark. When I have said my little say to Zed things will look different to him."

It was one morning in the late winter that Mrs. Agnew said her "little say" to her son. It was breakfast time, and Betsey stood beside the stove twirling a pancake turner over a smoking griddle.

Zed still sat at the table, bolting griddlecakes and listening without appearing to hear. He sat well back in his chair, with his feet gripped around the rear legs. His left elbow rested on the table, his hand clutching the back of his neck firmly. His forehead was low and his chin short. The nose turned up suddenly at the end and drew with it the middle of his upper lip, exposing a cavity which two front teeth would have become. When Zed spoke, which was seldom, his words arrived by way of his nose and were not intended to give satisfaction on any subject.

The only response he made to his mother's ultimatum was, "Fork me over a few of them cakes, will ye?"

Mrs. Agnew, paying no attention, bent over the griddle. "It ain't every day that a young man can git a farm of medder land he's been hankerin' after fer years, and"—here Mrs. Agnew shot a keen glance at her son—"that he can't git no other way."

"Has the molasses give out?" was Zed's satisfying response as he glued his eyes to the bottom of the sirup pitcher.

Betsey continued, knowing that her words were not falling on deaf ears. "No, I say, it ain't every day that a young man gits such a farm, with a new house on it, and"—here she paused and threw a big cake on her son's plate by way of emphasis—"a deed fer the whole thing on his weddin' day."

Zed unhooked his feet and laboriously arose. He twisted his upper lip sidewise and looked over the table. "There hain't nothin' more to eat in sight," he remarked tersely, "so I've got to quit."

He reached the barn, his eyes roving over the rich flats which stretched, acre on acre, toward the river. These fertile flats might be his, provided he followed the example of his three older brothers and took a Willet to wife. He kicked the barn door vindictively. "If one of the others had only took Atulk I'd be willin'," he muttered.

Later Betsey and Eliza reported to each other.

Eliza was agitated. "Oh, Atulky acts somethin' awful!" she moaned. "She says she will run away to Boston to her Aunt Atulk's, and I just bet she will!"

Atulka possessed a pretty face, an imperceptible hump in her shoulders and a very perceptible hump in her temper.

Mrs. Agnew rocked and looked calmly at her emotional friend. "How old is Atulk?"

"Twenty one, come next September."

"Yes," remarked Betsey meditatively, "under age. Now, you know that Atulk hain't a thing to carry her to Boston on except her two feet."

A relieved expression stole over Eliza's face. She was not one to deal out money freely.

"And what's more," continued Betsey, "she knows her aunt is dreadful dressy, and she'd cut a pretty figure in Boston without a decent dud to her back." Betsey finished impressively, "and you see to it that she don't have unless she'll marry Zed!"

Mrs. Willet sat bolt upright. "Why, Betts, you don't mean"—

"Yes, I do," interrupted Betsey. "It'll fetch her if anything will." And the friends were closeted together in close conversation for an hour longer.

The farsighted Betsey gave Zed a full month in which to think over his prospects concerning the meadow lands. Then she forced him to a decision.

"That man Skinner was here yesterday," she remarked casually, "to see about buyin' the medder lots. I told him I'd let him know in ten days what could be done with them medders. I told him I was thinkin' of givin' 'em to my son, but if he didn't want 'em," significantly, "I'd sell 'em to him."

Zed's upper lip twitched, and he took a firmer hold of the nape of his neck, but he made no reply until nine and one-half days later. Then he stopped, swill pail in hand, and asked gruffly, "Ma, when you goin' to begin that there house on the medders?"

"Just as soon as the frost is out of the ground," replied Betsey swiftly, "fer it's got to be used by the last of September."

She had won. She hastened to tell Eliza. The latter was pleased, but she looked actually pale.

"Ain't my plan with Atulky workin'?" asked Betsey anxiously.

Mrs. Willet groaned. "Workin'!" she ejaculated. "It's workin' me to death. Why, that girl keeps me all of a-tremble. I don't know where we're comin' out. Last Monday she says, says she, 'Ma, if I marry Zed I'll have Aunt Atulky git me a black silk coat, lined with white satin.' Listen to that, Betsey Agnew! And I give in. Tuesday she come in and says: 'Ma, if I marry Zed you've got to git me a bow of furs. I won't have him without 'em.' Just hear that, Betts! And I give in. And yesterday she says: "Ma, I'm goin' to have one of them long lace fishers. Aunt Atulky says they're all the rage.' And, Betts, I give in. Now, where am I goin' to stop givin' in?" Mrs. Willet applied her handkerchief to her eyes and wept.

"Yes, yes, Elizy, I know it's hard," responded Betsey, with the light of victory in her eyes, "but it's worth all that to have our own way where people think we can't. Now I must hurry along and hire the carpenters. By the way," with her hand on the doorknob, "I'm goin' to send Zed over Sunday night to set up with Atulk."

Eliza groaned afresh. "Of course it's got to be done, but it'll mean another silk dress out of me, as likely as not, before she'll set up."

Zed "set up" Sunday night with his prospective bride—that is, he sat in one corner of the large parlor and blinked at the lamp. He held himself down by means of his toes hooked around the hind legs of the straight backed chair on which he sat. Mrs. Willet, with a face full of anxiety, had received him and immediately retired and closed the door behind her. A commotion began at once upstairs and down. Zed grinned appreciatively until the door flew open and Atulka projected herself into the room and, without so much as casting her scornful eyes on Zed, flounced into a chair in the farther corner, pressed her nose against the window pane, stared fixedly out into the darkness and chewed gum.

Zed sat patiently until the hands of the clock designated the hour specified by Betsey and then took his silent departure. He nearly fell over Mrs. Willet, whose ear had been applied to the keyhole in order that she might report progress to Mrs. Agnew the following day.

There was no word for her to report, nor was there until September, until the house was finished and the wedding day set, until Zed's upper lip had been permanently twisted sidewise in disgust and Atulka had secured such a trousseau as no one in the county had ever had before. Then Mrs. Willet had a report to make one Monday morning. It was not much, but it excited and delighted both mothers.

"They talked!" Mrs. Willet exclaimed.

"Now the Lord be praised!" cried Betsey, piously sinking into a rocking chair. "What'd they say?"

Mrs. Willet shook her head. "I couldn't make out a word, they talked so low."

"I should like to know," said Betsey regretfully, "seein' it's only two weeks to the weddin'."

"My, ain't I glad it's only two weeks more," murmured Eliza pathetically. "The clothes that Atulky has got out of me! They make folks open their eyes, though, I tell you!" Eliza found a crumb of comfort there. "But I just feel as if I was comin' on to the town."

"Well," returned Betsey calmly, "I guess that deed I got recorded last week up to Auburn will take a trifle more out of [illegible] clothes have out of you, and the new house. You ain't the only loser."

"I know it, Betts," fretfully, "but I'll be all fired glad when it's over."

"I can't help wonderin'," was Betsey's ambiguous response, "what they said."

Unexpectedly Zed enlightened her that very afternoon. Zed had been doing an unprecedented amount of thinking for weeks and a little planning. He was proving himself the worthy son of his mother, but had his mother known it she would have been far from pleased. On her movements Zed had kept a wary eye until the previous week. The day Mrs. Willet and Mrs. Agnew drove to Auburn together he, feeling secure, had brought together pen, ink and paper, hooked his feet around the legs of his chair and with perspiring face toilsomely indited a letter. It was the longest he had ever written and proved to be the most satisfactory.

"Ma," said Zed, coming into the pantry—"ma, me and Atulky want to go to the circus Wednesday at Auburn. You know it's Atulk's birthday, and we want to celebrate."

Betsey was delighted. Mrs. Willet was delighted. They beamed on the world generally and on each particularly for two days. Eliza early decided to "set out Wednesday" with Betsey in order to finish their arrangements for the wedding. She hurried across the fields just after Zed and Atulka had departed, and the two women planned cakes and creams, salads and cold meats until sundown.

The dusk of the shortening September day was fast approaching when they heard the sound of horses at the front gate. Mrs. Willet arose hastily. "There; that means that Atulky is to home, and I must go right over."

"Why, wait, Elizy, and I'll have Zed carry you over"— Betsey was interrupted by a rap at the door. "It ain't Zed, Elizy. Set down again."

Betsey opened the door, and Asa Skinner entered. He was skinner by name and by nature both, the people of Auburn said, but outwardly he was pleasant to look at as he stood inside the door, smiling blandly at the the women. He coughed slightly against the rim of his tall silk hat, which he held in one gloved hand.

"Ladies," he began, with some hesitation, "I—ahem—feel it my duty to inform you—er—that your children will not be home—er—tonight, at least"—

Mrs. Willet sat down suddenly and hard. "Atulky!" she cried. "Where is Atulky?"

Mr. Skinner bowed in Eliza's direction. "She has just—er—let me see." He drew out his watch. "Yes, her train is just now pulling into Boston."

Eliza threw up both hands and turned pale. "Into Boston," she repeated in a weak voice. "How'd she ever git there?"

"By means of a ticket," explained Mr. Skinner gravely and added as if in afterthought to Betsey, "purchased by your son."

Betsey suddenly advanced one step nearer Mr. Skinner. She spoke with heavy emphasis. "My son got it, did he? Just wait till I git a holt of Zed."

Mr. Skinner smiled blandly. "I fear, Mrs. Agnew, that you will be obliged to forego that pleasure, as he is on his way to California."

"California!" Betsey's voice was shrill. "It can't be true! Zed left this house with just $7 in his pocket."

"He left Auburn," replied Mr. Skinner quickly, "with $7,000, the price of his new farm."

Betsey's head reeled. She caught the edge of the table and spoke hoarsely. "The farm ain't his until the weddin' day. I've got the deed"—

Asa Skinner interrupted sharply: "Your family affairs are nothing to me, madam. The deed of the meadow lots to your son was entered at the office of the registrar and recorder last week as signed, sealed and delivered. The farm is now mine. I called to get the keys of the house."

Ten minutes later two very pale and angry women were looking at each other silently. Betsey was the first to speak.

"To think," she moaned, "that I was fool enough to get that deed recorded!"

Eliza wrung her hands. "And there's Atulk run away without Zed after pesterin' me nigh to death"—

She ended her sentence with a suppressed scream and sprang to her feet with the agility of youth. She hurried across the field and in at her back

"LADIES," HE BEGAN, WITH SOME HESITATION.

door, closely followed by the breathless and astonished Betsey. Up the stairs went Mrs. Willet and with trembling hands threw open the door of the guest chamber, where the wedding finery had been laid.

The room was empty. Silk, chiffon skirts, veils, gloves, hats, scarfs and all the toilet accessories, which for weeks had been draining Mrs. Willet's purse, had all disappeared.

The two women gazed at each other and at the empty room by turns.

"My stars, Betts, how did she ever manage it?" wailed Eliza, immediately adding, "And she's of age today!"

All Right Now.

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"She is."

"I thought you and him was inemies."

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1.44	7.0	....Sinks....	11.10
2.04	9.8	....Wasco....	11.00
2.17	14.1	..Klondyke..	10.45
2.23	16.1	...Summit...	10.40
2.40	19.2	Hay Canon Jct	10.24
2.41	19.9	..McDonalds..	10.22
2.53	23.9	...De Moss...	10.05
3.04	27.0	....Moro....	9.55
3.13	30.4	..Erskinville..	9.37
3.44	38.5	Grass Valley	9.20
4.00	45.8	...Bourbon...	8.55
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