ST. TAMMANY FARMER.

COVINGTON, DECEMBER 21, 1878.

THE OLD MAID AUNT.

She was an old maid? Why, of course, Aunt Rebecca was an old maid. She was my aunt, and she was grown up when I was born; and I was seventeen. I should say she must have been thirty. Oh, no, she wasn't ugly; she was quite fine looking for her age, and she wasn't cross; but you know a girl don't like to be followed all about by an old maid aunt, who has forgotten all about her youth, and I thought it very mean of her—ever so mean.

We were living at —— then, just a little out of town, and he came down to the hotel for the summer, and he had known mamma and papa, and he called on us. Oh, I haven't told you who he was. Col. Morrison; and very handsome; about five-and-thirty; great, black eyes, beautiful, waving black hair; such broad shoulders.

Men are young at five-and-thirty, you know, and when he first saw me he started and colored beautifully.

"My daughter Becca," mamma said. I always would be called Becca. Why they gave me that old-fashioned name, I can't think. I would not have the whole of it put on me. And his face lighted up, and the color came and went, and he bowed.

"We named her after my sister," said papa.

And I shall never forget how the Colonel looked at me. After that he often came to see us, and I could not help knowing that he had a motive in coming.

It would have been too delightful; but Aunt Rebecca spoiled it all.

If he wanted me to play for him, there she was at the piano. If he wanted me to walk in the garden, there she was too. Out boating with him we had her. He was too polite not to talk to her. I showed her as plainly as I could that I did not long for her company, but she was stupid, and I finally said to her:

"Aunt Rebecca, really there are times when two makes better company than three."

She looked at me and blushed. Yes, she blushed.

"Not when people think so much of each other as we do, Becca," she said.

"Yes, even then," said I; "and one doesn't think so much of one who is a little in the way. It is tiresome; a man must have a chance to speak, you know."

"I'm sure men can make chances, if they choose," said she. "It's not for a woman to do it for him. And really, it's all your imagination, Becca."

"Indeed," said I, and I was cross at her all day; but I couldn't make her angry at me. She went on behaving in the most hideous manner, and at last it dawned upon me that she was, after all, like the maiden aunts in the books, and had taken it into her head that the Colonel was in love with her.

It was funny, but I couldn't help being ashamed, too, that my aunt should make such a perfect stupid of herself. I was a little sorry for her, too; so I made up my mind to keep quiet and let her find out her own mistake. She would be mortified, of course, but I could not help that.

Heigh ho! How handsome the Colonel was, and what a talker; and how well he rowed and danced. I was thinking of him one afternoon, sitting on the piazza in the shade of the wisteria vines, for it really was too warm to do anything, when little black Linda came up the steps with a note.

"Please, where is Miss Hunter, Miss Becca?" said she. "I've been looking everywhere for her; can't find her nowhar; got a letter for her from de officer gentleman."

"Colonel Morrison?" said I.

"Yes, Miss," said she.

I looked at the note.

"Why do think it is for auntie, Linda?" said I. "I am Miss Rebecca Hunter, too."

"Wall, de Colonel said Miss Hunter," said Linda, "and I always hear you talked of as Miss Becca."

"Not by the gentlemen, I hope," said I. "This is for me, I think. Any answer?"

"No, Miss," said Linda.

So I walked off to my room with the letter in my hand. My heart was beating faster than it ever did before, and I was wondering what the Colonel could have written to me. I turned my key before I opened the envelope, and then calmed myself down and read this:

"DEAREST GIRL.—Don't tease me any more. I want to see you by yourself, and you know I do. I am down in the woods by the little rock spring, and I want you to come to me without company. You may like a person immensely, and yet not want her always. I shall wait here until the sun goes down, unless you come before, for I must say something to you. Yours, ever,

"MORRISON."

Say something to me? Of course he meant to make an offer. I ran to the glass, settled my hair, tied on my prettiest hat, took my parasol, and tripped down stairs.

I stole past auntie's room like a kitten, and then I was in the open air, going, for the first time, to meet him alone. Oh, it was delightful. Every moment I feared to hear auntie's step, but she did not follow.

When I reached the woods they were so fresh and green, and the shadows lay so pretty across the paths, making just the very background for a romantic scene; and down by the rock spring a tall figure was standing. It was Colonel Morrison, and he was watching the path by which I came to meet him.

He hurried forward eagerly, but, as we stood face to face, he paused, looked at me in the saddest way, and with something like annoyance in his tone, said:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Becca. Have you any message for me?"

"Message?" I repeated. "I received your note."

"My note!" said he, then his face flushed. He had a way of blushing beautifully. "That stupid Linda," he muttered. "So Linda gave that note to you, Miss Becca. It must have puzzled you not a little."

"Yes," I said, scarcely able to speak. "I—I was surprised."

"I intended it for your aunt," he said. "She would have understood. We knew each other when she was of your age, and we quarrelled; but we are friends again. I—I—you are old enough to understand. And you are very like her—as she was, not as handsome as she is now, of course; but that will come with maturity. You will be as elegant a woman, I am sure. I think you comprehend the note now, and, of course, I ought to apologize."

"Oh, I know very well that it was I who was in the way," I said, fighting with my tears, and wondering whether he guessed all my foolish dreams. I could not tell by his face.

"I'll go and give auntie the note," I said, and ran away.

Oh, how hot and angry I was as I sped along. The old novel story had been transposed; the girl had been a fool, the woman was triumphant; and what had he said: "I was not yet so handsome or so elegant as aunt Rebecca." I could have drowned myself in the brook for very shame.

But no one must know. There was aunt Rebecca sitting on the porch. I tossed the letter into her lap.

"Excuse me for opening it," I said. "It is the fault of those who gave us the same horrid, old-fashioned name."

And she was handsomer than I—I saw that for the first time—one a man could love and admire; not the unattractive old maid I had thought her. I hated her for a moment, and then all of a sudden she threw her arms around my neck.

"Oh! Becca," she said, "you've read it, I know; but you can't understand—you are too young, too happy—what all these lonely years of watching and waiting and remembering have been to me. I never have loved any one else. Oh! Becca, don't be angry because he wanted me alone awhile, just as you said he did, when I hardly knew."

She did not guess what a fool I had been. Perhaps he did not; and the hate went out of my heart, and love came instead. I kissed her.

"Dear auntie," I said, "don't cry. Go down to the spring and let him say his say, and you say yours. All is well that ends well."

And I tied my hat on her head and sent her away; and then up in my room I fought it out all alone. I did not care so much for the Colonel after all. My pride was hurt worse than my heart, so I conquered.

They are married now, and I wonder I could have ever thought of him as anything but my uncle. He is quite a middle-aged person beside my Tom. I am engaged to him, and awfully fond of him.

The spider is wiser than the bee. The former sucks poison from everything; the latter honey. The former isn't robbed; the latter is.

Academy of Design—A young ladies' boarding school.

THE WATER MILL.

Listen to the water mill,
All the livelong day—
How the clicking of the wheel
Wears the hours away.
Languidly the autumn wind
Stirs the greenwood leaves;
From the field the reapers sing,
Binding up the sheaves;
And a memory o'er my mind
As a spell is cast;
The mill will never grind
With the water that is past.

Take the lesson to yourself,
Loving heart and true;
Golden years are fleeting by;
Youth is passing, too.
Strive to make the most of life—
Lose no happy day.
Time will never bring you back
Chances swept away.
Leave no tender word unsaid—
Love while love shall last—
The mill will never grind
With the water that is past.

Work while yet the daylight shines,
Man of thought and will;
Never does the streamlet glide
Useless by the mill.
Wait not till to-morrow's sun
Beams upon your way,
All that you can call your own
Lies in this to-day.
Power, intellect and health
May not always last—
The mill can not grind
With the water that is past.

Daniel Webster once dined with an old Boston merchant, and when they came to the wine a dusty bottle was carefully decanted and passed to the host. Taking the bottle he poured out Mr. Webster's glass and handed it to him. Then pouring out another glass for himself, he held it to the light and said:

"How do you like it, Mr. Webster?"

"I think it a very fine specimen of old port."

"Now, can you guess what it cost me?" said the host.

"Surely not," said Mr. Webster, "I only know that it is excellent."

"Well, now, I can tell you, for I made an estimate the other day. When I add the interest to the first price, I find that it cost me just the sum of $1 20 per glass."

"Good gracious! you don't say so," said Mr. Webster; and then draining his glass, he presented it again, with the remark:

"Fill it up again as quick as you can, for I want to stop the confounded interest!"

All the performances of human art at which we look with praise or wonder, are instances of the resistless force of perseverance; it is by this that the quarry becomes a pyramid, and that distant countries are united with canals and railroads. If a man were to compare a single stroke of a pickaxe or one impression of a spade with the general design and final result, he would be overwhelmed by the sense of their disproportion. Yet these petty operations, incessantly continued, in time surmount the greatest difficulties, and mountains are levelled and oceans bounded by the slender force of human beings.

A country girl coming from the field, was told by her cousin she "looked as sweet as a daisy kissed by the dew." "Well, it wasn't any feller by that name, but it was Steve Jones that kissed me, and I told him that every one in town would find it out!"

The Germans are said to be opposed to cremation. It takes away their last beer.

THE DEVIL'S FRUIT.

In the "Agricultural" department of the *Picayune* we find the following interesting story concerning potatoes:

Potatoes were first introduced at Moscow by a Mr. Rowland, eighty or ninety years ago. At first the people would neither plant nor touch them, saying they were the devil's fruit, given to him on his complaining to God that he had no fruit, when he was told to search in the earth for some, which he did, and found potatoes. A curious Berwickshire legend, which, however, is palpably anachronical, attributes the introduction of potatoes into Scotland to that famous wizard of the North, Sir Michael Scott. The wizard and the devil, being in partnership, took a lease of the farm on the Martoon estate, called Whitehouse. The wizard was to manage the farm, the devil managed the capital. The produce was to be divided as follows: The first year Sir Michael was to have all that grew above ground, and his partner all that grew below; the second year the shares were to be the opposite way. His Satanic Majesty, as is usual in such cases, was fairly over-reached in his bargain, for the wizard cunningly sowed all the land in the first year with wheat, and planted it with potatoes the second, so that the devil got nothing for his share but wheat stubble and potato tops. And this scourging rotation Sir Michael continued until he had not only beggared his partner, but exhausted the soil. In spite of this legend, however, we must continue to give credit to Sir Walter Raleigh for having been the introducer of potatoes into that country. The very first who tried them, we are told, fell into the very natural mistake of eating the apples and disregarding the roots.

INCOMBUSTIBLE WASH.

To make a cheap wash for the roofs of buildings, take a sufficient quantity of good stone lime and slack it carefully in a box or mortar bed, to prevent the escape of steam, and after slacking, pass it through a sieve. To every six quarts of this lime add one quart of rock salt and one gallon of water. The mixture should be boiled and skimmed clean. To every five gallons of this, add, by slow degrees, three-fourths of a pound of potash, and four quarts of fine sand. Coloring matter may be added. Apply it with a common paint brush. A writer, in speaking of this wash, observes: "It looks better than paint, and is as durable as slate. It will stop small leaks in the roof, prevent moss from growing over and rotting the wood, and render the roof incombustible from sparks falling on it. When applied to brick work, it renders the bricks utterly impervious to rain or wet, and endures a longer time than any paint I ever used. The expense is a mere trifle, in fact, scarcely deserving mention."

Old brass candlesticks are now fashionable wedding presents in Gotham.