

Old Lady Number 31

By LOUISE FORSLUND

Author of "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 unucky purchase of Tenafly 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 Angy 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, bears 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. 31." The old ladies give him such a warm welcome that he is made to feel at home at once. "Brother Abe" expands under the warm reception of the sisters, and a reign of peace begins in the Old Ladies' home. Abe is the center of the community. The semi-annual visit of Blossy's aged lover, Capt. Samuel Darby, is due. Abe advises her to marry him. For the first time the captain fails to appear.

CHAPTER VII—Continued.

At night, however, she was obliged to admit that he could not be coming, and then, quivering with honest anxiety for her old friend, Blossy dipped into her emergency fund, which she kept in the heart of a little pink china pig on a shelf in her room—a pink china pig with a lid made of stiff black hair standing on edge in the middle of his back—and sent a telegram to Captain Darby, asking if he were sick.

The answer came back slowly by mail, to find Blossy on the verge of a nervous collapse, under the care of all the women in the house.

That letter Blossy never showed to Brother Abe, nor to any one else. Neither did she treasure it in the sentimental trunk beneath the attic eaves. The letter ran:

Dear Betsy Ann: I never felt better in my life. Ain't been sick a minute. Just made up my mind I was a old fool, and was going to quit. If you change your intentions at any time, just drop me a postcard.

SAM'L DARBY, ESQ.

"This, Captain Darby, makes your rejection final," vowed Blossy to herself, as she tore the note into fragments and drowned them in the spirits of lavender with which the sisters had been seeking to soothe her distracted nerves.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Anniversary.

About this time Blossy developed a tendency to draw Brother Abraham aside at every opportunity, convenient or inconvenient, in order to put such questions as these to him:

"Didn't you say it is fully thirty-five years since you and Captain Darby were on the beach together? Do you think he has grown much older? Had he lost his hair then? Did he care for the opposite sex? Was he very brave—or would you say more brave than stubborn and contrary? Isn't it a blessing that I never married him?"

Fearful of the ridicule of the sisters, Blossy was always careful to conduct these inquiries in whispers, or at least in undertones with a great observance of secrecy, sometimes stopping Abe on the stairs, sometimes beckoning him to her side when she was busy about her household tasks on the pretense of requiring his assistance. On one occasion she even went so far as to invite him into holding a skein of wool about his clumsy hands, while she wound the violet worsted into a ball, and delicately inquired if he believed Samuel spoke the truth when he protested that he had never paid court to any other woman.

Alas, Blossy's frequent tete-a-tetes with the amused but sometimes impatient Abraham started an exceedingly foolish suspicion. When, asked the sisters of one another, did Abe ever help any one, save Blossy, shell, dried beans or pick over prunes? When had he ever been known to hold wool for Angy's winding? Not once since wooing time, I warrant you. What could this continual hobnobbing and going off into corners mean, except—flirtation?

Ruby Lee whispered it first into Aunt Nancy's good ear. Aunt Nancy indulged in four pinches of snuff in rapid succession, sneezed an amazing number of times, and then scolded in informed Ruby Lee that she was a "jealous oat" and always had been one.

However, Aunt Nancy could not refrain from carrying the gossip to Miss Ellie, adding that she herself had been suspicious of Abe's behavior from the start.

"Oh, no, no!" cried the shocked and shrinking spinster. "And Angy so cheerful all the time? I don't believe it."

But whisper, whisper, buzz, buzz, went the gossip, until finally it reached the pink little ears at the side of

Miss Abigail's generously proportioned head. The pink ears turned crimson, likewise the adjoining cheeks, and Miss Abigail panted with righteous indignation.

"It all comes of this plagued old winter time," she declared, sharply biting her thread, for she was mending a tablecloth. "Shet the winders on summer, an' yew ketch the tail of slander in the latch every time. Naow, ef I hear one word about this 'arnal foolishness comin' to Angy's ears, or Brother Abe's, or Blossy's either, fer that matter, we'll all have to eat off'n oil-cloth Sundays, the same as weekdays, until I see a more Christian sperit in the house."

She gave the Sunday damask across her lap a pat which showed she was in earnest; and the rebuked sisters glanced at one another, as if to say: "Suppose the minister should walk in some Sabbath afternoon and find oil-cloth on the table, and ask the reason why?"

They one and all determined to take Aunt Nancy's advice and "sew a button on their lips."

Fortunately, too, the February thaw had already set in, and the remainder of the winter passed without any severe strain on the "buttonholes." And at length the welcome spring began to peep forth, calling to the old folks, "Come out, and grow young with the young year!"

With the bursting forth of the new springtide the winter's talk seemed to drop as a withered and dead oak leaf falls from its winter-bound branches; and Abe stood once more alive to the blessings of renewed approval.

Angy went out of doors with Miss Abigail, and puttered around among the flowers as if they were her own, thanking God for Abe's increasing popularity in the same breath that she gave thanks for the new buds of the spring.

The anniversary of the Roses' entrance into the Home drew nearer, and Blossy suggested that the best way to celebrate the event would be by means of a "pink tea."

Neither Angy nor Abe, nor in fact half the sisters, had any clear conception of what a tinted function might be; but they one and all seized upon Blossy's idea as if it were a veritable inspiration, and for the time jealousies were forgotten, misunderstandings erased.

Such preparations as were made for that tea! The deaf-and-dumb gardener was sent with a detachment of small boys to fetch from the wayside and meadows armfuls of wild roses for the decorations. Miss Abigail made pink icing for the cake. Ruby Lee hung bleeding-hearts over the dining-room door. Aunt Nancy reurcted from the bottom of her trunk a white lace cap with a rakish-looking pink bow for an adornment, and fastened it to her scant gray hairs in honor of the occasion. Blossy turned her pink china pig, his lid left upstair, into a sugar bowl.

Pink, pink, pink, everywhere; even in Angy's proud cheeks! Pink, and pink, and pink! Abe used to grow dizzy, afterward, trying to recall the various pink articles which graced that tea.

But most delightful surprise of all was his anniversary gift, which was slyly slipped to his place after the discussion of the rose-colored strawberry gelatin. It was a square, five-pound parcel wrapped in pink tissue paper, tied with pink string, and found to contain so much Virginia tobacco, which Blossy had inveigled an old southern admirer into sending her for "charitable purposes."

After the presentation of this valuable gift, Abraham felt that the time had come for him to make a speech—practically his maiden speech. He said at the beginning, more suavely at his ease than he would have believed possible, secure of sympathy and approbation, with Angy's glowing old eyes upon her prodigy, that all the while he had been at the Home, he had never before felt the power to express his gratitude for the welcome which had been accorded him—the welcome which seemed to wear and wear, as if it were all wool and a yard wide, and could never wear out.

The old ladies nodded their heads in approval of this, every face beaming; but as the speech went on the others perceived that Abe had singled out Blossy for special mention—blind, blind Abraham—Blossy, who had first proposed admitting him into this paradise; Blossy, who had given up her sunny south chamber to his comfort and Angy's; Blossy, who had been as a "guardian angel" to him; Blossy, who as a fitting climax to all her sisterly attentions had given him today this wonderful, wonderful pink tea, and "this five hull pound o' Virginny tobacco."

He held the parcel close to his bosom, and went on, still praising Blossy—this innocent old gentleman—heedless of Angy's gentle tug at his coat-tail; while Blossy buried her absurdly lovely face in the pink flush of a wild-rose spray, and the other old ladies stared from him to her, their faces growing hard and cold.

When Abraham sat down, aglow with pride over his oratorical triumphs, his chest expanded, his countenance wrinkled into a thousand abject, grateful smiles, there was absolute silence.

Then Blossy, her head still bowed as if in shy confusion, began to clap her hands faintly together, whereat a few of the others joined her half-heartedly. A sense of chill crept over Abraham. Accustomed as a rule to deferential attention, did he but say good morning, by no means aware that his throne had toppled during the winter, he was still forced to perceive that something had gone amiss.

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As always when aught troubled his mind, "father" turned to Angy; but instead of his composed and resourceful little wife he found a scared-faced and trembling woman. Angy had suddenly become conscious of the shadow of the green-eyed monster. Angy's loyal heart was crying out to her mate: "Don't git the sisters down on yer, Abe, 'cus then, mebbe, yew'll lose your hum!" But poor Angelina's lips were so stiff with terror over the prospect of the county house for her husband, that she could not persuade them to speech.

Abraham, completely at sea, turned next to her whom he had called his guardian angel; but Blossy was rising from her seat, a baffling smile of expectancy on her face, the rose spray swinging in her delicate hand as if to the measure of some music too far back in youth for anyone else to hear. Blossy had worn that expectant look all day. She might have been delightedly hugging to herself a secret which she had not shared even with the trusted Abraham. She was gowned in her yellow lace, the beauty and grace of which had defied the changing fashions as Blossy's remarkable elegance of appearance had defied the passing of the years.

"Brother Abe,"—in her heedlessness of the mischief she had wrought, Blossy seemed almost to sing—"I never shall forget your speech as long as I live. Will you excuse me now?" She swept out of the door, her skirts rustling behind her.

Abe collected himself so far as to bow in the direction she had taken; then with lamblike eyes of inquiry met the exasperated glances cast upon him.

Not a sister moved or spoke. They all sat as if glued to their chairs, in a silence that was fast growing appalling.

Abe turned his head and looked behind his chair for an explanation; but nothing met his eye, save the familiar picture on the wall of two white kittens playing in the midst of a huge bunch of purple lilacs.

Then there broke upon the stillness the quavering old voice of Aunt Nancy, from her place opposite Abe's at the head of the board. The aged dame had her two hands clasped before her on the edge of the table, vainly trying to steady their palsied shaking. Her eyes, bright, piercing, age-defying, she fixed upon the bewildered Abraham with a look of deep and sorrowful reproach. Her unsteady head bobbed backward and forward with many an accusing nod, and the cap with its rakish pink bow bobbed backward and forward too. Abe watched her, fascinated, unconsciously wondering, even in the midst of his disquietude, why the cap did not slide off her bald scalp entirely. To his amazement, she addressed not himself, but Angy.

"Sister Rose, yew kin leave the room." Implacable purpose spoke in Aunt Nancy's tone. Angy started, looked up, going first red and then white; but she did not move. She opened her lips to speak.

"I don't want ter hear a word from yew, nor anybody else," sternly interposed Aunt Nancy. "I'm old enough ter be yer mother. Go upstairs!"

Angy's glance sought Miss Abigail, but the matron's eyes avoided hers. The little wife sighed, rose reluctantly, dropped her hand doubtfully reassuring on Abe's shoulder, and then went obediently to the door.

From the threshold she looked wistfully back; but an imperious wave from Aunt Nancy banished her altogether, and Abe found himself alone—not with the sisters whom he loved, but with 28 hard-visaged strangers.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Wanted a Little Praise Himself. Following a disastrous fire in a western city, many men and women gathered to look at the ruins. Some of the men, seeing that a wall near which they were standing was tottering, made haste to get out of the way, and narrowly escaped being crushed.

Johnny Brabson, a good Irish citizen, was so near the wall that he could not escape with the others. So, whirling about, he made for a door in the wall, burst through it, and came out on the other side safe, and evidently very proud of his exploit. Women who had shut their eyes and shrieked when they saw his danger now gathered round him in great joy, and cried out:

"Praise heaven, Johnny Brabson, down on your knees, and thank heaven!"

"Yis yis," said he, "and I will, but wasn't it injanevous inn me, now?"—Youth's Companion.

No Landmarks in Space. "There are no landmarks in space; every portion of space is exactly like every other portion, so that we cannot tell where we are. We are, as it were, in an unruined sea, without stars, compass, soundings, wind or tide, and we cannot tell in what direction we are going. We have no log which we cast out to take a dead reckoning by; we may compute our rate of motion with respect to neighboring bodies, but we do not know how these bodies may be moving in space."—Maxwell.

Futurist Window Display. An Oxford street store has turned one of its windows into a futurist boudoir, which is a regular "Midsummer Night's Dream."

There is an oxidized bed with black sheets and pillows, black and white striped wall paper, spruce and orange cushions scattered about at random on sofas or on the floor, and finally, one of these very green china parrots, the reason of which is not apparent.—Washington Herald.

CAN OUTRUN WILD HORSES

Santo Domingo Indians Are Credited With Remarkable Speed and Powers of Endurance.

In the old days of the "wild and woolly West" plainsmen and travelers by overland wagons held to the belief that a long journey could be made more speedily by man afoot than on horseback. In the army the impression generally is accepted that infantry can outravel cavalry on long marches. But to the Santo Domingo Indians of New Mexico belongs the credit of chasing wild horses over the ranges of the hills until the animals are exhausted and submit to capture.

No marathon runners have ever been recruited from this tribe of Pueblo Indians, for the wonderful powers of endurance of the runners of the tribe are little known outside the district immediately surrounding their village.

These runners of the Santo Domingos come from a race of fleet-footed ancestors. Like all tribes of American Indians, they have accepted the means of traveling best suited to the country where they live. The Sioux of the Dakotas are horsemen. The Santo Domingos have been walkers and runners always. Their physiques show the results of generations of footmen. Great chests, almost abnormal in development, wedge upward from slender waists, while sinewy calves proclaim the strength to hold to a hard trail.

Usually their chases of the bands of wild horses owned by the tribe are matters of necessity. The enormous stretches of broken country where the horses graze, and the untamed spirits of animals that may not have been touched by man in their several years of existence in the hills, make it necessary to wear the creatures out and run them down. None but a Santo Domingo Indian probably is able to do it.

A courier of the Santo Domingo tribe rode 30 miles at furious speed to the pueblo of a neighboring band, bearing a message. His horse was staggering when the town was reached.

A hasty consultation was called. The answer was handed to the Santo Domingo youth. Nodding, he turned toward home.

"Ho! Your horse?" a headman called.

The courier said: "I leave him. I must go fast. The race would kill my horse."

New Coal-Cutter.

Revolutionary changes in coal-mining methods are promised upon the general introduction of a coal-mining machine developed by a Pittsburgh mining and mechanical engineer, who has spent more than ten years in perfecting the machine.

The device, constructed of structural steel, can attack the coal seam in any position, moving up or down or in any direction. It takes out more than 90 per cent of the coal in the ground, whereas the best practice of today seldom recovers more than 70 per cent. It is stated that under all sorts of tests, running over many months, the machine has demonstrated that it can cut the cost of mining coal by half.

It is said that with only twenty men attending the machines, ten of them can produce over 1,000 tons of coal a day. Electricity or compressed air can be used, and so little power is required that the cost of power is less than one per cent a ton for each ton of coal mined.

Bravery of the Jew.

Jews! Never again will the bravery of the Jews be questioned. The European war has found them at the front on many a battlefield, fighting shoulder to shoulder with their compatriots among the various belligerents. Discussing at a meeting of the Jews in New York city the topic, "The Jew as a Citizen in the Country of His Domicile," Dr. Henry M. Leisler declared that from all of the countries involved in the conflict came reports that the Jews were rallying to the support of the country of their adoption, and were conducting themselves with heroism. Jews in the German army have received the Iron Cross, and in the Russian army have won distinction. The ability of the Jews to remain a distinct people and yet to support loyally the country of their birth or adoption is one of the marvels of history.—Leslie's.

Blind Boys Match Pennies.

Two blind newsboys who station themselves at Thirteenth and Market streets at midnight to sell the "bulldog" editions of the various morning newspapers are furnishing a spectacle that would call forth from Billy Sunday some choice Sundaygrams, remarks the Philadelphia Record. These two lads, one is white and the other is colored, when business becomes slack, engage in a quiet game of matching pennies. Of course, they cannot see the head or tail of a coin, but they readily tell it by the touch. One of them evidently tried to fool the other one night by using a smooth penny. He had some particular mark on it by which he could tell the head, and when the other lad matched him he challenged his opponent to prove his point. The boy felt the smooth coin and, to the surprise of the small group of spectators, detected the trick of the other boy.

Novel Use for Auto.

A Cleveland woodworker has mounted a work bench on wheels and tows it behind his automobile, using the power of the auto to drive a band saw and other tools.

COMPLETE SYSTEM OF HOGGING OFF CROPS



Healthy Sow and Litter.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

The familiar practice of hogging off crops has been developed by experts in the United States department of agriculture into a scientific system of farm management which, it is said, will minimize, in those sections and those farms to which it is adapted, the cost of harvest labor.

Reduced to its simplest terms this system, which is described in full in Farmers' Bulletin No. 614, "A Corn Belt System of Farming Which Saves Harvest Labor by Hogging Down Crops," consists of a four or five-year rotation of corn, corn, rye and a mixture of clover and timothy one or two years. A farm managed on this system should consist of four or five fields of from 20 to 40 acres each, and it is desirable that all the fields should be of approximately the same size. Farms should be laid out in accordance with the following plan:

1. Corn—First year to be hogged off.
2. Corn—Second year to be cut and rye sown.
3. Rye and Young Clover—Hogged off and pastured.
4. Clover and Timothy—Hog pastured.
5. Timothy and Clover—For hay or pasture.

Above is plan of a farm run on a five-year rotation.

In field No. 1 the first year corn is grown and hogged off as soon as it is ripe. This is generally from September 1 to September 10. When the corn is cultivated for the last time, it is usually desirable to sow soy beans or rape, in order that the hogs may have pasturage while gathering the corn, and also because such a crop supplies valuable humus which can be turned back into the soil. In the following spring this field is prepared for second-year corn and becomes field No. 2 in the illustration.

Field No. 2 is, as we have seen, devoted to second year corn, which is not hogged off but harvested by hand. Here rye is sown in the fall. Under favorable conditions this can be done while the corn is still standing, but if necessary it is not too late after the corn has been cut and shocked. Rye may be sown much later than wheat, and this is one of its great advantages in a rotation such as is now being described.

Field No. 3 is devoted to rye throughout the entire season. In the spring it is pastured by the hogs as long as it is palatable, affording excellent pasturage, especially for young hogs and brood sows. When the rye becomes tough and the hogs cease to relish it, they should be removed and not returned to the field until two

TIME FOR SELLING PIG CROP

Much Depends Upon Price of Feeding Materials and Development of Bone, Muscle and Vigor.

The best time to sell the pigs depends upon the price of feeding materials that may be utilized in growing them and developing their bone, muscle and vigor, and preparing them for the fattening period. When we have plenty of forage, skim milk and other home-grown foods, we often find it advantageous to allow them a longer period of growth than when we feed an exclusive grain diet. Market demands are for a medium-sized hog, with plenty of lean meat; strong, but not too coarse bone; plenty of activity and strength to stand up well during shipment.

Fall pigs, as a rule, are less profitable unless the feeder can utilize what would otherwise be waste feed in keeping them through the winter. Pigs that make good gains during the winter, and can be put on pasture in the spring, and then fattened in the fall, often make good gains during the longer periods, and cash in fine profits in the fall. On account of coming to maturity at the best time to breed for spring litters, we have found fall farrowed sows very desirable for breeding purposes. The second season gives them the bone and muscle development at a very low cost.

Warm drinking water, light, warm and dry quarters, succulent food with frequent change of breeding and diet, will insure good growth during the winter, but unless we are in the best shape to look after these details, we find it best to confine our feeding to spring litters. The fall pig that goes into the winter without a warm place to sleep and plenty of warm, nourishing food, has a winter of misery before it.

Farm Profits.

The farm profits are for the most part made out of yields that are above the average. Average yields seldom pay more than the cost of production.

MIDLINGS FOR YOUNG PIGS

If Rye Can Be Purchased for Less Money Than Wheat It Will Be to Advantage to Feed Them.

Chemical analyses indicate that there is nearly 75 per cent more fat and slightly more protein in wheat middlings than in rye middlings, although feeding tests show that wheat middlings are but very little better than rye middlings. Feeding tests have shown that pigs fed on rye middlings are quite likely to go off feed, which is not so common an occurrence with wheat middlings. With prices the same, wheat middlings would be the better feed, but if rye middlings can be purchased for somewhat less than the other, it will be to the feeder's advantage to use them.

DAIRY NOTES

Bad hay or fodder should never be fed to the cow.

Sunlight is death to disease germs. Flood the stable with sunlight.

Always provide the cow with a good bed to lie on. Be a good friend to your cows.

Water with the chill taken out is best for the milk cows. Put a heater in the tank.

The reason many cows kick is because they have been kicked first. Ever think about that?

The way to produce milk profitably is to have cows bred for that purpose. Do not try to make a cow do two things at the same time.

Fertile farms are necessary if permanent agriculture is to be established and the dairy cow offers the simplest and best possible means of securing these fertile fields.