The Port Tobacco Times

AND CHARLES COUNTY ADVERTISER.

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jan 12-1y JOHN HOFFMAN

Select Story.

By The Midnight Train.

There was a tiny circular garden, filled to overflowing with pansies, geraniums and roses; a house which looked like a magnificent pepper box, completely hidden from view by masses of hop vines, honeysuckles, and the red blossoms of some flower beans. The noon sun poured its hot beams over everything, making the dusty leaves sparkle as if some benevolent fairy had powdered them with diamond dust.

In contrast to the outside heat and glare, Ruy Blasmont, sauntering along the shaded piazza in his spotless white linen suit, seemed a perfect miracle of coolness. He was a slim, handsome man, about thirty, with regular features and light olive complexion. His hair and the small black moustache he wore vied with his eyes in intense blackness Such eyes! they spoke when their owner's eyes were silent, and expressed whatever he intended.

He puffed lazily at a cigar, and taking his stand where the shade fell dark, looked out on the sun beaten road.

'Parbleau!' he muttered. 'What care I for heat? Heat is my element. It is well—for doubtless I'll have enough of it some day.' And he laughed sardonically. 'I think I'd rather enjoy a war with his Satanic Majesty.' He paused an instant. 'Ah, here he comes—the young farmer. What brings him at this hour!'

A young man had just rounded the corner of the nearest house, and was coming toward the Blasmont garden. A stalwart; brown faced man with a frank open look. He nodded slightly to Ruy Blasmont, and said:

'Is Miss Rose at home?'

"Mademoiselle Blasmont is not at home,' the brother answered, slightly raising his eyebrows and playing with his moustache, to show the large diamond ring that glittered on his right hand.

John Brightly hesitated. He did not believe Ruy Blasmont's assertion. He distrusted him too greatly to credit anything he might say; besides, he did not feel inclined to retrace his way through the hot fields without accomplishing the end for which he had come.

His hesitation did not last long. A petite figure, clothed in some airy fabric of pink and white, came hastily through the French window. It was Rose Blasmont.

'Oh, Mr. Brightly!' she exclaimed, smiling and offering her hand. 'I thought I heard your voice.'

'I understand from what your brother said that you were not at home.'

'Why he knew'—she began, but she had too much tact to continue.

"I meant,' said Ruy Blasmont, with an insolent glance at John Brightly, 'that my sister might not be at home to me—ahem!—gentleman.'

John Brightly's face flushed, but he took no other notice of the insult, for Rose laid a hand on his arm, and whispered:

'Poor Ruy isn't well. He is--what do you Americans call it?'

'insolent,' John Brightly could not help saying.

'Oh, no, no, no. Only a little vexed—cross. Come into the parlor. It is much cooler there. 'Que vout etes bon! Ces fleurs son manifiques!" she exclaimed, catching sight of the large clusters of water-lilies that Brightly carried in his hand.

'You forget that I don't understand French,' he said, smiling for the first time, as he followed her into the parlor.

'Ah, oui! What a pity! But I am so thankful to you. I must sing at Mrs. Moreland's garden party to-night, and these are the veritable flowers I love most to wear.'

'You told me so last evening.'

'And therefore you walked through the hot sun to bring them. How good you are!'

'It is not such a sacrifice. This is my dinner your, you know. We farmers are extremely busy just at present, I snatched sufficient time to pay you a visit.'

'Then you will lunch with us. Excuse me for a moment, and I will prepare—'

'No, I wish to speak to you.'

'Strawberries and cream! Can you resist the temptation?' she said, laughing, and trying to escape. 'Besides, you never tried my sponge cake.'

'Rose,' he said, gravely, 'give me a few moments. I have something to say to you.'

Ruy Blasmont drew near to the window, and arranged himself in a comfortable position for hearing all that might be said.

Rose resumed her seat, her eyes cast down and the color varying in her face.

'I have a question to ask you, Rose. Will you be my wife?'

Ruy whispered through the lace curtain a sibulant 'no.'

Rose heard the word and turned pale To her, her brother's will was law.

'I don't know,' she faltered. 'I cannot yet tell.'

The eager look on the young farmer's face gave way to deep disappointment. 'I have been abrupt, but I thought that perhaps my actions have given you reason to expect that I might ask this question.'

Rose was silent.

'You think I am too impatient. I have waited a long time for this opportunity, and it may be my last chance for months. I start for New York by the midnight train.'

Rose gathered up all her courage.

'Yes, John, I promise. I will be your wife whenever you choose.

Ruy Blasmont angrily overturned the rustic chair on which he had been sitting, and entered through the window.

'Ah, mes amis,' he said, cooly smiling, 'I have been an involuntary listener to your conversation, and pardon me if I interrupt it, to correct a slight mistake. Monsieur Brightly, the young lady who has this instant promised to marry you is already pledged to another—the rich proprietor, Monsieur Willis.'

John Brightly looked inquiringly at Rose. Rose seemed astonished—and then her color heightened, and she cried indignantly:

'It is false!'

'It is true. I have promised Monsieur Willis that you shall become his wife within the year.'

'You!' exclaimed Rose, with a gesture of utter scorn.

'By what right?' demanded Brightly.

'By my right as the young lady's guardian and only relation.'

'I deny that any such right exists,' cried the young farmer, passionately. 'Take care, Ruy Blasmont—take care. If you attempt to force your sister—now my promise wife—into a marriage with another, I will disclose that which will place you where your interference will be useless.'

'Indeed!' sneered Blasmont; but his countenance fell.

'Good-bye, Rose,' said Brightly. 'Be true to me. I will return as soon as I can. As for you, sir,' he continued, looking at Blasmont, 'I advise you not to try to coerce Miss Blasmont. No doubt you read the papers. There has been a new forgery. Good-day.'

And with another good-bye to Rose, he left the room and walked down the garden path.

Ruy Blasmont went to his room, murmuring imprecations in an undertone. Rose sat down in the parlor, lost in thought.

The Blasmonts, brother and sister, had come from France about two years previously, and taken the small cottage not far from Maryland.

Rose taught French and music in the neighborhood families and in one or two boarding schools in town. She had made herself a general favorite; her musical education had been thorough, and her services were in demand and well remunerated. She was a pretty, true-hearted little lady, who did her duty, and tried to make every one around her happy. She regarded her brother as a hero. He was her ideal. For him she would have worked until she died; and he would probably have made no objection. People wondered where his fast horses and champagne suppers came from. From his sister's earnings, perhaps. Some of them, but not all. He had no visible means of support. Moreland people hoped that Rose would get married soon, if it were only to rid herself of that scamp, her brother.

Ruy Blasmont had been cast on the world by the death of his parents, when very young. While he dissipated his fortune in Paris, his sister had remained in her convent. One day he found himself penniless. He needed somebody to support him. He accordingly withdrew Rose from the convent, and the two started for the United States

Rose could see no flaw in the character of her immaculate Ruy, until she met John Brightly. Comparing the two men she was forced to acknowledge that her brother was not perfect. That he was selfish and insincere she had discovered, but that he was so utterly base as to sell her to old Mr. Willis, whose offer of marriage Ruy knew that she had once refused, she could scarcely believe And yet he had admitted it himself! Hot tears dropped from her eyes as she thought of it.

Stooping to pick up the water-lilies which had fallen from her lap, she noticed an open paper on the floor. Half idly, she picked it up and read the words written on it:

"DEAR SIR—The man who forged your name to a check for one thousand dollars has been traced. He is a neighbor of yours—Ruy Blasmont. The proof is certain. If you desire to have the matter hushed up, come to New York at once. If you don't come, I will have him arrested without delay.

"THOMAS RICHARDS,
Private Detective."

"To John Brightly, Esq."

Scarcely knowing what she was doing, Rose turned the note in her hand. On the back she saw written in lead pencil:

"Telegraphed to Richards—Don't proceed. Will start for New York by the midnight train. J. B."

Rose Blasmont paced the room, pale and tearless. She remembered how this note came there. The stems of water-lilies were wet when John Brightly brought them in. He had pulled out his handkerchief to dry them, and Rose recollected that a scrap of paper, as she thought, had fallen to the floor.

'He shall not impoverish himself for my sake,' she said passionately. 'He is poor already. I know it. I will prevent this sacrifice, even though I hand Ruy over to the law I will pay him every cent yet!' And taking a small book from her pocket, she ran her eye down a column of figures. "Yes—there is something. I can pay John Brightly a part of this money my brother has stolen.' A shiver ran through her as she spoke the word stolen. 'I have my mother's jewels which Ruy so often wanted me to pawn, and three hundred dollars, my savings, that I promised Ruy on his fete day. Yes I will pay him every sou. He shall not remain poor, even one day, for my sake. I will take the jewels to-night by the the midnight train to New York, and on the morrow I will meet John Brightly with the whole sum.'

Rose was thoroughly aroused. She was naturally high spirited and proud, although those qualities were seldom shown in her ordinary life. The knowledge of her brother's baseness, was probably the bitterest experience that could have come to her. She felt the hope of becoming John Brightly's wife must be given up. She would not take to him a tarnished name.

She hastly wrote a note to Mrs. Moreland, by whom she had been engaged to sing that evening, and excused herself. Then she went up to her room and did not reappear until in the darkness she stole to the railroad station. Rose was as impatient as she was impulsive. The few minutes of waiting in the railroad office seemed as many hour's to her. With the knowledge of her brother's crime weighing on her heart, action seemed the only thing that could give her relief. At last the midnight train started. Just as the last car left the station, John Brightly appeared running at full speed. The locomotive went on; he was left behind. He had spent all the evening in attempting a letter for Rose. So absorbed had he been in his task, that he had not noticed the flight of time, and hence his lateness.

The next train would be in at 4.30. The farm was at least four miles from the station, so John Brightly concluded that he might as well remain where he was. He entered the little office, which at present was occupied by a dimly-burning oil lamp and a sleepy employe, and gave himself up to thought. He looked back on the years of long struggling he had passed, in the endeavor to buy that farm upon the hill; and when his object was almost attained—when the last instalment of the purchase money was to be paid to the owner—Ruy Blasmont had to step in, and, by a few strokes of his pen, swept it all away. It was very hard. 'And yet she shall never know it,' he thought. 'I will save her from disgrace, if it costs all I have.'

All that afternoon Ruy Blasmont remained in his room. He wanted money, and a large amount, too. The only means to obtain it would be to marry Rose to a rich man. Old, pompous Mr. Willis, the wealthy man of Moorland, was the person he had selected for Rose's husband. Rose had rejected him once, and then he applied to Ruy. Ruy had promised for Rose, never imagining that his sister would dare oppose his all-powerful will.

Ruy Blasmont had found that Rose had a will of her own. Brightly was in the way. Brightly, doubtless, knew more about the forgery than was agreeable for the forger. Brightly was a dangerous person. Brightly would leave Moorland by the midnight train. Parbleu! What can one do with a dangerous person? Ruy Blasmont showed his white teeth, and closed his eyes as if he were afraid that they would tell the evil thought showing through them. He was not aware that Rose had left his house.

Shortly before midnight he stood on the side of a steep embankment, on the railroad, about two miles from Moorland. His hands were torn and bleeding. He had just succeeded in rolling a huge rock on the track. On either side of the embankment was a narrow path. Fifty feet below on one side was the river; on the other were rugged masses of clay and rocks. Running along the embankment until he reached the field to the north of it, he crouched between the fence and the trunk of a willow tree, and waited the coming of a train.

'Parbleu!' he muttered 'Monsieur le diable will thank me for the cargo I'll send him to-night. Bah! they'll die sometime all the same.' And he shrugged his shoulders.

The light of the locomotive grows larger and larger. In another moment the train will be on the embankment. It passes the field at lightning-like speed. The moon is at its full. The engineer perceives the obstruction; but too late. The locomotive strikes it, leaps back, crushing in the nearest car, and plunging down the embankment. There are shrieks and groans from men and women, and crushing timber. The locomotive, followed by the train, plunges in among the clay and rocks. At last it falls over on its side, and all who are alive pour from the cars. There are many wounded and many dead; but Ruy Blasmont does not see John Brightly. He sees another, however, and that is his sister Rose. With her pale, still face upturned, she lies among the rocks, near the dismantled locomotive, the light from its reflector forming a halo around her.

Ruy Blasmont kneels by her side. His face becomes rigid.

'A mistake,' he says, cooly taking a revolver from the breast-pocket of his coat. 'I've killed the wrong one. This time I will be sure.'

He points the pistol at his own head and fires. The ball passes through his head and he falls back a corpse.

The news of the disaster travelled quickly to Moorland. John Brightly was the first to reach the spot. He exerted himself nobly, tenderly caring for the wounded, and reverently removing the dead. Approaching the spot where the locomotive lay, in search of more unfortunates, he received an impression of horror that never left him until his dying day. He saw Rose Blasmont. He staggered and almost fell.

'Rose! My Rose!' he gasped.

'John!' she cried, joyfully opening her eyes, 'Where am I? Is it really you John? Then I am safe!'

She was safe and unhurt. She had only fainted.

In a dark clump of cypress trees, near the Brightly farm, there is a marble slab. It bears the name--'Ruy Blasmont.' Mr. and Mrs. Brightly have forgiven him. The remembrance of his terrible crime is the only cloud in the sunlight of their happiness.

Select Reading.

The Bad Boy.

'What are you setting there for half an hour for, staring at vacancy?' said the grocery man to the bad boy, as he sat on a stool by the stove one of these foggy mornings, when everyone feels like quarreling, with his fingers clasped around his knee, looking as though he did not know enough to last him to bed. 'What you thinking about any way?'

I was wondering where you would have been to-day if Noah, had run his ark into such a fog as this, and there had been no fog-horn on Mount Ararat, and he had passed by with his excursion and not made a landing, and had floated around on the freshet until all the animals starved, and the ark, had struck a snag and burst a hole in her bottom. I tell you, we can all congratulate ourselves that Noah happened to blunder on that high ground. If that ark had been lost, either by being foundered, or being blowed up by the Fenians because Noah was an Englishman, and it would have been cold work trying to populate this world. In that case another Adam and Eve would have to be made out of dirt and water, and they might have gone wrong again ahd failed to raise a family, where would we have been? I tell you, when I think of the narrow escapes we have had, it is a wonder to me that we have got along as well as we have.'

'Well, when did you get out of the asylum,' said the grocery man, who had been standing back with open mouth looking at the boy as though he was crazy. 'What you want is to have your head soaked. You are getting so you reach out too for with that small mind of yours. In about another year you will want to run this world yourself. I don't think you are reforming very much. It is wicked for a boy of your size to argue about such things. Your folks had better send you to college.

'What do I want to go to college for, and be a heartless hazer, and poor base ball player. I can be bad enough at home. The more I read, the more I think. I don't believe I can ever be good enough to go to heaven, anyway' and I guess I will go into the newspaper business, where they have passes everywhere. Do you know, I think when I was built they left out a cog wheel or something in my head. I can't think like some boys. I get to thinkin about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and of the dude with the cloven hoof that flirted with Eve, and treated her and Adam to the dried apples, and I can't think of them as some boys do, with a fig leaf polonaise and fig leaf vests. I imagine them dressed up in the latest style. I know it is wrong, but that is what a poor boy has to suffer who has an imagination, and where did I get the imagination? This confounded imagination of mine shows me Adam with a plug hat on, just like our minister wears, and a stand up collar, and tight pants, and peak-toed shoes, and Eve is pictured to me with a crushed angleworm colored dress, and brown striped stockings, and newspapers in her dress to make it set out, and a hat with dandelions on, and a red parasol, and a handkerchief, which she puts to her lips and winks with her left eye to the masher who is standing by the corner of the house, in an attitude, while the tail with the dart one the end is wound around the rain barrel, so Eve won't see it and get scared. Say, don't you think it is better for a boy to think of his first parents with clothes on, than to think of them almost naked, exposed to the inclemency of the weather, with nothing but fig-leaves pinned on? I want to do right as near as I can, but I had rather think of them dressed like our folks are to day, than to think of them in a cyclone with leaves for apparel. Say, it is wrong to fight, but don't you think if Adam had put on a pair of boxing gloves, when he found the devil was getting too fresh about the place and knocked him out in a couple of rounds, and pasted him in the nose, and fired him out of the summer garden, that it would have been a big thing for this world. Now, honest?

'Lookahere' said the grocery man, who had been lookin at the boy in dismay, 'You better go right home and let your ma fix up some warm drink for you and put you to bed. You are all wrong in the head, and if you are not attended to you will have brain fever. I tell you, boy, you are in danger. Come, I will go home with you.'

'O, danger nothin.' I am just telling how things look to a boy who has not got the facilities for being too good in his youth. Some boys can take things as they read them, and not think any for themselves, but I am a thinker from Thinkerville, and my imagination plays the dickens with me. There is nothing I read about old times but what I compare it with the same line of business at the present day. Now, when I think of the fisherman of Galilee, drawing their seines, I wonder what they would have done if there had been a law against hauling seine, as there is in Wisconsin to-day, and I can see a constable with the arrest of the Galilee fisherman, snatching the old apostles and taking them to the police station in a patrol wagon. I know it is wrong to think like that, but how can I help it. Say, suppose those fishermen were out hauling their seines, and our minister should come along with his good clothes, his jointed rod, his nickel plated reel, and his silk fish line, and his patent fish hook, and put a frog on the hook, and cast his line near the Galilee fishmen an go trolling for bass? What do you suppose the lone fisherman of the Bible times would have thought about the gall of the jointed rod fisherman? Do you suppose they would have thrown stones in the water where he was trolling, or would they have told him there was good trolling around a point about half a mile up the shore, where they knew he wouldn't get a bite in a week, the way a fellow at Muskego Lake lied to our minister a spell ago? I tell you, boss, it is a sad thing for a boy to have an imagination,' and the boy put his other knee in the sling made by the clenched fingers of both hands, and waited for the grocery man to argue with him.

'I wish you would go away from here. I am afraid of you,' said the grocery man. 'I would give anything if you pa or the minister would come in and have a talk with you. Your mind is wandering,' and the grocery man went to the door and looked up and down the street to see if somebody wouldn't come in and watch the crazy boy while he went to breakfast.

'O, pa and the minister can't make a first payment on me. Pa gets mad when I ask questions, and the minister thinks I am past redemption. Pa said yesterday that baldness was caused in every case, by men wearing plug hats, and when I asked him where the good Eliza (whom the boys called 'go up old bald head,' and the bears had a tree lunch on them) got his plug hat, pa said school was dismissed, and I could go. When the minister was telling me about the good Elijah going up through the clouds on a chariot of fire, and I asked the minister what he thought Elijan would have thought if he had met our Sunday school superintendent coming down through the clouds on a bicycle, he put his hand on my head and said my liver was wrong. Now, I will leave it to you if there was anything wrong about that. Say do you know what I think is the most beautiful thing in the Bible?

'No, I don't said the grocery man and if you want to tell it I will listen five minutes, and then I am going to shut up the store and go to breakfast You make me tired.'

'Well, I think the finest thing is that story about the prodigal son, where the boy took all the money he could scrape up and went out West to paint the town red. He spent his money in riotous living, and saw every thing that was going on, and got full of benzine, and struck all the gangs of toughs, both male and female, and his stomach went back on him, and he had malaria, and finally he got to be a cowboy, herding hogs, and had to eat husks that the hog didn't want, and went pretty low down. Then he thought it was a pretty good scheme to be getting around home, where they had three meals a day, and spring mattrasses, and he started home, beating his way on the trains, and he didn't know whether the old man would receive him with open arms or pointed boots, but the old man came down to the depot to meet him, and right there before the passengers, and the conductor and brakemen, he wasn't ashamed of his boy, though he was ragged, and looked as though he had been on the war path, and the old man fell on his neck and wept, and took him home in a hack and had a veal pot pie for dinner. That's what I call sense. A good many men now days would have put the police on the tramp and had him ordered out of town. What, you going to close up the store? Well, I will see you later, I want to talk with you about something that is on mind,' and the boy got out just in time to save his coat-tail from being caught in the door, and when the grocery man came back from breakfast he found a sign in front, 'This store is closed till further notice.—Sheriff.'—*Peck's Sun.*

Facts Worth Knowing.

That salt fish are quickest and best freshened by soaking in sour milk.

That cold rain water and soap will remove machine grease from washable fabrics.

That fish may be scaled much easier by first dipping them into boiling water for a minute.

That fresh meat beginning to sour will sweeten if placed out of doors in the cool air over night.

That boiling starch is much improved by the addition of sperm or of salt, or a little gum arabic dissolved.

That a table spoonful of turpentine boiled with your white clothes, will greatly aid the whitening process.

That kerosence will soften boots or shoes that have been hardened by water, and will render them pliable as new.

That clear boiling water will remove tea stains; pour the water through the stain, and thus prevent its spreading over the fabric.

That salt will curdle new milk; so in preparing milk porridge, gravies, etc., the salt should not be added until the dish is prepared.

That kerosene will make your teakettle as bright as new. Saturate a woolen rag and rub with it. It will also remove stains from the clean varnished furniture.