

Oliver October

By
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(Continued from last week.)

Mr. Sage paused aghast half way down the steps of the last coach but one. He stared, open-mouthed, out over the sea of faces; his knees seemed about to give way under him; his nervous fingers came near relaxing their grip on the suitcase handles; he was bewildered, stunned.

"In heaven's name—" he groaned, and then, poor man, over his shoulder in helpless distress to the girl behind him—"Oh, Jane, why didn't we wait for the midnight—"

But someone had seized the bags and with them he was dragged ingloriously to the platform. Jane came next, crimson with embarrassment. She hurried down the steps and waited at the bottom for her mother to appear. As might have been expected of one so truly theatrical, Josephine delayed her appearance until the stage was clear, so to speak. She even went so far as to keep her audience waiting. Preceded by the Pullman porter, who up to this time had remained invisible but now appeared as a proud and shining minion bearing boxes and traveling cases, wraps and furs, she at length appeared, stopping on the last step to survey, with well affected surprise and a charming assumption of consternation, the crowd that packed the platform.

Now, a great many—perhaps all of those who made up the eager, curious crowd, expected to behold a young and radiant Josephine Judge; they had seen her in the illustrated Sunday supplements and in the pictorial magazines; always she was sprightly and vivid and alluring. They were confronted instead, by a tall, angular woman of fifty-two or fifty-three, carelessly—even "sloppily"—dressed in a slouchy two-piece pepper and salt tweed walking costume. What most of the observers at first took to be a wad of light brown fur tucked under her right arm was discovered to be a beady-eyed "Pekinese."

But the minister's wife was still a vividly handsome woman. She had taken good care of herself; she had made a business of keeping young in looks as well as in spirit. In a clear, full voice, trained to reach remote perches in lofty theaters, she spoke to her husband from the coach steps:

"Herbert, dear, have you the checks for my baggage, or have I?"

"I will attend to the trunks—" he began huskily, only to be interrupted by the indefatigable Sammy.

"Don't give 'em another thought, Mr. Sage. I'll see to everything. Give me the checks and—right this way, please, Mrs. Sage."

"Thank you—thank you so much," said Mrs. Sage graciously, and, as Sammy hustled ahead, inquired in an undertone of Jane at whose side she walked: "Is that the wonderful Oliver October I've been hearing so much about?"

"No, mother—that is Sammy Parr. I don't see Oliver anywhere. I wrote him the train we were coming—"

A few paces ahead Sammy was explaining loudly to Mr. Sage: "I guess something important of a political nature must have turned up to keep Oliver from meeting the train. We had it all fixed up to meet you with my car and he was to be here at four sharp. Doc Lansing's up at Harbor Point, Mich., for a little vacation. Won't be back till Sunday week. Murie's out here in the car, Mr. Sage. She'll drive you home while I see about the baggage."

Mr. Sage had recovered his composure by this time. He leaned close to Sammy's ear and said gravely:

"Luggage, Sammy—luggage."

"Sure—I get you," said Sammy, winking. "But just the same I'll call it baggage till I've got it safely out of the hands of Jim O'Brien, the baggage master. Here we are! Hop right in, Jane. Permit me to introduce myself, Mrs. Sage. I am—"

"I remember you quite well," interrupted the great actress (pronouncing it "quite"). "You are Sammy Parr—little Sammy Parr."

"I say, Herbert, old thing, you can't make me believe this is Rumley. You are deceiving me. I don't recognize a single— Oh, yes, I do! I take it all back. I would know that man if I saw him in Timbuktu. The old Johnnie in the car we just passed. It was Gooch—the amiable Gooch—and, my word, what a dust he was raising!"

Oliver, pedaling furiously, arrived at the parsonage ten minutes behind the Sages. The minister greeted him as he came clattering up the front steps.

"Sh! he cautioned, his finger to his lips. "Don't make such a noise, Oliver—if you please. She's—she's resting. Sh! Do you mind tiptoeing, lad?"

"Where is Jane, Uncle Herbert?" broke in Oliver, twiddling his hat. He was struck by the dazed, beatific, and

yet harassed expression in the minister's eyes.

"Jane? Oh, yes, Jane. Why, Jane is upstairs with her dear mother—helping her with her hair, I think. I am sure she will not be down for some time, Oliver. After the hair I think she rubs her back or something of that sort. Do you mind strolling around the yard with me, Oliver? I was on the point of taking Henry the Eighth out for a little exercise."

"Henry the what?" inquired Oliver, still gripping the pastor's hand.

"The Eighth," said Mr. Sage, looking about the porch and shifting the position of his feet in some trepidation. "Bless my soul, what can have become of him? I hope I haven't been standing on him. I should have squashed him— Ah, I remember! The hat-rack!"

He dashed into the hall, followed by Oliver, and there was Henry the Eighth suspended from the hatrack by his leash in such a precarious fashion that only by standing on his hind legs was he able to avoid strangulation.

"I am so absent-minded," murmured Mr. Sage, rather plaintively. "Poor doggie! Was he being hanged like a horrid old murderer? Was he—"

"I say, Uncle Herbert, don't you think Jane may have finished—er—rubbing Mrs. Sage's back by this time?" interrupted the impatient Oliver.

"Possibly," said the other. "Come along, doggie—let's romp a bit."

Meanwhile, Jane, having brushed her mother's hair, was now employed in the more laborious task of rubbing the lady's back.

"You have a great deal of magnetism in your hands, my dear," droned Mrs. Sage, luxuriously. "As I say, my maid always did it for me in London, but she never had the touch that you have. The right shoulder now, please."

"I think Oliver is downstairs with father," began Jane wistfully.

"She was my dresser, too," went on Mrs. Sage drowsily. "Really, I wonder now that I endured her as long as I did. And I shouldn't if she hadn't been so kind to Henry the Eighth. I do hope your father is giving him a nice little romp in the front—"

"Shall I run down and see, mother?" broke in Jane eagerly.

"Presently, my dear, presently. I shall be taking my tub in a few—you say we have a bathroom now? Dear me, how the house has grown. How many servants have we?"

"One," said Jane succinctly.

"One?" gasped Josephine. "I never heard of such a thing."

"One is all we need, and besides one is all we can afford. I am afraid you will have a lot to put up with, mother dear."

Josephine was silent for a long time. Suddenly she lifted her head and looked up into her daughter's face.

"My dear," she said, with a wry little twist at the corner of her generous mouth, "I've come home to stay. I



"Sh! The Windows Are Open, Oliver."

daresay you will find me capable of taking things as they are. I did it once before, and I can do it again."

The express wagon with Mrs. Sage's trunks arrived as Oliver, in despair, was preparing to depart as he had come, on Marmaduke Smith's bicycle. He took fresh hope. Here was a chance to see Jane after all.

"Where do you want the trunks, Jane?" he shouted from the bottom of the stairs. There was no answer.

"Where shall we put them, Uncle Herbert?" he asked, his hands jammed deep in his pockets.

"Bless my soul, I—I haven't an idea," groaned Mr. Sage, passing his hand over his brow. "Unless you put them in my study," he suggested brightly.

Fifteen minutes later, the trunks being piled high in the pastor's little study, Oliver mopped his brow and expressed himself feelingly to Mr. Sage from the bottom of the porch steps.

"Uncle Herbert, I think Jane might have been allowed a minute or two to say hello to a fellow. Good Lord, sir, is—is this to be Jane's job from now on?"

"Sh! The windows are open, Oliver."

"Is she to be nothing but a lady's maid to Aunt Josephine?"

"We are so happy to have her with us, my dear boy, that—er—nothing—"

"I understand, Uncle Herbert," broke in Oliver contritely, noting the pas-

tor's distress. "I'm sorry I spoke as I did. Tell Jane I'll call her up this evening. And please tell Aunt Josephine I am awfully keen to see her. I used to love her better than anything going, you know."

Then he pedaled slowly away on Marmaduke's wheel, looking over his shoulder until the windows of the parsonage were no longer visible.

CHAPTER VII

Oliver Is Worried

Three days later, the sheriff of the county served papers on Oliver October. The prosecuting attorney had refused to lay the matter before the grand jury, as requested by Horace Gooch, but had grudgingly acceded to his demand that an official investigation be instituted and carried to a definite conclusion by the authorities.

"I want you to understand, Oliver," explained the sheriff, "that this is none of my doing. Gooch has obtained an order from the court, calling for a search of the swamp and your premises, basing his affidavit on the suspicion that his brother-in-law came to his death by foul means and—er—so on. He agrees to pay all the costs arising from this investigation in case nothing comes of it. On the other hand, if your father's body is found, and there is any evidence of foul play, the county naturally is to assume all the costs. The old man has hired two detectives to come down here and take active charge of the work. I hope you won't have any hard feelings toward me, Baxter. I am only doing my duty as ordered by the court."

"Not the slightest feeling in the world, sheriff," said Oliver warmly. "I wish you would do me a favor, however. The next time you see my uncle, please remind him that my offer to give \$5,000 if he finds my poor father—dead or alive—still holds. You can start digging whenever you are ready, sheriff. If any damage is done to the property, however, I shall be obliged to compel my uncle to pay for it. Don't forget to tell him that, will you?"

The sheriff grinned. "I wonder if this old bird knows how many votes he's going to lose by this sort of thing."

Oliver frowned. "His scheme is to throw suspicion on me, sheriff. That's what he is after. It is possible that a good many people will hesitate about voting for a man who is suspected of killing his own father."

"Don't you worry, Oliver," cried the sheriff, slapping the young man on the back. "Things are coming out all right for you!"

Fully a week passed before a move was made by the authorities. The newspapers devoted considerable first page space to the new angle in the unsolved Baxter mystery, but not one of them took the matter up editorially.

Notwithstanding the reticence of the press, the news spread like wildfire that Horace Gooch was actually charging his nephew with the murder of his father. The town of Rumley went wild with anger and indignation. A few hot-heads talked of tar and feathers for old man Gooch.

And yet deep down in the soul of every one who cried out against Horace Gooch's malevolence lurked a strange uneasiness that could not be shaken off.

The excitement over the return of Mrs. Sage was short-lived on account of the new and startling turn in the Baxter mystery. Acute interest in the pastor's wife dwindled into a mild, almost innocuous form of curiosity.

Ladies of the congregation, after a dignified season of hesitation, called on her—that is to say, after forty-eight hours—and were told by the servant that Miss Judge was not at home. She would be at home only on Thursday from three to six. Some little confusion was caused by the name, but this was satisfactorily straightened out by the servant, who explained that Miss Judge and Mrs. Sage were one and the same person, and that she was married all right and proper except, as you might say, in name. Mrs. Serepta Grimes, being an old friend, was one of the first to call. And this is what she said to Oliver October that same evening:

"You ask me, did I see her? I did. I told the hired girl to say who it was, and in a minute or two she came back and told me the barefacedest lie I ever heard. She said Mrs. Sage wasn't at home. Well, do you know what I did, Oliver? I just said 'Pooh' and walked right up the stairs and into her room. She got right up and kissed me five or six times—and well, that's about all, except I stayed so long I was afraid I'd be late for supper."

"Did you see Jane?" broke in Oliver.

"Certainly. Do you want to hear what Josephine said about you?"

"N, I can't say that I do. By the way, Aunt Serepta, there is something I've been wanting to ask you for quite a while. Do you think Jane is pretty?"

Mrs. Grimes pondered. "Well," she said judicially, "it depends on what you mean by pretty. Do you mean, is she beautiful?"

"I suppose that's what I mean."

"What do you want to know for?"

"Eh?"

"I mean what's the sense of asking me that question? You wouldn't believe me if I said she wasn't pretty, would you?"

"Well, I'd just like to know whether you agree with me or not."

"Yes, sir," said she, "fixing him with an accusing eye, 'I do agree with you—absolutely.'"

"The strange thing about it," he pursued defensively, "is that I never thought of her as being especially good-looking until recently. Funny, isn't it?"

"There are a lot of things we don't notice," said she, "until some one else pinches us. Then we open our eyes.

I guess some one must have pinched you. It hurts more when a man pinches you—specially a big, strong fellow like Doc Lansing."

A pained expression came into Oliver's eyes. "The trouble is, I've always looked upon her as a—well, as a sort of sister or something like that. We grew up just like brother and sister. How was I to know that she was pretty? A fellow never thinks of his sister as being pretty, does he?"

"I suppose not. But, on the other hand, he never loses his appetite and hopes and has the blues if his sister happens to take a fancy to a man who isn't her brother. That's what you've been doing for two or three weeks. If you had the least bit of gumption, you'd up and tell her you can't stand being a brother to her any longer and you'd like to be something else—if it isn't too late."

"Gee!" exclaimed he ruefully. "But suppose she was to say it is too late?"

"That's a nice way for a soldier to talk," said Mrs. Grimes scathingly.

Oliver saw very little of Jane during the days that followed Mrs. Sage's return. Her mother demanded much of her; she was constantly in attendance upon the pampered lady. Oliver chafed. He complained to Jane on one of the rare occasions when they were alone together.

"Why, you're nothing but a lady's maid, Jane. You've been home five days and I haven't had a chance to say ten words to you. Now, don't misunderstand me. I'm fond of Aunt Josephine. She's great fun, but hang it all, she's right smack in the center of the stage all the time. It isn't fair, Jane. You can't go on being a slave to her. She—"

"She has always had some one to wait on her, Oliver," said Jane. "I don't mind. I am really very fond of her. And she is just beginning to care for me. At first, I think she was a little afraid of me. She couldn't believe that I was real. The other day—in Chicago—she suddenly reached out and touched my arm and said: 'It doesn't seem possible that you ever squallied and made the night hideous for me and your poor father. I can't believe that you are the same little baby I used to fondle and spank when I wasn't any older than you are now.' Besides, Oliver, I like doing things for her. It makes father happy."

"But it doesn't make me happy," he grumbled. Then his face brightened. "Wasn't she great last night when she got started on Uncle Horace—and all this hullabaloo he's stirring up?"

The fourth day after his wife's return to Rumley, Mr. Sage blurted out the question that had lain captive in his mind for weeks.

"If it is a fair question, my dear, would you mind telling me just why you came back to me?"

She leaned back in her chair and studied the ceiling for a few minutes before answering.

"I may as well be honest about it, Herby," she said, changing her position to meet his perplexed gaze with one that was absolutely free from guile. "I came back because they were through with me over there. I was getting passe—in fact, I was quite passe. They were beginning to cast me for old women and character parts. Two or three years ago they started my funeral services by seeing what I could do with Shakespeare. I was through. My musical comedy days were over. The stage was crowded with young women who could dance without wheezing like a horse with the heaves and whose voices didn't crack in the middle register. People didn't want to see me in musical comedy any longer, and they wouldn't see me in anything else. I'm fifty-three, Herbert—between you and me, mind you—and just the right age to be a preacher's wife. So I made up my mind to retire. You notice, Herby, I didn't cable to ask if I could come home—I cabled that I was on the way. Now, you know the secret of my homecoming. By the way, I've put by a little money—quite a sum, in fact—so you mustn't regard me as a charity patient. We'll pool our resources. And when the time comes for you to step down and out of the pulpit for the same reason that I chucked the stage—why, we'll have enough to live on for the rest of our days. You won't have to write sermons and preach 'em, and I shan't have to listen to them. It's an awful thing to say, but we'll both have to mend our ways if we want our grandchildren to love us."

He laid his arm over her shoulder and gently caressed her cheek.

"You are still pretty much of a pagan, Jo," was all that he said, but he was smiling.

"But you are jolly well pleased to have me back, aren't you?"

"More overjoyed than I can tell you."

"No doubts, no misgivings, no uneasiness over what I may do or say to shock the worshippers?"

"I have confidence in your ability as an actress, Josephine," he said. "I am sure you can play the part of a lady as well as anything else."

She flushed. "Score one," she said. Then she sprang to her feet, the old light of mischief in her wonderful eyes.

"But, Herby, what's going to happen when I spring all my spangles on the innocent public?"

"I shudder when I think of it," said he, lifting his eyes heavenward.

"I saved every respectable costume I've worn in the last ten years—and some that are shocking. Twelve trunks full of them."

"Never mind, old dear. I shan't disgrace you. I've got a few costumes I will put on in private for you. Bless your heart, Herby, don't look so horrified. I've still got my marriage certificate—though God only knows where it is."

He cleared his throat. "I've got it,

my dear. You neglected to take it away with you when you left."

She smiled. "Well, I daresay it was safer with you than it would have been with me."

It was the fourth week in September when the detectives arrived in Rumley. The city editor of the Dispatch interviewed Detective Malone, the chief operative in charge of what the newspaper man was jocosely inclined to classify as the "expedition."

"Where do you intend to begin excavating, Mr. Malone?" inquired the editor, notebook in hand.

Mr. Malone was very frank about it. "In China," said he. "We're going to work from the bottom up. If you'll go out to the swamp tomorrow and put your ear to the ground you'll hear men's voices but you won't understand a word they say. They'll be speaking Chinese."

The editor eyed him in a cold, inimical manner. "Umph!" he grunted, flopping his notebook shut. "It's a good thing you've got your Chinese army, because you won't be able to get anybody to work for you in this town."

"I guess that's up to the authorities," said the detective coolly. "I'm here to boss the job, that's all."

That afternoon the sheriff and the prosecuting attorney stopped electioneering long enough to pay a hasty visit to Oliver.

Half an hour later they left. Detective Malone and his partner, who had joined the county officials at the Baxter house, remained behind. They were smoking Oliver's cigars.

"How long do you figure it will take you, Mr. Malone, to finish up the job?" inquired the young man.

Malone squinted at the tree-tops. "Our instructions are to work slowly and surely. It may take six or eight weeks."

"In other words, you are not expected to be through before election day."

"Unless we find what we are after before that time, Mr. Baxter," said the other. "It's a big job, as you can see for yourself. Like looking for a needle in a haystack, eh, Charlie?"

His partner nodded his head in silent assent.

"We'll go out and take a walk around the swamp tomorrow," said Malone. "If you've got the time to spare, Mr. Baxter, you might stroll out with us now to the place where you last saw your father. Then I'll want to question your servants. It seems that he is supposed to have come home to change his clothes after he said good-by to you."

"He did not say good-by to me," corrected Oliver. "We parted in anger."

"Do you know a man named Peter



"As I Understand It, You and He Sat for Some Time on That Log Over There?"

Hines, Mr. Baxter?" asked Malone abruptly.

(To be Continued.)

Vivian's Memory Prodigious

One of the sources of the late Rene Vivian's eloquence was his profound knowledge of French literature. He knew by heart thousands of verses and could recite entire acts of the classic tragedies without an error.

He demonstrated this at the time of his baccalaureate, when he agreeably surprised the examiner by his accurate analysis of "The Cid."

"Can you recite a few verses of it?" the examiner asked.

"Certainly," said Vivian, and had recited the whole of the first act before he was halted. On another occasion he recited the whole of "Horatius" and "Phedre" from beginning to end.

Ears That Tell Ages

To ascertain the age of a horse, it is not too old, it is usual to examine its teeth. To tell the age of a fish, regardless of age, you look into its ear.

In the internal ear of a fish there is a little bony pocket. In this pocket is a tiny stone called an otolith, which rolls about as the fish tips his way and that, and so helps it to know if it is right side up. As the fish grows older, the otolith grows larger, and the age of the fish may be determined from its size.

FARM NOTES.

—Crude petroleum thinned with a little kerosene is effective in eliminating hog mange or scurvy.

—At farrowing time the herdsmen should be at his post, for it is then that he has the chance to save some of the young pigs, and in some cases the sow. When the pig is born it has some small needle teeth, or artificial tusks. Some of the best herdsmen make it a practice to remove these. After farrowing it is a good rule to feed a thin slop containing a double handful of ground feed the second day, and gradually increase this amount as the pigs are able to take the milk.

—Lime is a soil corrector and not a plant food. Hence, it cannot take the place of commercial fertilizer. This is not saying that lime is not just as essential in the growing of crops.

Good virgin soil contains an abundance of carbonate of lime. This gradually becomes neutralized by the formation of organic acids caused by the decaying of organic matter in the soil. When this natural supply of lime is exhausted, then the soil becomes acid because there is no more lime to neutralize it. Many plants will not thrive at all in acid soil; many more will not do well, while some do not seem to be affected much by a slight amount of acid.

When crops are planted on this acid soil, and fertilizer is used freely, they will not do well. The plant cannot use the fertilizer. It is sick. Use lime to correct this acid condition of the soil, then the plant can use its food and become thrifty. But the plant must have food, even though the acid condition of the soil is corrected.

—Proper winter protection for bees should be more carefully provided by the average beekeeper. Statistics for Iowa show that winter losses of bees due to carelessness in wintering methods, often run as high as 18 per cent. This tremendous annual loss could be avoided for the most part if beekeepers would give the matter of wintering more thought.

Two general methods of wintering are outdoor or cellar wintering. Of these the former method is considered superior. In either method the essential things to provide are good ventilation protection against rodents and absorption of moisture given off by the bees.

Complete information on wintering bees by several methods as well as much reliable material on practically all phases of agriculture is contained in the report of the State apiarist for 1923. This booklet of nearly 100 pages was compiled by F. B. Paddock, state apiarist. Iowa State college, and will be mailed free upon application to him.

—Nearly every farmer raises, or should raise, enough pop corn for home use, but many seem to have difficulty in curing the finished product, and usually consider it a matter of luck. If the right procedure is taken the curing is a simple process.

Pop corn, unlike other corn, should be allowed to remain on the stalks in the field until thoroughly ripe and hard. It should then be cut and put up in small shocks and a twine tied around each shock near the top to make it cone-shaped; this will help shed the water and prevent molding. After about two weeks it should be husked out and placed in an attic on a piece of chicken netting or screen suspended from the roof so that rats and mice will not have access to it.

Later in the season when cold weather comes and the corn has dried thoroughly it should be removed to a cold place—if the attic is not very cold. This step has a very important influence on the popping quality of the corn. If allowed to remain where it is warm and dry there will not be sufficient moisture left in the kernels to more than crack the shells, but if kept where it is cold it will become slightly damp when brought to the fire and will pop nicely.

Pop corn that has become too dry can be aided somewhat by putting a few drops of water on it before putting into the popper.

—No one breed can be classed as the best winter layers. There is much variation in egg production in the same breed, owing to the development of egg laying ability as a result of breeding and selection for this purpose. In establishing a flock select a breed you favor. When securing your foundation, get stock from a good, reliable source. For a straight commercial egg production the small breeds are usually preferred.

Calves coming in the fall of the year usually are more welcome than those coming at any other time, because from the price standpoint this is the most desirable time for the cows to freshen. It is also realized that such calves are often harder to raise since they have to endure the rigors of winter at an early age.

By using a few precautions, a minimum number of calves will be lost. Among these safeguards may be suggested the following:

A clean, well-bedded stall, should be provided the cow, so as to avoid trouble during the first two days after birth while the calf is left with the cow.

An abundant amount of sunlight is necessary for all calves and their quarters should be cleaned daily and kept well bedded.

The feeding of too much milk is a common error. For the first three or four weeks calves should receive not more than 12 pounds daily of whole milk, and after the gradual change to skim milk is made, large quantities should not be fed. Very few calves are capable of properly digesting even as little as 16 pounds of milk daily.

Bright green hay, ensilage and grain should be fed as early as possible.

Calf pails should be kept scrupulously clean, and calves should be fed individually.

Adequate shelter from wind should be provided as also should a run for exercise.

The strict observance of a few essentials will minimize danger from scours and loss from other causes, insuring a good healthy growth.—H. R. Lascelles, Fieldman, Colorado State Dairy Commissioner.