

IN MIDDLE AGE.

(Chicago Tribune.)

A good many of you, I dare say, know something of Mr. George Bailey, if not by name why then at least by sight, particularly if you have occasion to pass frequently through that part of Madison street which lies between La Salle street and the bridge. You need not be reminded, then, of the relation that "handsome George," as he is known in boot and shoe circles, holds to the street at large, and you can recall, without any help from me, his general appearance and personality; how he sits or lounges behind a particularly large and clear pane of plate glass, near a certain corner, where it is an easy matter to see and an easier one to be seen, with a vague and indefinite array of black-lettered cases of a background, and a little crowd of nervous or appreciative fellow-salesmen as foils and supports—youths who can put proper value upon the set of his vest, the tilt of his straw hat, and the general air of self-sufficiency, experience and felicity that shows in his sharp, good-natured blue eyes, his handsome, chestnut mustache and his whole prosperous and well-kept being, and sets as a crown or halo upon his 28 years. Twenty-eight years, you ask; and pray do you call 28 "middle-aged"? Not at all. Then this prepossessing young man is not the hero of your romance, after all? Not in the least, he is only going to serve to start us on our way—to have the "first say."

It is on a certain Saturday afternoon in August, when an air of elegant leisure more marked than usual seems to pervade the establishment of Roxtoe & Instep, when the attitudes of the group behind the great French-glass window are rather more negligent and insouciant than ordinary, and the cloud of cigar-smoke hovering above is rather more dense and undisturbed than it will be when trade "braces up." But for the first time in the history of his connection with the "house" Mr. George Bailey fails to altogether harmonize with his setting; there is a spark of irritation in his clever blue eye and a note of impatience in the tattoo which his neat boot beats upon the ill-kept floor. Something has occurred to annoy him, and he is on the point of "letting himself out" about it.

"That settles the business," he remarks. "I'll go at the end of the month. I can get along with Instep's airs, and I can drudge on like a dray-horse on half-pay, and there's one or two other things I don't like but can stand. However, there's one thing I can't stand, and that's this. I don't see how all you fellows can, either; you've had one girl-time here already, and you ought to remember what they're like. No sitting around comfortably in your shirt sleeves; no saying anything that begins with a D without a pair of startled blue eyes turned your way with a how-can-you-be-so-dreadful look in them; no calling 'Mamie,' or 'Josie,' or whatever it is, without that shocked, grieved, why-are-you-so-shamefully familiar glance that breaks a fellow all up; no anything except plenty of chains, and rings, and geraniums, and kittens with pink ribbons in their ears, and a young thing in montagues saying to Tommy there, 'I know I'm real ignorant and inexperienced, and I want you to be nice and patient with me and show me everything I ought to know; now, won't you?' And Tommy blushing up to the roots of his hair, and passing out quarters for halves, or halves for quarters, and the dickens to pay generally. That thing in the corner there, is it the machine she's going to perform on?" And Mr. George Bailey shook himself together with a groan of disgust, while everybody around laughed mildly or vociferously, as his temperament dictated or as his recollection of the last young lady help prompted.

"That's the machine," answered the cashier, from his window just above their head, "and the machinist herself is going to be around Monday morning. I understand. It'll be time enough to fly from your firm base then; better wait and see what she's like. You don't want to be down on all womankind solely on account of poor Susie Simpson. And I should say you ought to be the last man here to be down on Susie herself, anyway. Who was it said she didn't object to seeing a well-made man in his shirt-sleeves? Susie. Who said she didn't mind so very much hearing a handsome fellow swear a little now and then? Susie. Who was always snipping away at her geraniums and things to make button-hole bouquets for 'handsome George' Susie. And who, if my memory serves me, once said that if she should—"

The cashier's voice, becoming every moment higher and more emphatic, was here drowned in a roar of appreciative laughter; but it emerged from the hubbub with the remark which betrayed the animus of his entire speech: "And I don't want any fellow to hint that my balance was ever a cent out on account of Susie Simpson or any other girl." "Girl" with a most scornful emphasis.

"Yes, we're death on girls here, and don't you forget it," chimed in a grinning youngster just emerging from the stock.

"We'll be death on this one," said Mr. Bailey, majestically adopting the juvenile formula. "In one week we'll be taking her to the dime museum or some other inexpensive place of amusement; in three we'll collectively present her with a parrot—say, in a gilt cage; and in four Old John will come down like a thousand of brick, and Miss Jennie, or Lalie, or whatever her name is, will be politely informed that her services are no longer indispensable to the prosperity of the house. I have worked this racket before," he went on, with a portentous frown in the direction of the cashier's window, "but my motives don't seem to have been understood as clearly as they might have been. Come, Tommy, old man, brace up there; I want to bet you a five that I'll be calling this girl by her Christian name before she's been here three days. What do you say to that?" "I bet you will, too," chuckled Tommy from his post. "I'll take you up, though, and if I lose I'll strike the boys for a general subscription. We'll settle on Wednesday at 6 p. m."

What other rash and reckless wagers might have been laid then and there, had not something occurred to prevent, I may well be excused from relating. But nobody joked when the senior part-

ner was around, and it was Mr. John Roxtoe just entering with his sun umbrella and his palm-leaf fan who immediately cooled the mounting ardor of his staff. "Old John," as they familiarly called him behind his back, never could be brought to approve of jokes between 8 in the morning and 6 in the afternoon. Those were the hours for business. But in truth business with old John had all hours and seasons for its own. He was business all through. He had never found time for amusements; he had never (to Mr. Instep's regret) found time to cultivate society; he had never even found time to marry, and when interrogated on this point frankly acknowledged that he never expected to find time to marry. He had never seen much of women, never cared very much about them, never found it necessary to include them in his calculations. But after fifty years—or forty-nine; that don't seem quite so antiquated—of absence the feminine element was about to obtrude itself upon Old John's life. He, in short, it is only going to serve to start us on our way—to have the "first say."

The following Monday morning Bailey and his friend the cashier happened, by a coincidence that seldom repeated itself, to cross Roxtoe & Instep's threshold together. A moment later Bailey had opened his pocketbook, placed a crisp, fresh V in the other's hand, and said in a voice whose every accent expressed the resignation which sometimes follows utter defeat: "Here, take it, Tommy; we won't wait till Wednesday."

Just inside the door of old John's private office sat a little woman of about 33 or 35. Beside her stood a typewriter opened for work, in her lap lay a notebook, and her hands were just putting the finishing touches on three or four pencil-points. She was attired neatly and trimly in simple gray, with plain white linen at her throat and wrists. Not a curl, or frill, or furbelow. And as our two young men entered she lifted a pair of calm gray eyes and said, in a serene and matter-of-fact tone: "Good morning."

"We won't wait till Wednesday," repeated handsome George in an awed whisper, while a fendish chuckle came from the boy, whose head was popping up over a case of Congress gaiters not far away. The lady's name turned out to be Katherine. She was introduced, however, as Miss Grant, who had undertaken to shorthand and typewrite the firm's correspondence; and Miss Grant she was called, and nothing else, until—

Upon the arrival of old John she began work on the morning mail. She "took down" from dictation between 9 and 11, and an hour of clicking followed before she rose to go out to lunch. During her brief absence one of two venturesome spirits took it upon themselves to investigate the progress of her work. Why not? they said; it's a firm's matter, ain't it? Of course; and so they turned over with some awe the twenty odd pages of algebraical, pyrotechnical, and cabalistic scratching which her notebook contained, and tried to trace some correspondence between the first letter in the book and the letters at the bottom of her little pile of printed sheets. Though they failed totally in this matter, still they tipped out with a certain respect for shorthand and an expressed opinion that she seemed to be a pretty nice woman and that Old John would probably find her a considerable help.

He did. He was a man upon whom precision, punctuality, and good general capacity were never thrown away, and by the end of the first week he had come to wonder how he had ever got on so long without help of this sort and had reached the firm conclusion that he never should be able to dispense with it in the future. Everybody else in the office, too, became impressed in the proper degree with the promptitude and capacity with which Miss Grant discharged her duties, and she soon gained the complete respect and good-will of the house. Even Mr. George Bailey was carried along in the general wave, and acknowledged that he liked the newcomer none the less even after she had distinctly begun to discourage the ornate attentions with which he seemed rather disposed to favor her.

"Such treatment comes to me like something of a novelty," he modestly said one day; "but perhaps it will do me good. She's a nice little woman, all the same, and ought to have made some man a good wife long before this."

"She may yet," said the credit man, briefly; he happened to overhear. One morning two or three months later the cashier cast a knowing look in the direction of Mr. George Bailey, and in the course of the next half hour inquired in a discreetly lowered voice if Mr. B. had any idea where he had been last night and what he had seen by being there.

"No," replied George. "Where were you and what did you see?" "Theatre," said the cashier. "I was up in the first balcony, in the front row, you know; best seats in the house; would sit anywhere else; and along in the second act I happened to look down, and there right under me, so help me gracious, was—who d'you s'pose?" "Couldn't guess," responded Bailey briefly; "who?"

"Old John; that's who! Old John, do you understand? I haven't seen the top of that head every day for four years for nothing. And who—who—who do you think was with him?" "O, that Dubuque man—Shank, or whatever his name is."

"Not at all," cried the other, with great elation; "not at all. The person with him was an accomplished phonographer and type-writer operator, as I'm a living sinner. You ought to have seen them. It was the 'Lady of Lyons.' They mingled their tears together. Old John hasn't been to a play for years, and tender as a chicken doesn't express it, and Miss Grant was—"

"Are you telling me?" asked Bailey, "that Old John has been taking Miss Grant to the theatre?" "I am."

Bailey gave a prolonged whistle. "The dime museum is nowhere," he simply said.

ling up to him and a juvenile voice asked:

"Say, have you heard the latest? Do you know what he's been givin' her? Shall I tell you?"

"Who the deuce is 'he' and who the deuce is 'her'?" severely asked the exasperated Bailey. "What are you giving me, anyhow?" "It's a pair of canary birds in a gilt cage, and a fine thing all around I'm telling you. I know the fellow that took them up to her place—on the north side, you know."

"Are you telling me?" demanded Bailey, torn by conflicting emotions, "that John Roxtoe has been giving Miss Grant a cageful of canary birds? Well, she won't want any parrot now."

Yes, old John had been taking Miss Grant to the play and had bestowed numerous small gifts upon her, besides testifying his appreciation of her in numerous ways that never became public; and late on a December afternoon he took the final step for which everything before had been merely preparatory. On this occasion he hastily entered his own private office with three or four letters which had arrived by a late mail and must be attended to, he said, before the close of business hours. So Miss Grant immediately got out her books and her pencils and was soon deeply in a communication relating to a case of overlooks that had started for Peoria but had never got there. Then followed two or three others of general similar nature. They all related to matters of very simple character and were not especially different from many others that had left the establishment during the last month or two; but the two made very slow progress. Old John's usual fluency seemed to have quiet deserted him; he hemmed and hawed, and stammered, and altered, and repeated, and made a very bad business of a very simple and ordinary matter. "Well, that's all for now," he said, after a long pause had followed the completion of the last answer of all. "Or, no," he went on, as Miss Grant turned aside to uncover her machine, "there'll be just one more yet. Now are you ready? My dear madam; dear madam; have you got that down? My dear madam—"

"This is for a lady, apparently," said Miss Grant, looking up with an amused smile. "Yes, it is," replied old John. "My dear madam, I hope you will not be not be disagreeably surprised if—"

Poor old fellow! how he stammered and blundered. How much he said, and unsaid, and resaid before he had even got fairly under way! How he blushed, and fidgeted, and perspired, until in his desperation he was forced to boldly take the bull by the horns and finally say his say in two or three swift, compact sentences that were out of his mouth almost before he knew it. "Yours, devotedly, John Roxtoe. There!" cried Old John, mopping his brow, with a gesture half of relief and half of expectation. "Name and address, please," said Miss Grant in her usual neat and business like way. "Sure enough, sure enough," he rejoined, with another wave of embarrassment surging over his already crimson face. "This is for Miss Katharine Grant."

"For me, is it?" she asked in the most simple and unsuspecting manner in the world. "Well, then, just let me run through it and see what it is all about. And, as she ran over her hieroglyphics, a bright spot began to burn in each cheek, and something like a smile began to play around her mouth, and something like a tear began to start in each eye. What she was reading was a proposal of marriage. With admirable presence of mind she turned to her typewriter. She would pay him in his own coin. "My dear sir," she murmured, and began to run her fingers over the keys of the instrument. But there was no sheet in place, and she was obliged to look around for pen and paper. "My dear sir," she repeated again, and then dipped her pen into the ink. But it was useless quite, for she had set the handle of the penholder itself. "My dear sir," she said once more, casting about for a final resource.

Old John began to laugh heartily. "You are writing to a gentleman, apparently," he said. "If I am the gentleman a verbal answer will do as well as any other. Come!"

And then she gave him her reply in regular fashion. They were married within a month. Mr. Instep, who knew how these things were managed, saw them through it. He had been upon the point of providing a goodly company for the occasion from his own wide circle of acquaintances, but Old John put his foot down on that at the beginning. They wouldn't go much on style, he said, and in consequence the house itself and the trade at large so nearly monopolized the attendance that an odor of leather may be said to have permeated the entire affair. Perhaps to this arrangement more than to anything else was due the presence of Mr. George Bailey; he was no doubt the most conspicuous ornament of the evening. And the next morning when he resumed his seat behind the great sheet of French glass his handsome face wore a perturbed and wistful expression that was not often there. The morning was wet and gloomy, and he stood looking out disconsolately upon the muddy crossing and the falling rain. Upon the opposite corner a little girl was just giving a penny to a blind organ grinder.

"An," sighs Bailey as he looks that way, "if she were only a little younger, or I had half his money!"

Values. Some genius has been calculating values as related to human energy in various departments of life, and cites the following illustrations: "The British poet laureate can take a worthless sheet of paper, and by writing a poem on it can make it worth \$99,999; that's genius. Vanderbilt can write a few words on a sheet of paper and make it worth \$5,000,000; that's capital. The United States can take an ounce and a quarter of gold and stamp on it an 'eagle bird,' and make it worth \$20; that's money. The mechanic can take the material worth \$5 and make it into a watch worth \$100; that's skill. The merchant can take an article worth 25 cents and sell it for \$1; that's business."

A GREAT POET'S MISTAKE.

The Real Heroine of Whittier's "Barbara Freitche" Poem.

[Washington Cor. Baltimore American.] Much has been written about the alleged mistake of Whittier in making a heroine out of Barbara Freitche for waving the Union colors in the face of Stonewall Jackson and his followers as they marched through Frederick, Md. There are some interesting facts, however, connected with this conspicuous blunder which have never before been published. These have been furnished to your correspondent by Mr. Joseph Walker, the son-in-law of Mrs. Quantrell, who was the real heroine on that occasion. Mr. Walker is connected with the paper house of Morrison & Co., on D street in this city, and is perfectly familiar with the dramatic scene in which Dame Barbara, "bowed with her four-score years and ten," is supposed to have flouted the silken scarf of patriotism from the window-sill and exclaimed: "Shoot, if you must, this old, gray head, but spare your country's flag!" she said. "I'll tell you the exact particulars," said Mr. Walker, "and they have never before been correctly given. I have never given my account of that affair. None of the versions heretofore published are accurate. In the first place, there was none of the poetic incidents mentioned by Whittier. There was no window-sill, and there was no old woman about it. Mrs. Mary A. Quantrell was at that time a woman of 32, black-haired, and, though she did become my mother-in-law afterward, I must say that she was very pretty. Her husband was then at work as a compositor on The National Intelligencer in this city, and Mrs. Quantrell was living in Frederick with her children. On the day that Jackson and his army passed through Frederick she and her little daughter, Virginia Quantrell, who is now the wife of Mr. Perry Brown, at present an employe of the government printing office, were standing at the gate. They had several small Union flags which they brought there to wave as the Confederates marched by. Mrs. Quantrell was enthusiastically loyal and she, woman-like, simply took advantage of the occasion to show her devotion to the Union. They stood within a few feet of the line of march. Virginia was waving a very small flag, such as children play with on patriotic days. Many of the rebel soldiers had called out 'Throw down that flag!' but the little girl kept waving it. Suddenly a lieutenant drew his sword and cut the staff in two, the flag falling to the ground. The little girl then took another small flag and waved it, and this, in turn, was cut from her hand. Then Mrs. Quantrell displayed a larger flag and waved it in a conspicuous manner. This she continued to do until Stonewall Jackson and his men had all marched past her house. She was not molested in the least. In fact, many of the officers and men treated her with marked courtesy. Some of the officers raised their hats and said: 'To you, madam; not to your flag!'

Mr. Walker expressed his indignation that his mother-in-law should have been robbed of the credit of this patriotic performance. He gave a diagram of the streets in that portion of Frederick, showing that Barbara Freitche did not live on Jackson's line of march; that her house was a block and a half around the corner, and so situated that she could not have gotten a sight of the Confederates without leaving her premises; that the good old dame never claimed the honor of having waved a flag on that day, and that all Frederick knew that it was Mrs. Mary A. Quantrell, and not Barbara Freitche, who should have been immortalized in verse by the Quaker poet.

The Quantrell family is now in possession of the letters from Whittier acknowledging his mistake and the injustice that had been done the real heroine, or rather the two heroines, as it would seem that the little Virginia was as much entitled to a niche in the temple of fame as her patriotic mother. These letters Mr. Walker offered to show your correspondent if he would accompany him to his home. In one of them Mr. Whittier says that he derived his information as to Barbara Freitche from Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, the manufacturer of sensational literature, who wrote him a letter detailing the incident, and suggesting that it afforded material for a masterful poem. Whereupon he sat down and evolved the thrilling story of the nonagenarian dame who had floated the stars and stripes in the face of the rebel invaders. Mr. Whittier admits that Mrs. Southworth made a mistake, but says that the poem has become so widespread that a correction of the name would be impossible. The Quantrells evidently fail to appreciate the force of Mr. Whittier's logic, as they are unable to see how it is too late to correct such an egregious blunder.

It is a little singular that a family which furnished such an exponent of the loyal sentiment of the country should also have supplied a champion of the Confederate cause whose very name carried with it terror and consternation. John Quantrell, the famous guerrilla, was a nephew of Archibald Quantrell, the husband of Mary A., whom Whittier should have immortalized, but did not.

Mexican Market Scene. [Exchange.] From dawn till dusk in a Mexican market one hears the cake-vender shouting in Spanish: "Fat little cakes! Fat little cakes! Here are good fat little cakes!" While the fruit-peddler, the candy boy, and the seller of beverages, and a hundred others carol in concert their various strains. "Who wants mats from Pueblo—mats of twenty yards?" cries the seller of woven straw. "Salt beef! Salt beef!" interrupts the butcher; and the vender of poultry, sitting among her fowls in the sun, sings lazily by the hour, "Ducks and chickens! Oh, my soul, good ducks and chickens!"

Not a Lumber-Boom. The memory ought to be a store-room; many turn their rather to a lumber-room. Even stores grow moldy and spoil, unless aired and used betimes, and then they, too, become lumber.

A Hundred Years. An English doctor who has traveled in this country says Americans could live to be 100 years old if they would take care of themselves.

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