

The Bloomfield Times.

FRANK MORTIMER,
Editor and Proprietor.

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BY

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AUNT BETSY'S ADVENTURE.

IT WAS A HOT July afternoon, the air full of slumberous electricity, and the sunshine, sleeping dreamily on the close-cut grass in front of the Merrifield hotel; while down in the glen, towards the railroad track, you could distinctly hear the fret and ripple of the trout stream over its bed of mossy stones.

Merrifield was a pretty, sequestered place, full of picturesque wood-nooks and pleasant rambles, and as yet, not overcrowded by the high tide of summer fashionables. Moreover, the fare was low, and the hotel charges moderate—and that was the reason why Miss Betsy Whistleton had come thither with band-boxes, her tortoiseshell cat, and her niece Elfrida.

Miss Betsy was a tall, squarely-fashioned maiden lady, stranded somewhere on the debatable land between forty and fifty, with a leathery complexion, hair cut short in the neck, coal black eyes—glassy rather than brilliant—and thin, colorless lips. As the French say, "there are young maids, and old maids." Some are perfectly irresistible in their sunny good humor and *embonpoint*—more bewitching than any sixteen-year-old girl, because their arrows are tipped with the barb of experience. But Miss Whistleton did not belong to this rare and radiant few. Miss Whistleton was an old maid—venomous—a radical opponent to anything savoring of matrimony—a believer in catnip tea, total depravity, and the approaching end of the world. And above all things Miss Whistleton detested—a man.

Little Elfrida was totally different. Elfrida was just seventeen, with a round, apple bloom face, eyes as blue as wood violets, and mischievous dots of pimples, coming and going, like the impress of Cupid's finger on her smooth, pink cheek. And Elfrida wore white dresses, with blue ribbon fluttering about them, and roses at her belt, and read poetry *sub rosa*, and believed in mankind—particularly in Tom Castlewynne.

Consequently, it may easily be inferred that Elfrida led a dolorous life of it, with her aunt Betsy and her Aunt Betsy's peculiar views.

This particular afternoon, Miss Betsy sat bolt upright, engaged in hideous pieces of patchwork, which had been poor Elfrida's "black beast" ever since she was tall enough to wield a needle, and scolded her niece persistently.

"Don't talk to me, Elfrida Martin!" she said energetically—which was quite unnecessary for poor Elfrida had not opened her lips in a quarter of an hour—"I know perfectly well that it is all through your doing that Thomas Castlewynne, and his riotous cigar-smoking friend, have come down to Merryfield and taken the room next to ours—the *very next* room. I should think you would be ashamed of yourself Elfrida, to be walking about the house with him, and the house full of respectable boarders." Elfrida colored here.

"I am sure aunt Betsy, Mr. Castlewynne is respectable."

"A pettifogging, dissipated, young good-for-nothing lawyer—and Frank Ermine is no better. Elfrida if you don't stop taking

such long stitches I'll make you rip them out again. What I want you to understand is this: that this love-making business has got to stop. I won't tolerate Thomas Castlewynne's presumptuous attentions—no not for another day. I'll pack up and leave Merrifield sooner. Do you hear me Elfrida?"

"Yes, aunt Betsy, I hear you."

"Very well, then, I'll trouble you to heed as well. Perhaps you think I didn't see you lingering on the very threshold of their door this morning, talking nonsense about the trumpery and wild roses you had been gathering. On the the threshold of a young man's room! Elfrida I don't know what you are coming to."

"But Aunt, the door was wide open, and Mrs. Glen was in the hall, and Isabella Raymond, and Major Parker's daughters—"

"I don't care whether the twelve tribes of Israel were there, it makes it none the less improper for you"—and here aunt Betsy rolled up her eyes in a fearful cataleptic manner. "Now stop dropping those big tears over the turkey red joining of that quilt I never saw such a baby in my life—never."

What a relief it was to poor hunted little Elfrida when Miss Major Parker came in, with her stiff rustling silks and her basket of knitting work, and she was allowed to steal away into the inner room, with pricked finger, aching spinal column, and eyes yet dewey with tears.

"I'll be married as soon as ever I can," thought Elfrida with an indignant pout of the cherry lips. If I thought I should ever be an old maid, like aunt Betsy, I'd jump into the river, I would.

And Elfrida crept away for a walk, low-spirited enough.

The afternoon was well advanced before Miss Parker departed; and Miss Whistleton politely seeing her to the door, stood looking after her portly form.

"I wonder where Elfrida has gone to," pondered the spinster aunt. "Down in the grove flirting with that odious Castlewynne. I've no doubt—dear me, what trials girls are. Castlewynne's out somewhere, I know for the door of his room is half open. I wonder—"

Miss Betsy Whistleton stretched her long neck seriously toward the neighboring apartment, but there was not a soul in sight.

"I don't really believe they change notes," said Miss Whistleton, "but if they did—and it's really a very excellent opportunity—"

She paused again and listened; still no sound, save stray footsteps in the hall.

"I think it's my duty," said Miss Betsy, setting her colorless lips tight together, and advancing on tiptoe into the apartment of Messrs. Castlewynne and Ermine.

"I never was in a man's room before," thought the lady with a little bride and a simper. "Dear me, what a variety of boots and slippers, right in the middle of the floor. Is this brandy and water? No, it's lemonade—and a box full of cigars as I live, and a novel. Oh, the depravity of young men. I really hope I won't be contaminated by the awful atmosphere. And what's this curious wooden thing? Oh, I suppose it must be a boot-jack. A dressing case, too, with chased silver stoppers to all the bottles—dear me, this cologne is really very nice. I wish I had brought that empty paregoric bottle along with me; I don't believe they'd ever miss a few drops. Pink pomatum, as I live and breathe—and a "housewife," all fitted up with needles and thread. My goodness, me, if it isn't lined with the very brocade silk that belonged to my grandmother's wedding dress. I thought that pattern came short when I measured it, to make a silk quilted skirt. I do believe Elfrida took it to make this piece of folly and nonsense with."

Miss Whistleton elevated her eyes and hands with pious horror.

"Two whole inches. I wonder if El-

frida ever thought what a great sin it is for any one to steal?"

The inquisitive spinster tip-toed about the room, peering into boxes, opening bottles and looking behind sofas; but still she found no condemning proof of a correspondence between Mr. Castlewynne and her niece Elfrida. She was just turning to come out rather disappointed than otherwise at the non-success of the scouting expedition when Tom Castlewynne sprang up the stairs, two steps at a time, and strode along the hall, followed by his friend Frank Ermine.

Miss Betsy made a rush at the door, but she was too late. Tom's speed of locomotion had been greater than she had calculated on, and with a blind impulse of concealment she darted into the closet and shut herself in among dressing-gowns shooting coats, and odd-looking bifurcated garments that filled her spinster soul with horror.

"They'll go out again pretty soon," thought Miss Betsy, panting, as she held on desperately to the inner handle of the door, "and then I can just slip into my own room."

But no such a denouement appeared at hand. Mr. Castlewynne and his friend sat themselves down and deliberately lighted their cigars; the blue vapor stole spicy and pungent through the key-hole.

"I shall choke, thought Miss Betsy.

"Now look here, Tom," said Mr. Ermine, apparently resuming the conversation which had been temporarily interrupted, "there's no use being a faint hearted fool. Marry the little Elfrida if she has forty old maiden aunts."

"My goodness gracious," secretly aspirated the captive maid.

"I say, though," said Castlewynne, "what an old cat Miss Betsy is. Fifty, if she's a day."

"Sixty, I should think," remarked Frank.

"The impudence of the creatures!" gasped the imprisoned subject of criticism.

"But still," pursued Castlewynne, "Elfrida has some tender little notions about never marrying without her aunt's consent, and if we could persuade her to give it—"

"Never," said Ermine. "Who could expect a shriveled up old fossil like that to—hallo! what's that noise?"

For Aunt Betsy, half stifled in the closet, and choked with cigar smoke, had given a spasmodic "ketch a" of a sneeze.

"Nothing but the cat on the veranda roof."

"I tell you it is something in the closet."

Ermine rose and tried the door. Aunt Betsy hung resolutely on to her side of it.

"If it is the cat," said Castlewynne coming to the rescue, "she is remarkably strong in her muscular development; give a good pull, Frank. Halloa."

For the door flew open with a jerk, revealing Miss Betsy Whistleton shrinking back into a corner. One moment Castlewynne stared—the next a brilliant idea flashed across his mind; he shut the door again, and bolted it, instantaneously.

"Thieves," he cried in carefully suppressed tones. "Robbers, burglars!"

"Oh my good Mr. Thomas," squeaked Miss Betsy wildly through the key hole, "please don't. Please stop crying for help; it's only me, Miss Betsy Whistleton; it's all a mistake, a misunderstanding."

"A misunderstanding eh?" said Castlewynne. "It has a rather burglarious look. I should be sorry to deliver you into custody, Miss Whistleton, but—"

"Have mercy on me," shrieked Miss Betsy rattling at the door-knob. "Indeed, indeed I meant no harm—it was a mistake, upon my word. Please let me out, quick, before any one comes, and me in a man's room, too."

"Dreadful," groaned Mr. Ermine.

"Too frightful to think of," hollowly echoed Castlewynne.

"Oh, dear," wailed Miss Betsy, as all the horrors of her situation dawned upon

her, "do please let me out, Mr. Thomas, and I'll give you anything I have in the world."

Mr. Castlewynne paused; he appeared to be deliberating. Miss Betsy took heart of hope.

"Will you give me your niece Elfrida?"

"My niece Elfrida? Never—really, I could not—"

"O very well, just as you elect. Ermine, will you have the goodness to step down stairs and call up the landlord?"

And at the same instant Elfrida's soft voice was heard calling in the next room.

"Aunt Betsy, aunt Betsy. Oh, Mrs. Parker, where can my aunt be gone?"

Search, an *expose* and detection were looming over the wretched victim of circumstances; she rattled madly against the door.

"You—needn't go, Mr. Ermine—you needn't go. Only let me out—"

"You will freely bestow the hand of your niece upon me?"

"Yes—yes—anything—everything."

Mr. Castlewynne unbolted the door, and threw it open with a low bow. Miss Betsy stayed not to reciprocate his politeness, but darted from the room like an arrow fleeing from the bow, never stopping till she was safe in her room.

"Aunt," exclaimed the astonished Elfrida, where on earth have you been?"

But that was just what "auntie" never would tell her.

"Elfrida," said Miss Betsy, when she had calmed her agitated nerves by green tea and a nap, "I've changed my mind about young Castlewynne. If you and he are really bent on making a match of it—here aunt Betsy involuntarily grimaced, as if she were taking medicine—"why you must have your own way, I suppose."

Elfrida's face grew radiant.

"Dear Aunt Betsy," she cried with a shy kiss upon the parchment forehead of the old lady, "I am so glad."

"There, there go along," said Miss Whistleton, ungraciously, "I want to rip up my caps for the wash, and I can't be bothered with kissing!"

"I do hope," she had added mentally, as Elfrida tripped away, "he won't tell that child the whole story."

But there was a mischievous sparkle in Elfrida's eye when she came up that night, which filled Aunt Betsy's soul with dread, and convinced her that Castlewynne had betrayed the secret of her siege and surrender.

And thus Aunt Betsy, sorely against her will, was forced to help Cupid's bark afloat down the stream of True Love. Alas! poor Aunt Betsy.

The other day a currier-pigeon carried into beleaguered Paris a newspaper 4 1/2 inches square, with 226 dispatches microscopically photographed upon it, comprising the detailed news of the day from all parts of the world; and there now comes from London a description of the machinery which did the printing. It makes a duplicate of ordinary handwriting a million times smaller than the original, so that it can only be read by the aid of a powerful microscope. The inventor announces that he can thus reprint the whole Bible 22 times in the space of an inch, and other books in proportion. Think of it. The Speaker of the House can carry Cushing's Parliamentary Manual entire, photographed on his thumb nail! Webster's Unabridged may be printed on the lining of your hat. By the magic aid of this little machine, the total contents of the Astor Library may be transferred to a five-cent blank book. Add to such a compendium, a small portable microscope, which might nestle unnoticed in the pantaloons pockets, and the proprietor may have at command all the wisdom of the sages, from Socrates down to Ralph Waldo Emerson.

A man with a clear intellect and a sound body, can meet all the emergencies of life and be happy.

A New Trick upon Travelers.

A BOSTON paper gives the following account of a new trick played on travelers:

A gentleman recently traveling from Philadelphia to New York fell into a chance conversation with a stranger having all the outward appearances of respectability. After some quarter of an hour's talk, the stranger politely asked the gentleman if he would take a cigar, at the same time holding out two cigars, one looking like a Regalia the other smaller, such as is usually called a London size. The gentleman happening to take the larger one, being nearest in him as presented, the stranger recommended him to take the smaller one, remarking that he thought it was of better flavor. After smoking about a quarter to a third of the cigar, the gentleman discovered that he was suddenly becoming very dizzy. A suspicion flashed through his mind that the cigar was not all right. He immediately threw it away; but his giddiness increased so much that it was with the greatest difficulty that he preserved his self possession. In a few minutes a most copious perspiration started from every pore of his body, and the water fairly ran off his person.

The stranger, meanwhile, was apparently sound asleep on the other end of the seat. On his arrival at New York, the gentleman with great difficulty, got off the car and took a carriage for his hotel, where he was soon after violently attacked with vomiting, and passed a very sick night.—He had been for several years a resident of Cuba, a great smoker; and is fully convinced that the cigar was drugged, and that this is a new dodge to trap the unwary for the purpose of robbery. He attributes his escape to the fact of his smoking, but little of the cigar, and to his very robust constitution.

Sold for Three Dollars.

In New York, Edward Murphy was arraigned at the bar of the Special Sessions, last week, for stealing twenty-five cents.

"Who is the complainant in this case?" inquired Justice Downing.

"I am, your honor," answered Miss Sophia Leffler; but I wish to withdraw the charge."

"Withdraw the charge?" queried the Justice.

"Yis yer riv'rince," squeaked a shrill voice from the spectators' benches; "you see I'm the by's mother; I've settled the case all right by givin' Mrs. Leffler three dollars."

The people of the State of New York sold out for three dollars!" shouted Justice Downing. "Not if the Court knows itself! Mrs. Leffler, return that money immediately."

His Honor's eyes flashed as the woman nervously gave the money back to the mother of the lad, and gave testimony that convicted him. Sentence was suspended.

Knock Down Arguments.

A few days ago, a house of ill-fame in Detroit, was entered by a man of middle-age and serious countenance, who informed the women that he intended to offer up a prayer for their spiritual welfare, and proceeded to do so dropping on his knees. The inmates of the house not desiring his devotional service took advantage of his position and rolled him out of doors. But there their triumph ended. Rising to his feet he rushed back into the house striking out vigorously with the carnal weapons of nature in a style that would have done credit to the prize ring. Having by such knock-down arguments cleared a space, he again knelt down and finished his prayer. The astonished sufferers by this development of muscular christianity subdued into silence, heard themselves described and their cases stated in prayer, with a plainness befitting the occasion.