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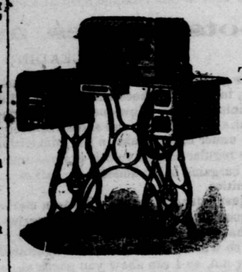

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BEWARE OF IMITATIONS.

Love and Politics at Swan's Island.

Politics and courtship are all that seem to interest the people in Swan's Island to any great extent. Even the women and children quarrel over the affairs of the government; and a Democratic lady cannot borrow from a Republican lady, though it be a case of emergency sudden and pressing. Neither can a Republican lady expect any favors from a Democratic lady. No business can be transacted amicably between two men of different politics; and the small Democrats and Republicans make faces at each other, and cannot be induced to sit side by side at school. The men are always discussing and "argifyin" when on shore. In the one store, which is down by a dark cove, which is also the postoffice, there is seldom a lull in the discussion of a week-day, and the meditative eve rings with livelier debates. Sometimes these political discussions by the fitful kerosene end in tragedy. Two young sailors disagreeing on the merits of the incoming and outgoing President last year, one seized a knife and inflicted a severe wound upon the other. Cap'n Nahum True thrashed Cap'n Ezra Hogden within an inch of his life because he did believe in "terift reform," and Cap'n Ezra took his revenge by shooting Cap't Nahum through the arm in the dark and silent night while the latter was on his way home from Greatport. Small boys emulate the example of their elders; and one lively lad of nine pushed another lad a year or two younger than himself off the slip into the deep waters of the ocean because he did not believe that Cleveland was a good President. Fortunately some fishermen were near at hand, and the young politician was rescued from a watery grave. Sailors who are either neutral, or only mildly persuaded that they belong to one party or the other, when they come to Swan's Island soon become violently partisan; and yet there appears to be nothing more aggressive in its salt, Northern, and vigorous air than in other places roundabout where they take things more calmly.

A courtship, or the rumor of a courtship, will always create a diversion even in the most troublous times, however; and now, though the Swan's Island lightkeeper had recently died, and there was great excitement over the question whether the government would appoint Ben Spurling, the son of the late keeper, who was a Democrat, or Joe Neally, who was a Republican, and was trying his best to get the position himself, when it was spread about that Mary Olive Swan was encouraging two beaux at the same time, even this excitement passed over in a measure. The male portion of the island were fully as much interested in the affair as the female, and everybody was on the *qui vive* to find out all the particulars of the case. The women dreamed of it at night, and edified each other by relating these dreams at the earliest possible opportunity, and the fishermen were reluctant to leave the shore until it was finally settled. Some prophesied that she would take Joe, some that Ben was the favored one, "Mary Olive was just so queer 'n bigerted;" and others that she had no idea of marying either. Some thought she was "so tickled to get two beaux, as she never had any when she was young, her hair was so red and her face so saller, thas she was entirely upsot, and couldn't tell her own mind no more'n nothing."

"To be sure, her hair was jest as red now, but she had grown better-looking." Her cheeks were plump and her complexion red and white, but what there was about an old maid like her that them two men should be so dretful taken by was a wonder. It was probable that she had good wages for keepin' house for her old uncle over to Greatport all these twelve or thirteen years, but she couldn't have laid by no great; she was too given to dressing up, Mary Olive was."

As for Mary Olive herself, she was the picture of unconscious innocence when she entered the meeting-house of a Sunday with the two men dangling at her heels, and sang soprano in the choir to Joe Neally's bass, while Ben looked on with ill-concealed jealousy and disapproval.

Mrs. Reuben Swan—they were nearly all Swans and Spurlings on Swan's Island—declared that she "couldn't sense the preaching at all with sich goin's on," and Mrs. Adoniram Swan said that it was "Mis' Jotham Swan's duty to speak to Mary Olive, and caution her against sich behavior." If she was her sister-in law and lived beneath the same roof with her, she would have done it long ago. But Mis' Jotham never had no gumption till she got well started; then her tongue got too limber sometimes. And Mrs. Jotham Swan *did* speak after awhile, though she liked and respected her husband's sister; and having not yet fully recovered from a rheumatic fever, and with a large family on her hands, she could not possibly get along without her help, and was mortally afraid of offending her. But something must be done soon to stop the wagging tongues.

"Have you any idea what a sight of talk there is 'bout you round the island, Mary Olive?" she said one night twitching nervously at the skirt of her limp calico dress.

"About me?" exclaimed Mary Olive. "What under the sun do they find to say about me? I've hardly been out-of-doors, except to meeting, nor seen anybody since I came back from Greatport."

"Why, they say you're a-leadin' on and encouragin' two men ter court ye ter once, and I must say myself thet it looks like thet, Mary Olive. 'Pears ter me, if I was in your place (I know 'tain't none of my business, though), if I wanted ter git mermied, I'd take Joe Neally right off fur good and all, and give Ben his walkin' ticket. Joe's stiddy and likely owns his house, and is pritty certain ter git the light, bein' a Republikin and an honest feller."

"There, Sabriny Swan, what are you talkin' about? I declare I'd forgotten what a miserable, pryin', suspicious, meddlesome place this island is, I've been away from it so long. You'd out to go away too for a while, Sabriny, and get a different set of ideas and notions. Encouragin' two men to court me, am I? Can't two old neighbors call to see a body once in a while without havin' it said they courtin'?"

"Oh, Mary Olive, what the use o' talkin' like that? You know 's well's I do, and everybody else does, that they're both crazy ter git ye, and ready ter tear each other's eyes out with jealousy; and didn't Joe bring ye some sap sugar, and Ben mend your boat fur ye, and dig up yer flower bed, and bring ye a whole lot of chiny-oyster seeds and sich; and didn't you go a-ridin' with Joe and a-sailin' with Ben; and don't they both walk ter meetin' with ye every Sunday, and hang round the steps ridic'lous in the evenin' tryin' ter steal a march on one t'other to see ye home?"

"For goodness' sake, what if all you say is true? Ben is an old friend of mine. He's the only one that ever paid me any attention before I went over to Greatport, and Joe was little brother Tom's best friend, and was with him when he was drowned, and tried hard to save him, and I played with of 'em both when I was a little girl. It seems a pity 't I couldn't accept a few triflin' favors from them without having it called encouragement. They's all I have to speak to outside of this house, anyway. Nobody with a grain of sense could have any intercourse with these spleeny, gossipin' women. As for marr,ing either of 'em, I haven't the least idea of it. The last thing I want is to get married to anybody."

"If ye git merried ye must put yer trust in the Lord," sighed Mrs. Jotham. "Jotham's a terrible good husban' as husban's go; but there, catch me ter git merried again if I was single! But, Mary Olive, it does 'pear ter me that you're a-leadin' both them men on, and ye'll git yerself inter hot water if ye don't quit it. I don't feel right a-havin' Ben here ser much, nohow. He' a Demererat, ye know—kinder lukewarm, mebbe—but Demercrats are as wicked as the Borgies. If they git inter power the country will all go ter nothin', the mack'rel fishery be sp'ilt, and the Pope of Rome will grab us all under his thumb: the minister says so. Joe's a respectable Republican, at least. He was kinder makin' up ter Maria Antinette Spurlin' when you got home."

"Well, he'd better stick to Maria Antinette. There's no reason why he shouldn't because he comes over here of an evening sometimes. He likes to sing, and Maria Antinette hasn't got an instrument, and I have; that's most likely one thing that takes him here so much. But, mercy sake, Sabriny, I won't condescend to talk any more about. As if a woman of my age—thirty-five my last birthday—hadn't got judgment enough to know what's suitable in the way of friends without anybody's interference! And I must say I never heard such nonsense talked about politics, nor met so much politics in my whole life, as I have since I came back to Swan's Island. If the Pope of Rome was to grab this place, he'd drop it quick enough, there's no doubt about that; and I reckon there's some cracks and damages in the ship of state whichever party sails it. Both parties are wicked enough. They both say, like those plaguey patent-medicine men, take my pills and you'll be all right, and offer a han'some chromo as a reward into the bargain. Joe Neally expects to get the light because he turned Republican a year ago. That's his chromo."

"Why, Mary Olive, I should think 'twas plain enough which side was right. All the ministers and deacons is Republikins, 'cepting Deacon Goodwin, and he's a dretful queer Christian—goes trampin' and sailin' all over the country on the Sabbath-day if he happens ter take a notion."

"I don't care anything about his politics, but he's worth all the rest of the island put together. I don't sees how he stands such a narrow-minded set as he has to deal with."

"Oh, dear! dear! dear! It 'pears to me you must be crazy. I reely believe you're a Demererat too. Jotham, he ain't real strong on the right side neither. He don't want ter set in the store and argify nor nothin'. An' you a perfessor, Mary Olive! What would Elder Wright say? He—"

This conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Joe Neally, who brought something in a basket, which he handed to Mary Olive with a smile.

"Why, it's a setting of ducks' eggs!" she said, lifting the cover. "'Twas real good in you, Joe, but I didn't expect you to go and get 'em just because I said I wanted 'em. I was calculating to go over to the Point to-morrow and get some. And if here isn't Ben with ducks' eggs too!" she proceeded, as the door again opened and another man with a basket appeared on the threshold. "You're both as kind as kind can be. I don't know what I shall do without you two good neighbors when I go away from the island."

Both men looked glum, and then glared at each other.

"You don't say you're goin' to leave us, Mary Olive?" said Joe, pulling at his sandy whiskers.

"Not till Sabriny gets real smart again; not this summer, or I shouldn't be setting hens. But of course I ain't going to stay here for good. What is there for me to do on Swan's Island?"

"I got some Pekin ducks' eggs for you, Mary Olive. They say you can bring 'em up 'bout as you would chickens, with skursely any water, and I thought they'd be just the thing for you, as the pond is a consid'able distance off," said Ben, who would not acknowledge Joe's surly nod of greeting.

"Pooh! I don't take no stock in them kind o' ducks," remarked Joe, scornfully. "Ducks must have plenty o' water. They take to it as natural as life."

"Just as natural as some folks take to lyin' and connivin' in all kind of underhand ways to cheat other folks out of their dues," said Ben, his blue eyes flashing with wrath and contempt.

Joe started up in a towering rage. "What do you mean?" he cried. "I—"

"There!" said Mary Olive, interrupting him. "If you and Ben are going to quarrel here, I'll never speak to either of you again. Sit down, Joe, and don't be such a goose. I'm ashamed of you, Ben. Why can't you be friends? You used to be, I'm sure; and such old neighbors too."

"I ain't a-goin' to have my house a scene o' condention and quorlin', nohow," piped Mrs. Jotham. "It wa'n't never sech a place, and never will be if I ken help it."

"Beg pardon," said Ben, promptly. "I hadn't ought to have said what I did, I know, but there's a limit to a man's endurance sometimes."

"Ben thinks I'm trying to cheat him out of his dues because the folks about here think I'd ought ter have the light," said Joe, with a sneer.

"Princerpul is princerpul, and the righteous party is in power," said Mrs. Jotham, with closed eyes, as she swayed to and fro in her splint rocker. "His father 'd orter died last year afore the Democrats went out, if Ben'd wanted ter keep the place."

"Never mind Sabriny, Ben. She always feels obliged to testify to her politics as well as to her religion," said Mary Olive, looking half alarmed, half amused.

People did not generally mind Sabriny very much. Ben hardly knew what she had said. He was regarding Joe with a look of most intense disgust.

"That's a strange way to put it," he said. "The people round here want you to have the light, and you're so mighty obliging as to resort to lyin' and cheatin' in order to get it. I won't say any more, Mary Olive. I won't demean myself to talk with him about it, anyhow."

"Can't we have some music, Mary Olive?" said Joe, ignoring his angry rival. "That new piece we sang last Saturday night has been a-runnin' in my head ever since. That was a handsome tune and no mistake."

"Yes; but let us have some of the old tunes. If Ben brought his flute, he'll play an accompaniment."

"I brought my flute, but I'd rather not play under the circumstances, if you'll excuse me, Mary Olive," said Ben.

"There, somebody's a-comin' up the walk. P'raps it's Jotham," said Mrs. Jotham, rising to open the door. "Lor', no; 'tis Aleck Clark!" as a tall, stalwart young fellow appeared on the threshold.

"Do, folks!" said the new-comer. "Any news sence I've been gone?"

"Not that I know of. Take a seat, Aleck," said Mary Olive. "I hope you've had good luck."

"Tollable, thank ye; but I've seen a bigger load of mack'rel brought in 'fore now. I shouldn't ha' come in so soon but my boat's kinder giv' out. She ain't nothin' more'n nailsick, though. But I can't stop. I come after Joe. I brought over a friend of his, Nat Jones, from Greatport. He's got some business on hand that he wants to see Joe about."

"Well, I s'pose I must be goin', then," said Joe. "Where'd you leave the boat, Aleck?"

"Sorry to have you leave so soon," said Mary Olive; but there was an amused twinkle in her eyes at his very evident reluctance to take his departure and the quick furtive glance of hatred which he bestowed on Ben, as it the unfortunate circumstance had been of his especial planning.

"I hope we sha'n't be cheated out of our music the next time I come over," he said, still lingering on the threshold, while the somewhat impatient Aleck, who had already said good-night, waited outside.

"Come, Joe," he ventured at length; "Nat's a-waitin', you know, and he won't know what's become of me."

"Well, I guess nobody will be stunded if he waits awhile longer. He ain't afraid of the dark, is he?"

When the door finally closed upon him conversation rather lagged. Mrs Jotham was grim and severe, but very sleepy. A loose board in the floor complained dolefully under her slowly swaying rocker. The fire fell into a pile of scarlet coals, and left the large room with one faint lamp in semi-darkness Mary Olive scarcely moved her knitting-needles. Ben sat, with eyes fixed upon the floor, in a most dejected attitude. Mrs. Jotham's knitting work fell to the floor.

"She's asleep, ain't she?" remarked Ben with a nod in the direction of the now stationary rocker.

"Oh, Lor', yes. She's usually pretty sleepy evenings you know."

"Well, as long's proverdence has taken away Joe Neally for an hour or so, and has shut Mis' Jotham's eyes at the same time, I'm going to say something to you Mary Olive, for goodness knows when I can get another chance. I know 'tasn't any use. Joe's a great deal better match than I am, as far as property goes, and you 'pear to like him consid'rable well; but I'm going to have it out anyhow, and if there ain't the least hope for me, I want you to say so. I keep a-saying so to myself all the time, but—"

"Oh, dear me, Ben!" interrupted Mary Olive, "why will you be so foolish? Why do you take it for granted that there's got to be a match in the question, because I'm friendly with you and Joe, and accept neighborly kindnesses from both of you? I haven't the least idea of taking either of you, or of getting married at all, as far's that goes. I'm a good deal better off as I am. An old maid won't put up with the contrary dispositions of men, and all trying ways and notions, jest for the sake of getting married, as a silly girl will."

"I s'pose I am contrary and trying," said Ben, meekly; "but I worship the very ground you walk on, Mary Olive. I did before you ever left the island; but I was a dreadful bashful, shilly-shalling idiot, and you never dropped your eyes and was sheepish and quiet, like the other girls, to give a feller a chance to speak."

"I guess you wasn't in a very desperate state, Ben, or you would have dropped over to Greatport to see me now and then, or written to me or something. You was in the place lots of times while I was there, and I never laid eyes on you, only once or twice when I happened to meet you in the street. I was an awful homely girl, and I don't suppose 'twas natural that any man should really fall in love with me."

"You was always a picture to me," said Ben, simply; "but as for going to see you to Greatport, why I daresn't. You never would ask me, in the first place, and when I happened to meet you over there in the street, you were always so kind of pert and off-hand, and dressed so nice, I didn't feel as if I was anywhere."

Mary Olive colored deeply. "I thought if you wanted to see me, you could come without asking," she said. "Queer, I would have liked to have had a beau then. All the other girls had them, but not one came near me. Late years, when I've had something else to think of, I 'pear to have become a belle."

"You ain't going to have Joe, then?" inquired Ben, anxiously.

"Why, didn't I just tell you, Ben, that I din't want to marry anybody?" she answered, laughing.

"He thinks you favor him, I'm certain; and I heard over t' the Point yesterday that you was engaged."

"Never mind what he thinks. He hasn't any reason to think anything. The folks over to the Point must have something to talk about, anyway."

Mrs. Jotham awoke with a start at this point, and looking about her with some bewilderment, remarked that she "shouldn't wonder if Jotham got in that night, as she had just been dreaming that a clairvoyant came in and told her he was a-coming."

Ben arose to take his leave, looking rather dismal.

"Yes, you're in a hurry to go now. I s'pose 'taint so interesting, now I've woke up," said the drowsy lady, with unusual vim.

"Sabriny Swan," said Mary Olive, "you certainly are not very interesting the little time when you are awake late days."

Jotham did get in that night. He appeared at the door soon after Ben took his departure, filling the room with an odor of saltwater, tar and fish.

"There!" said Mrs. Jotham. "I reckon you'll begin ter b'lieve in my dreams byme by! What did I tell ye? Any luck, Jotham?"

"Tollable. Not sich a great ketch, but the fish sold well. I stopped to the store on my way up. There's a sight there a-talking."

"Politics, of course. I do hope you won't get political, Jotham," said Mary Olive.

"Well, 'taint exactly polertics. They're a having it over 'bout the light. Joe, he's detarmined to git it; and some folks say 'tain't coz he wants it ser much himself as he wants ter git it away from Ben. He's got a grudge agin him, ye see"—with a meaning look at his sister—"but then, for that matter, he alwas bed, and he's been and got up a petition against his having it, saying he ain't a suitable man, and how he neglected his dooty."

"Neglected his duty?" exclaimed Mary Olive. "Did Ben neglect his duty? I wouldn't have believed that of him or any of his family."

"I can't see't he did, and I declare it's a mean shame, Democrat or no Democrat. You wouldn't ketch me signing nothing agin Ben. The minister, he seems ter run of an idee it's an orful wicked party; but Ben's a good feller, whatever ticket he votes, I say; and he was a doing his dooty, and more'd a-doing his dooty, when he saved that crew of men from drowning, if the light was five minutes late."

"I never heard anything about that. When was it that he saved the crew?"

"Why, 'twas nigh six months ago, jest after the old man died. An all-fired storm came on in the morning, and the *Susan Jane* was wracked jest outside Black's P'int on them blarsted rocks. All the other men was skairt to go to the rescue, and Ben he never thought nothing 'bout the lamp, but risked his own life and saved four men. There was six in all, but two was lost overboard before he got to 'em. Elmiry, she alwus lit the lamp in the old man's time if he happened ter be behindhand, but she was so took up with the wrack, and so scairt about Ben out on sich a tough sea, that she clean forgot, and was just a little mite late. All the other lights was lit, ye see, and the wrack warn't in the wake of this, nohow. Besides, the fog was a-clearing up, and there warn't no need of a light, as I see."

"And they say Ben neglected his duty?"

"Joe does; and he's kinder persuaded some other folks that he did too, 'specially folks that didn't know nothing o' the sarcumstance. He's got a number of names on his paper outside the island, and all round about. Most of the island folks wants Joe ter have it, 'coz they're pooty near all got sound Republicans, the minister said ser much; but a good many are honest enough not ter sign that partition. If Joe comes ter me with it, I shall tell him what I think pooty plain. He's a going to Washington himself with it, they say."

"I can't find words to say what my 'pinion is of Joe Neally if that's what he's up to," said Mary Olive, with flashing eyes, as she hurried off to her own room.

"Massy sakes!" said Mrs. Jotham. "You don't s'pose she means ter hev Ben, after all? Mary Olive was alwus jest so bigerted. But princerpul is princerpul."

Mary Olive closed her door with a bang, and seating herself on the bed, began to think. "I ain't in love with Ben, I know I ain't, but I hate such injustice, and I'm going to do something about it myself, no matter what folks think or say, as there's nobody else that seems to care enough about right and wrong on this miserable political island. So Joe's going to Washington with his petition, is he? Well, somebody might make haste and get there ahead of him, and carry the truth to headquarters; and if there is any justice in the world, why, the truth would prevail. What's politics got to do with keeping a light, I should like to know? I always wanted to go to Washington myself, I always meant to. I've got the money now and my new black dress would do to wear. It ain't just the time of year I should 'a chosen for the trip, but then—"

And before she blew out her candle and settled herself for repose, Mary Olive had a plan in her mind which would have amazed the whole island. When she awoke in the morning it flashed at once into her mind.

"There, I've slept on it," she said to herself, "and I ain't altered my mind; but nobody but Deacon Goodwin must know the least thing about it. He can keep a secret, and he'll be glad to help, I'll warrant. I shouldn't wonder if some other folks could get up a petition too, as well's Joe. But if Sabriny, or even Jotham, gets hold of it, everything will be spoilt. They're both of 'em leaky. Jotham always was kind of simple, poor soul; and as for Sabriny—"

She bustled about her household affairs as usual until after dinner. It was a breezy morning. Jotham was preparing for another fishing cruise. Sabriny had a touch of "neuroligy," and was smoking to cure it. The bay was filled with scudding sails, and up at the light-house, which she could see from the kitchen door, Ben was polishing the windows of the tower. Mary Olive watched his motions for a few moments, then turned quickly away.

"I know I can't prevent folks from calling me a fool, but I can and will prevent myself from being one," she said, half aloud. "Heads orter harden after bumping against the world for thirty-five years, but anyhow I'm going to start on a journey to-morrow."

The children were on their was to school before she broached the subject.

"Where in the world air you a-goin', Mary Olive?" asked Mrs. Jotham, on being informed of the proposed journey.

"Well, I'm going to Boston, in the first place, and maybe I shall go about considerable before I get home, if you can get along with what help Israel's Phebe can give you for a week or ten days."

"Oh, I can put up with her for a spell. She's tollable smart, if she didn't waste soap so awful. 'Pears to me you started up dretful sudden, though."

"That's the way I like to do. If I wait and think of it a while, I sha'n't enjoy it half so much. I shall start to-morrow, and this afternoon I'll go over to Israel's and speak to Phebe."

She not only went to engage Israel's Phebe that afternoon, but had a long and apparently satisfactory interview with Deacon Goodwin, who lived over at the Point, and who met her at the wharf in Greatport the next noon, when she embarked on the Boston boat.

The next day Joe Neally went off in the same direction, and the whole island was alive with the report that he was going to join her in the city, and they were to be married.

One week from that date Ben was agreeably surprised to receive from Washington, duly signed and sealed, his appointment as keeper of Swan's Island Light. The outraged Republicans all collected in the store that night to give vent to their indignation and amazement. What was the world coming to when a Republican government appointed a man of another party to keep a light? "The whole country had a right to be fairly stunded," old Captain Spurling said.

And great was the disappointment when Mary Olive returned alone two days before Joe made his appearance, though there was some excitement in wondering where she had been, and what had been her errand. Perhaps she had bought her wedding outfit. When Joe appeared there was more to talk about.

"How'n under the sun did Ben git thet 'pintmunt?" his followers inquired of him. "Didn't he go on ter Washin'ton with thet petition himself, 'n' wouldn't thet fetch 'em?"

"No, 'twouldn't fetch nothin', because Mary Olive Swan got there ahead o' me with another petition, 'n' a great pack o' lies into the bargain. She's the slyest 'n' the brazenest woman I even see. She thought nobody 'd find her out, but I tracked her, 'n' met her in the station to Boston comin' back, 'n' cast it in her face, 'n' she couldn't deny it. She said she didn't care nothin' particklar about Ben, only to esteem him as a friend, but she wanted ter see justice done."

"She don't care nothin' particklar 'bout him, hey? Porty strong leanin' towards jestice. I should say. Hard on you, Joe. We all thought you was the favored one."

"Favored one?"—with an air of intense scorn. "Mary Olive 'n' I have been good friends enough, we used ter play together when we was children, but as fur marryin', no sick bold, contrivin' old maids fur me!"

A general laugh and doubtful looks followed this statement.

"You're a tarnal critter, Joe, if you be a 'Publican," said Captain Timothy Drew, who was a frequent caller at Jotham Swan's and knew the state of affairs.

Ben kept away from the store, but he heard the whole story, of course. The place rang with it. It got over to the other island, it was even talked of over at Greatport: and some aggravating scribbler sent an altered and highly romantic account of it to the county paper. Jotham's front lock, the one which he always twitched whenever he was angry or excited, had grown so thin and ragged that he was strangely altered in appearance, and Mrs. Jotham was so overcome that she took to her bed. As for Mary Olive, she only remained on the island one night. Israel's Phebe was doing remarkably well as help, and she thought it a good time to make a long-promised visit to relatives in Greatport. One outing made her long for another, she said.

At the end of three weeks she was back again, and on the evening of her return Ben came strolling down from the hill to see her.

"How's the ducks flourishin'?" he inquired of Mary Olive, who was standing in the open doorway.

"Well, I declare, I'd forgotten to ask after 'em myself. I left 'em in care of Joey," she said. "I've been a considerable distance since I saw you last, as you know, of course, who doesn't know it? But, Ben Spurling, don't you go and think that—that I was in love with you because I went to get ahead of Joe Neally in that light business. I wasn't any such thing, but I was awful mad to see such injustice done, and I hopped right up and off on the impulse of the moment, and I'm glad I did. I'd 'a' done it for old Cap'n Timothy Drew under the same circumstances. I never knew till afterward that—I liked you"—with a sudden rush of color into her fair plump cheeks.

"I never indulged in any such notion. 'Twas just like you, Mary Olive: just as you was when you was a little girl," said Ben, vehemently.

"Well, but, you see, I should have to marry you now anyway; that is, if you were of the same mind. Folks never 'd get tired of talking about it if I didn't; if I do, they'll quiet off in a little while, maybe. But I ain't going to live on this island, Ben, though I love the place. It's too political. You'll have to give up the light-house or me, after all."

"Well," said Ben, with his face aglow. "I'm 'tached to the light, but I'm 'tached to you a good deal more. Father 'n' mother both bein' sick so long. I've been obliged to stay here so fur, with now and then a little run o' coastin', so I haven't laid up any capital to start out in any kind o' business with; but I calculate I could support you tollable well a-coastin'. Oh! Mary Olive, if you *do* like me—."

"Don't talk about coasting, Ben. To tell you the truth, Uncle Rube left me a little money. I've got 'most four thousand dollars in all. It's a wonder I've been able to keep it a secret; but I have, so far. Jotham and Sabriny don't suspect it, and what do you say to our setting up a store over to Greatport?"

But, after all, the pair began housekeeping at the light-house. It was evident that Ben had a great many friends on the island still in spite of his politics, and Mary Olive made haste to have a charming little cottage built adjoining the old one at the foot of the light, surrounded by a flower-garden that was the wonder of the town.

"Cupid appears to be uncommonly lively over here on Swan's Island; laughs at politics as well as at locksmiths," said the captain of the supply boat, as he landed with his cargo of oil for the light, to old Captain Hardy, who was lounging on the wharf.

"Coopid? Yes, Coopid is kinder beatin' down polertics, as 'twere. Mariar Antinette Spurlin' giv' Joe Neally the mitten t'other day, 'n' is goin' ter marry Dan Thomas, the Demcreratic repersentitive from Western Harbor over yonder. I'm a 'Publikin myself; but, Lor', there's jest as good Demererats as there is 'Publikins, 'n' there's jest as good 'Publikins as there is Demercrats, 'n' that's the long 'n' short of it. The folks about here is a-beginnin' ter find it out, too, in spite of all the stump-speaking there's been about, 'n' the minister ser dretful onesided."—Susen Hartley *in Harpers Weekly.*

Poison-Ivy and Sumach.

Four things need to be committed to memory to insure safety against our poison ivy and sumachs:

First. The three-leaved ivy is dangerous.

Second. The five-leaved is harmless.

Third. The poison-sumachs have white berries.

Fourth. No red-berried sumach is poisonous.

Both the poison-ivy and poison-sumach, though unlike in appearance of foliage, have similar white berries growing in small slender clusters from the axils of the leaves. In all other sumachs the berries are red and in close bunches at the end of the branches, and far from being dangerous, yield a frosty-looking acid which is most agreeable to the taste, and wholesome withal. With these simple precepts fixed in the mind, no one need fear the dangers of the thickets. Nor need any one repeat the hazardous exploit of two young ladies whom I know, one of whom, as a committee on church decoration in a country town, brought her arms full of the scarlet autumn branches of the venomous sumach; while the other once seat the writer a really beautiful group of carefully arranged rare grasses and mosses generously decked with the white berries of the poison-ivy. Both of these rash maidens, I belive, paid the severe penalty of their botanical innocence.

Why She Wept.

At his lecture on "Ministers and Preachers" Dr. Andrews told some amusing stories of ministers of the past. One about Dr. Jeter was especially good. Dr. Jeter, when he became worked up in preaching and was most eloquent, had a habit of putting a whine into his voice which as near resembled tears in his voice as possible. Once when the tears were especially strong during a sermon the good old doctor noticed a lady weeping in the audience. As soon as the services were over he hastened to overtake her and ask her what part of the divine word touched her to tears.

"T'wasn't that," said the lady.

"Have you had some deep affliction in losing family friends then?" asked the doctor.

"Twe sn't that, neither," said the lady.

"Well, what was it then?" asked the doctor.

"Well, doctor, we had a mule, and it was a good one, too. We all liked that mule, and he died, and while you were preaching your voice sounded so much like that mule's that I couldn't help crying."

"When the maid of Interior Africa
Goes visiting here-and there,
It never bothers her in the least
That she has nothing to wear."

How Uncle Jerry Went Back on the Crowd.

Every boy of us in the village knew Uncle Jerry Crawford. He was a dried-up old man, and never seemed to get any older, although always complaining. The form of salutation was invariably this:

"Hello! Uncle Jerry!"

"Yass, yass."

"How you feeling?"

"Wretched, wretched, thank ye."

I've heard that at least one thousand times, and never knew a deviation but once. A drummer who used to come up occasionally from St. Louis got on to it, and one day when a dozen of us sat on the steps of the drug store Uncle Jerry was seen coming up the street.

"Isn't that old Crawford?" asked the drummer, as he shaded his eye with his hand.

"Yes."

"He's the man that always replies that he's pretty well, praise God?"

"Oh, no. He's the man who always replies that he's wretched, wretched, thank ye."

"I may be mistaken, but I don't think so."

"Of course you are."

"Well, I hate to give in. I'll bet $20 that when he comes up and you ask him how he is he'll reply as I said."

There were seven of us there, and all we could raise was $16. We handed that out fast enough, however, and it had been covered when Uncle Jerry came along. We were on the grin as the drummer called out:

"Hello! Uncle Jerry!"

"Yass, yass!"

"How you feeling?"

"Pretty well, praise God!" replied Uncle Jerry, as he passed on.

It was about two minutes before we could get breath, and then the drummer had gone with the stakes. An hour later I asked Uncle Jerry what he meant by such conduct, and he replied:

"Took me all day to learn it, and the feller gin me two big dollars."

Things Best Left Undone.

Do not introduce your girl friend to the gentleman visitor. Instead, say, "Miss Brown, will you allow me to present Mr. Jones?"