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**Why Miss Wiggin Didn't Elope.**

"LOUIZY ALLEN'S got a beau, as sure as I'm a livin' woman!" Miss Mehetabel Wiggin was peering through the closed blinds of her front parlor at two figures which were pacing up and down the shady paths of the Widow Allen's pretty garden opposite.

"Now you don't say so, Hetty!"

And from the dining-room, where she had been washing up the china teacups, appeared Miss Lupira, her younger sister.

Miss Lupira reached the window in a marvelously short space of time, considering that she was an exceedingly fat and roly-poly woman of forty.

"And we're the first to know it, Hetty! I'm sure of it. Hannah Spriggins was here this morning, and never mentioned the Allens. Now to find out who he is! I thought as like as not Louzy would catch a beau when she went to Boston. It's my opinion that's what it was done for."

"He ain't much to look at, that's certain," said Miss Mehetabel. "He looks old enough to be her father. His hair's as black as coal; but it's my belief its a wig."

"Hetty! Hetty! there's Mr. Jarvis, the expressman, coming up the street with a big trunk. I know it's going there. Can't we stop him, and look at the name that's on it?"

And Miss Hetty's shrill voice instantly arrested the headlong course of the expressman.

"O, Mr. Jarvis! I want to send a parcel to Dixmont. I'll get it ready in a minute."

And, while Miss Mehetabel was preparing her bundle, Miss Lupira walked down to the gate and inquired after the health of Mr. Jarvis's family. Her little, keen blue eyes soon discovered a bit of pasteboard on the end of the trunk, which they had decided was the property of "Louzy Allen's beau." "F. K. Warfield" was the name written on it.

This discovery was imparted to Miss Mehetabel as soon as the expressman had driven on.

"I should have been mad enough if we hadn't found out, for I didn't just want to send that old carpet to Mary Grimes. We decided that it was too good, the other day, you know; but I couldn't think of any other errand, to save my life. And there goes the trunk up the front stairs! I don't begrudge the carpet now; for the Widow Allen is so close-mouthed we might have been weeks finding out. F. K. Warfield! Now I'll write to Semantha to look in the Boston Directory and find out what he does, and where he lives."

The Misses Wiggin, with their faithful maid Sally, and their ancient cat Moses, lived alone in a snug little house, and superintended the affairs of all Poppleton, from the settling of a new minister to the number of slices of bread and jam propriety allowed the little Stubbes next door to consume in a forenoon.

Miss Mehetabel, who was tall and angular and forty-five, and of decidedly unpleasant countenance, had a regard for the opposite sex, and had not yet abandoned her hopes of entering the matrimonial state. She was always paying attention to one or more single gentlemen.

Miss Lupira, on the other hand, was very shy of the male sex, blushing and dropping her eyes if one of the audacious creatures looked at her. She was always having hair-breadth escapes from ardent admirers who followed her home

and she never entered a street-car without being stared at impudently.

On one occasion a man went so far as to wink at her; and from this momentous occasion Miss Lupira dated all subsequent events.

"Let me see," she was won't to say, in relating events; "it happened about a month"—or a year, as the case might be—"after the man winked at me."

And Miss Mehetabel's suggestion, that the man might have had an affection of the eye, was received with angry scorn by Miss Lupira.

Miss Mehetabel had never enjoyed the distinction of being winked at.

The Misses Wiggin were not adored by their fellow-Poppletonians; but they were possessed of some property, and they always had the latest news to tell; on which account they were held in some consideration.

The Widow Allen, who lived opposite them, was very reserved, and the Misses Wiggin found no favor in her eyes.

Louise Allen, a blooming maiden of twenty, never went out of the house without being peered at by some of the spinsters, and never went to a concert or a party that one of them didn't sit up till she returned, to see who came home with her, and report it all over Poppleton before she was up the next morning.

It is not to be expected, under the circumstances, that Miss Louise would entertain a warm regard for the Misses Wiggin. So it came to pass that there was very little intercourse between the two families.

When visitors who were unknown to the spinsters made their appearance at the Widow Allen's they at once dispatched their maid Sally to borrow something, and with instructions to get all the information possible; but here the "war of races" interfered somewhat with the spinsters' plans; for Chloe, the presiding genius of the Allen kitchen, was black, and "didn't like paddies," and Sally "couldn't abide the nasty naggurs."

Miss Mehetabel declared it to be her opinion, that the only reason for their keeping Chloe, "who had 'thief' written in her face if ever a girl had," was because she would not associate with other girls, and tell of the "carryings-on" they had there.

"As soon as F. K. Warfield's trunk had been carried in, and the door closed upon the retreating expressman, the Miss Wiggin sought the kitchen to interview their faithful Sally.

"Sally, I want you to go straight over to Mis' Allen's and carry that cup of vinegar you borrowed last week. And, Sally, be sure you say that Miss Louzy's beau is very handsome, and ask Chloe whether her engagement-ring is a diamond or a pearl, or what."

"I'm ag'in' talking to naggurs at all," said Sally.

But she went quite obediently, nevertheless.

The Misses Wiggin waited, breathless with suspense, until Sally returned.

"Sure, the sarcy naggur says he's handsome fur them as likes his looks," reported Sally. "And she axed me how I knew he was Miss Louzy's beau, an' I said you guessed it, an' she said then you could guess whatever was her engagement ring."

"It's of no use to try to depend upon Sally and that impudent Chloe," said Miss Mehetabel decisively. "We must find out ourselves."

So it happened that the next day Miss Mehetabel took a twilight walk upon a street which bounded the Widow Allen's garden on the back. Miss Mehetabel had a theory that what the front of a house would not reveal about its inmates the back of it would.

And, sure enough, there was 'Louzy's beau' industriously pulling weeds out of a beet-bed, and, O favorite Fates! all by himself. It wasn't a wig; but he was all of forty-five, and had a bald spot as large as a silver dollar on his crown, and a queer twitching of the eyelids that reminded her of the man who winked at Lupira. He had a very marked Roman nose, and a large, ugly mouth.

"Clearly," she mused, "it was not his beauty did it."

"He must have money," she continued, after watching him, in silence, a moment longer. "I always knew that Louzy Allen was a mercenary minx."

She approached the fence, and smiled blandly over it.

It was wasted. He did not look up.

This was too good an opportunity to be lost by bashfulness; and, fortunately, bashfulness was not one of Miss Mehetabel's failings.

"Good-evening, sir," she remarked graciously. "A beautiful evening."

"Louzy's beau" jumped as if he had been hit by a bullet.

"Good-evening—ah—ah—madam," he stammered.

"Miss," corrected Miss Mehetabel blandly. "I am Miss Mehetabel Wiggin, a neighbor. I see you like gardening. I do so love the pursuits of agriculture myself, that I couldn't help stopping to watch you."

"I like it when I bask in the beams of such radiant beauty as now shines on me," exclaimed the little gentleman,—he was very short, though very stout,—clasping his hands ecstatically.

"Is the man making fun of me?" thought Miss Mehetabel, who had not a doubt that she was very good looking, but who had never been called a radiant beauty, that she could remember. "If he is making fun of me, that little minx, Louzy Allen, must have put him up to it."

The thought caused Miss Mehetabel to frown severely.

"Oh, pardon me! pardon me!" he exclaimed. "Do not frown upon me, and turn my sunshine into night. My emotions were too strong to be suppressed; but, oh! I trust I have not offended you beyond forgiveness. Your beauty dawned upon me so suddenly, and you remind me so strongly of one I loved years ago. Pardon me, and say that we shall meet again."

"Well, I am sure," simpered Miss Mehetabel, and dropped her eyes, like a bashful school-girl.

Surely no one could doubt his sincerity! At last she was appreciated. At last the dream of her life was realized; she had a lover.

Just at this moment, most unfortunately, a door was heard to open at the house, and somebody came out.

Miss Mehetabel moved swiftly away.

"Oh, say that you will come again," the little gentleman called after her.—"Let this be our trysting-place."

Miss Mehetabel went home in a dream of delight. She had captured "Louzy Allen's beau! Could there be greater happiness than that?"

For once in her life she was reticent with regard to her experiences. Miss Lupira could find out nothing, but that she had seen Louzy's beau, and he was very handsome. That was very astonishing, for Miss Mehetabel was inclined to think other women's lovers "horrid-looking creatures;" and Miss Lupira determined to see "F. K. Warfield" for herself as soon as possible.

That very night, Miss Spriggins, who was a retail dealer in millinery goods, and a wholesale dealer in gossip, came in with a bit of news.

"Mis' Lawton says that Louzy Allen has got a beau, and his name is Frank Warfield. She's ben a-writin' to him constant ever sence she come home from Boston."

Mrs. Lawton was the post-master's wife.

"We knew as much as that ourselves," said Miss Mehetabel, with dignity, and then made signs energetically to Miss Lupira to say no more.

Miss Lupira was much bewildered at the state of affairs, her sister's conduct was so mysterious. Never before had Miss Mehetabel manifested any reluctance to tell all she knew.

Miss Lupira took a morning stroll, before the dew was off the grass, the next morning.

She put on a white dress and a chip hat with lavender trimmings, carried a bouquet in her hand, and walked around the Widow Allen's grounds.

"Louzy's beau" was walking up and down, in a secluded spot of the garden, reading aloud, in declamatory style, from a book of poems.

The book dropped from his hand at sight of Miss Lupira, and he rushed up to the fence.

"Oh! what vision of loveliness is this that crosses my pathway?" he cried. "Oh! are you Cleopatra, or Helen the most fair? O cruel, cruel barrier that separates us twain!"

And he eyed the rather high board fence tragically.

Miss Lupira blushed, and hurried away; but, like Lot's wife of old, she soon looked back.

"Oh, do not see, beauteous vision!" he exclaimed. "Draw near, and let me reveal the emotions which thou hast aroused in my heart."

Miss Lupira fled; but she "came that way again" the next morning. And on this occasion she went so far as to pause for a moment and listen to the little gentleman's delightful flattery, and even to utter a few timid word herself.—And, for the first time in her life, she had a secret from her sister. This was a real lover, and she could not talk about him as she could about the dreadful man who winked at her.

Miss Mehetabel took her walks in the twilight, and Miss Lupira took hers in the early morning; and they each managed to always go alone, and each was so intent on keeping her own secret that she never suspected the other of having one.

And the wooing sped apace in each case.

One evening the unsuspecting little gentleman and Miss Mehetabel had listened to their love-making. In the rustic summer-house, near them, were secreted "Louzy" and a very handsome young man. They evidently had to make very great efforts to keep from interrupting the tele-a-tets by shrieks of laughter.

"Oh, I thought I should scream!—How could you help it?" said Miss Louise, leaning confidently upon the young man's arm. "To think of him asking her to marry him, and her taking it all in such dreadful earnest! And did you hear her call him 'dearest Frank'?"

"I'm afraid it won't do to let him go on so—poor Uncle Frank! We shall have to send him back to the asylum.—Your mother says he proposed to Chloe this morning. And he is destroying the garden now. He has pulled every beet out of that bed that he heeded so carefully, and set the weeds out in their places; and he has pulled up the carrots, and stuck them in again bottom side up. Poor fellow! and he was just as sensible as anybody once! See what a dreadful thing it is to be disappointed in love. You had better take care that such a thing never happens to me. I might be crazy too. I really don't know but that I should."

And young Frank Warfield looked very affectionately into his betrothed's pretty face, and forgot his uncle for a few moments in doing a little love-making on his own account.

"No, Frank," said Louise, returning to the subject; "don't send him back yet. He enjoys the garden so much; and, if he wants to destroy a few vegetables, that is very little harm. And, besides, it is such fun. Those two horrid old maids, who have been my *beten noiv* ever since I was a little girl! No, I am not too hard on them; you would not think so if you knew how much harm their meddling and gossip have done in this town. But I don't see how he can make love to both of them, in the way he does, without their suspecting each other."

It was rather surprising, but the reason was, that each was too much absorbed in her love affairs to think much about the other.

"Lupry, I have something to tell you, which will probably surprise you very much," announced Miss Mehetabel, with her twilight walks. "I am going to be married."

"Mehtabel! you don't say so!"

And Miss Lupira, in her amazement, sat down on her sister's bonnet. But bonnets were a trifle to Miss Mehetabel now.

"Is it Elder Whitlow, or Ebenezer Robinson, or?"

"Neither of those, Lupry, neither of those," dismissing all those objects of her former attentions with a majestic wave of her hand. "They were all worthy men; but I never could bring myself to favor their suits, because I couldn't feel either of them to be my soul's true mate. But I have found him at last, Lupry—my twin soul. But he wishes our engagement to be a secret, and our marriage strictly private, on account of family reasons."

Miss Lupira started at this.

"We are to be married the first of

September, and I shall have Miss Robinson here to make my trussoo right off," she asked.

Miss Lupira drew a long sigh, which sounded like one of relief. A faint shadow of suspicion had crossed her mind; but this made it all right. Family reasons made it necessary for her own marriage with Mr. Warfield to be extremely private; but she was going to elope with him in a week from that day.

She tried her best to find out who Mehetabel's sweetheart was, but all in vain.

She was almost appalled by the boldness of her own undertaking. Poor, timid Miss Lupira! It did seem a dreadful thing to let a man run away with one. And sometimes in spite of her promise to her lover, she was tempted to tell Mehetabel all about it; but that worthy woman was wholly absorbed in her "trussoo," and the dressmaker was there constantly, so she had no opportunity if she had had courage.

The eventful day of the elopement came at last.

The little gentleman was to appear under Miss Lupira's window at precisely twelve o'clock. She did not propose to descend from the window, nature not having blessed her with a form adapted to such feats. She was to steal softly out of the door, and Mr. Warfield was to have a carriage in waiting.

Poor Miss Lupira! she was soon to learn that—

"The best laid schemes of mice and men Gang aft agley."

At dinner that day, Sally, who waited on the table, had some news to impart.

"It's a queer, crazy crayther they have across the way," she said. "The same yees thought was Miss Louzy's beau; an' sure he a'n't, but his crazy uncle, and they are takin' him back to the crazy house to-day. An' sure it's out of his head I knew he was a week ago, an' he tellin' me I was as beautiful as an angel wid wings, an' he'd marry me and make me a lady if I'd run away wid him in the night-time. An' says I, 'Go away wid you, ye crazy loon,' says I, 'and me promised to Tim O'Flanagan these six months.' And there's not a gurri or a woman gone by the garden—it's not any further than that they'll let him out, av course—there's not a woman gone by but he's after makin' love to her, and they canna kape him at Mis' Allen's no longer, though it's quiet and country air he come for. Sure it's an engagement-ring with a big stone in it that he gave to Chloe—and he's not above making love to naggurs—and he telling her they'd get married again in September. And he having a wife living!—a nice, dacent lady, they say. Well, he's a poor crazy crathur, without his wits about him, I suppose."

While Sally rattled on, Miss Mehetabel regarded her with a stony stare.

"Sally, bring me the camphire-bottle," was all she said, when Sally's story was finished.

But Lupira, all regardless of the presence of the dressmaker, threw up her arms, and went into a fit of hysterics.

Before she had recovered, a carriage was seen to stop at the Widow Allen's door, and the little gentleman was assisted into it.

As it rolled by the window, "Louzy Allen's beau" leaned out, and bowed and smiled affably, and even threw a kiss when he saw Miss Mehetabel.

That spinster shook her fist fiercely, in return.

"Deceitful monster!" she cried, "he is not crazy; he's a villain. He promised to marry me the first of September."

Miss Lupira recovered, at this.

"You, Mehetabel!" she exclaimed.—"Oh, you only imagined it. You are always imagining such things. A woman of your age! O my dearest Frank. He really loved me. He told me I was the only woman he ever really loved.—And I was going to elope with him tonight. It's all those snaky Allens!"

"Elope!" exclaimed Mehetabel. "A woman of your age! Lupry Wiggin, I am ashamed of you!"

How they settled it, nobody ever knew; for at this juncture Miss Robinson discreetly retired.

The story got abroad, and the Misses Wiggin moved away.

They are now superintending the affairs of another village, and Poppleton is at peace.