

Easley Messenger.

TRUTH, LIKE A TORCH, THE MORE IT'S SHOOK IT SHINES.

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BETSY HAMILTON'S LETTER.

A Sketch of Life in the Backwoods.

It had been whispered around that Jake Loftis had flirted Malindy Jane Trotman, and was a hitchin' of his ridin' nag up at our house; but they didn't know that when Jake's critter was a chawin' of our fence, Malindy Jane was inginnerly in the house.

The Trotman's is not the sort that sounds a horn and tells they business to everybody, and for that very reason some folks tries to find out their affairs.

Malindy Jane she kep her sowin' hid and never let none of the neighbor gals but me and Caledoney see it, and Jake he got so he taken the nigh cut, and gin old Miss Freshours and old Arminity the dodge when he went to see her, and they sot it down that he had quit gwine, and that it was all busted up betwixt 'em, or, 'Mebbe,' says old Arminity, "atter all he haint never coted the gal."

But when the Trotman's let in to whitewashin' ther house and fence, and then let in on the trees around the house, they knowed in reason it meant a weddin'; but thar wasn't nothin' like findin' out for sartin. So Arminity tuck it on herself to go over thar and stay the live long day. She hinted and hinted but all she gethered from Malindy Jane's maw was that the dock lowed lime was healthy.

Caledoney was a tellin' it at our house, and she lowed that when grammammy Eve was a leavin' so much cu'osity to ole Arminty she never forgot ole Miss Trotman. She left her sense enough to come ahead of her. They didn't only whitewash, but they scoured and fixed up tel they didn't skarely know they own place, but Malindy Jane was the onliest gal the ole folks had and she didn't git married every day.

To be sho if they'd had ther own sesso about it, they never would have picked out Jake Loftis; but who in all the land could they have picked out for a husband for ther gal, Malindy Jane.

The day was sot, and axed me and Caledoney to wait on her. Cal she come over to our house and we all went together. She fetched her yaller-buff muslin (mine's off'n the same piece) and lowed me and her could fix and dress alike. So we wheeled in and starched our yaller buffs so stiff they'd stand alone, and ironed 'em slick enough to see your face in 'em, and we tuck the artificial off'n our last summer hats and stuck 'em whar the overskirt was tucked up at one side, and we tacked a row of cedar all around the bottom of the frock and put a piece under breastpins and a piece in our hair, and I wish

you could have saw us. I tel you we was fixt. Aunt Nancy lowed: "Gals for all you do, don't outshine the bride."

Buddy he hitched up the steers in the waggin and sot in the cheers, and we all went, even to maw. We went soon so as to help Malindy Jane fix, and bless you when we got thar the house and yard was plum full. They had been a comin' ever sense a hour by sun. I won't be sartin, but I think everybody that come fetched a baby and a bench-legged fice and a flop-year-ed hound. We'uns allers fastens "Old Scrouge" and "Trip," and never lets 'em foller.

Atter I fixed the artificials in the fashion on Malindy Jane's head and lent her my neck-ribbin, (its good luck to marry in sump'n borrid) I taken a peep in the set tin room to see who all was thar, and behold thar sot the Sommons-es big as who but they, and I know in reason they wasn't axed nor wanted; and who should be hiked up on a bench all in a row but them tore down Freshours chillun grand as you please, and still for the fust time in they lives, and ther faces was raily so clean I didn't skarely know 'em. They had shorely been put to soak the night afore. Ther skin was as shiny and slick as a peeled ingon, and ther hare plastered down tight with saff soap, and they looked plum satisfied.

Over in the corner sot the three-ole mades, Miss Bunch Beasley, Miss Patience Potter and ole Arminity Pendergrass. Miss Bunch is as broad as she's long and as good as she's broad. Miss Patience is as long as a bean pole and as good as she's long and is funny enough to make a dog kill hisself a laughin'. She wears a short frock to try to make her look short, and all the colors of the rainbow to make her look young. Pap lowed she looks like Joseph's coat. Ole Arminity was a settin' right side of 'em. Now thar was three ole mades as different as the elephant and the monkey and the tiger. So needn't say old mades is all alike. And widders lacks a heap of bein all alike, too. The widder Comings was thar, and you wouldn't have knowed she was a widder. But the widder McAllister played fishin' for love, and put on a sight of airs. She tuck keer to let everybody know she picked the turkey and baked the tater-custards and half-moon pies.

Jake he was the last one to come. He had his head drippin' with lard and scented with cinnamon draps, and his new shoes was so tight he couldn't skarely walk. I wonder if a feller ever got married without havin' on tight boots or shoes?

Some town boys was out in the entry a giglin'. Cal lowed if she'd a been Malindy Jane they should not er been axed, one of 'em in pertickler, I disremember his name. She lowed he thought kase he lived in town that was all he needed. He had the enshorance to laugh at country boys with ther homemade jeans, and all he was fitten fur was to wear fine Sunday clothes that wasn't paid for. He strutted around mighty bigoty and smoked and chawed terbacker, and took his sweetened dram, tied his cravat in the fashion, pulled his mustache, and played with his watch-chain, and laughed at them boys, he laughed at his betters. One good, honest, hard workin' country boy like Iky Roberson, Cap Dewberry or Jake Loftis is worth enough of his soat to build a fence from here to town.

Yes, everybody knowed when Jake got thar by the cinnamon draps. Brother Cole was axed to marry 'em, and as many couples as he has joined he don't know his piece: he had to read it, and they helt a candle and dript the taller a inch thick on the po' old man's coat sleeve, and then atter all he come nigh marryin' 'em by the wrong names.

Caledoney and Iky Roberson stood together, and I and Cap Dewberry, and when we tuck our stands, Malindy Jane she got on tother side of Jake and Brother Cole he wiped his spees and sot in to readin' and spellin' out all his words.

"The couple which now stands afore us for the occasion and benefit of being jined in wedlock, will please jine they right hands."

Old Miss Patience Potter squeaked out in a loud whisper:

"Lindy Jane you air on the rong side of Jakey."

Then Brother Cole helt his paper up and read on.

"Will you, John Loftis—"

"Jacob, not John," says Miss Patience.

"Well, then, we'll proceed to continue. Will you, Jacob Loftis, take this 'oman, Malissy Ann—"

"Ma-lin-dy Jane," says Miss Patience a little louder. Then in a loud whisper:

"For the lands sake don't git 'em married rong."

"Well," says he, "fling on a piece of light'ood, or hold me a torch, for I can't see."

Some of 'em grabbed a torch and helt it high. Then jist as fast as one word could follow toher, without stoppin' to git his breath, he went on.

"I pronounce you man and wife fur better or fur wusser salute your bride and if any present has any re-jections let 'em speak now or forever atterwards hold ther

tongue you're dismist amen ar.'

Then old man Trotman stept out and lowed: "Git your pardners and into ther house to supper; the ole 'oman's got a bite to eat in thar, and sich as it is you're welcome to it." So we locked arms and marched in to supper. The table was plum full, nothin' wasn't skace nor skimpy. The bride's cake was sot on a block of wood that was kivered over with letter paper cut in fringe to hang all around the aige of it. It had a thin whitewash over it, and was dressed off with little sprigs of cedar stuck in a row all around and a stick of peppermint candy stuck right straight up in the middle, and I tell you it sot the table off powerful. They had a taller candle at each eend of the table and a pine light in the fireplace. Atter supper we sot in to playin' kissin' games. Ole brother Cole had done all he could—he had jined 'em in wedlock and he had et his supper.

The games was a gwine on and all was a laughin' and havin' fun, some playin' 'William with a trembling toe,' 'Clap in and clap out,' 'All around the mulberry bush,' and some was fishin' for love, when brother Cole knocked for silence.

"Brethering and sistering," says he, "let us unite in pra'r and be dismist ar."

Atter he was gone Aunt Nancy lowed: "There air a time fur all thing, and that ar prayer were very on-timely. Brother Hagin wouldn't done sich a on-timely thing as that."

But they soon got to playin' and laughin' louder'n ever and havin' a power of fun, and all looked happy 'cept Miss Trotman. In course she was a feelin' bad about Malindy Jane a marryin'. The women folks all had sump'n to say to her about it. Ole Arminity lowed in a religious tone: "Ah! I tell you, Miss Trotman, I haint never married, and all of 'em can marry thats a mind to, but marryin' air a mighty solemn thing."

"Yes," says Miss Trotman with tears in her eyes, "its a solemn thing to marry."

"Yes," says Caledoney, "but its a heap solemnner not to marry."

"I bound for Cal," says pap.

And that sot 'em all to laughin'.

BETSY HAMILTON

SHE TOOK THE CUE.—He—In what respect does billiards change my usual disposition?

She (naively): "Does it change your disposition?"

He—Yes; in billiards I never 'kiss' when I can help it; whereas, ordinarily—

She—"You never kiss if anybody else can help it."

—To prevent honey bees from stinging—pull out tail feathers.