The American Union.

DEVOTED TO MORALITY, AGRICULTURE, AND THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE COUNTY.

VOL. 36.—NO. 1. DENTON, MD., THURSDAY, AUGUST 25th 1892. $1.00 PER ANNUM

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ABSOLUTELY PURE

A Match For Molly.

Molly Minot was a beauty, and just escaped being an utterly spoiled one.

Her parents had humored all her follies and caprices until she sometimes forgot there was any one else in the world beside pretty Molly Minot. Yet she was more of a favorite than many really admirable and exemplary girls.

Perhaps it was because she was always ready for a frolic, and never had neuralgia—so demoralizing physically and spiratually. If she had just escaped from a Kansas blizzard with simply her life, as soon as she recovered breath enough, her comment would have been:

"How splendid!"

It was the girl's inexhaustible flow of spirits that won forgiveness for her numerous faults and peccadilloes. Her lovers she tormented.

Not that she ever favored one more than another, or singled one out as a special victim of her caprices. No, she simply treated them, as she did every one else, as if they had been created for her special benefit and entertainment. If they liked it well and good; if not they might stay away from her and seek more appreciative girls.

Finally there was a change of min isters in the parish to which Molly belonged, and a handsome bachelor of perhaps thirty years took the place of the elderly preacher who had lulled his hearers contentedly to sleep for half a century.

But there was no peaceful sleeping when Edmond Ashland was in the pulpit. It seemed as if his keen eyes singled out all such offenders, and a volley of sharp, quick sentences would rattle about their ears and rouse them from their untimely slumbers.

"Won't I have fun shocking the new minister?" Mollie cried before he came. "He will be awfully proper, of course, and expect us to be so.

"Instead of shocking him, Molly," one of hea friends suggested, try and be proper yourself. That would be much better fun."

"For you, perhaps, but not for me. I could not keep up the character for two days. You say my eyes laugh when I am feeling sober as a judge."

"I did not know that you ever felt that way."

"Well, I intend to shock the new minister as sure as the world."

But the new minister could stand a good deal more than Molly imagined. Instead of being unsually proper and severe, he was very genial and pleasant, evidently enjoying a little fun quite as well as the young lady herself did.

Yet when the situation demanded it, he could be as grave and dignified as become his profession and character. Molly hardly knew whether to feel disappointed or not, but her companions all pronounced him with girlish enthusiasm, "perfectly splendid."

She did try to "act awfully," as she expressed it, but the obstinate minister watched her as if she had been a kitten playing with a string or ball.

It really was aggravating. Instead of being shocked, or even mildly surprised, he treated her with the same deference he showed her mother. But one day she thought the desired opportunity had certainly come.

She was standing at the door with a few companions, when a man called to see her father, leaving his horse and vehicle at the door. The latter was a queer looking contrivance on two wheels, with a seat only wide enough for one person.

"There is Mr. Ashland coming down the street," Mollie cried. "I will horrify him this time, anyway."

"How?" the others asked.

"Stand still, and look," was the brief reply.

Then running to the gate, she untied the horse standing there, and springing upon the seat, started off admidst a chorus of exclamations from the girls.

When she met Edmund, she fully expected that his face would express amazement at least.

Alas, no, he only smiled pleasantly lifting his hat with the utmost deference. Then she stopped.

"Will you ride, Mr. Ashland?" she inquired, presenting a charming picture with her red cheeks. saucy eyes, and curls blown by the wind.

"I shall have to take your place, if I do," he replied, as he approached her smilingly, and looking as if about to suit the action to the word. "Perhaps I had better do it, for that horse has a wicked eye, and the cart is not intended for a lady, is it?"

Molly blushed scarlet with annoyance. but, trying to carry it off grace fully, she said:

"I was only jesting, of course. The horse is meek enough."

But when she went back to her ccmpanions her face showed unqualified disgust.

"I might as well try to shock or horrify our bronze statute of Benjamin Franklin!" she exclaimed, impatiently.

The owner of the horse looked enough disturbed, however, to make up for the minister's imperturbable demeanor.

"Miss Minot," he said, "you should never drive a horse you know nothing about, and you may be very thankful your neck is not broken. A more vicious brute never lived."

"I hate Mr. Ashland!" Molly said to herself, as if he had been to balme for her discomfiture.

She and her girl friends planned an excursion to some woods which were not very much frequented, but where blackberries grew abundantly.

They aggreed to meet at the house of the one who lived nearest the woods, and they were all there when Molly made her appearence.

To her surprise the minister was with them, he having happened to call just at that time.

And, as usual his presence was enough to arouse all the defiant naughtiness of which she was capable.

"Oh, Molly," was the unexpected greeting, "we cannot go to Gray's Woods, for Mr. Ashland killed a rattlesnake there yesterday, and we may encounter the mate!"

"Why, girls," she replied we never saw any rattlesnakes there!"

"I can show you the rattles," the minister said, "if you are incredulous.

"I did not mean to dispute your statement, but I am not afraid Come girls!"

"No, indeed," they all cried, "we would not go for the world!"

"Then I shall go alone!"

"It is not safe, Miss Minot, I assure you," Edmund said. "If you persist in going I shall accompany you."

"I shall not let you," she answered, with an emphasis he could not mistake.

And off she marched to the woods, while the minister immediately bribed two boys to follow her to see that nothing happened.

Then they awaited results.

"I believe Molly was never afraid of anything in her life," one of her friends said after she had left them.

"She seems to have a great deal of decision of character," Edmund replied.

In about half an hour they saw the young lady returning with the two boys who carried something between them.

"What are they bringing?" some one asked.

"The other snake," was the minister's dry responsible.

It was the other snake, sure enough, and as soon as the triumphant procession reached the house Molly took the stick holding the lifeless reptile from the boys, and handed it to Edmund.

"Thera are more rattles, Mr. Ashland," she said gravely.

The girls shrieked in horror and disgust, and one of them asked.

"Molly, did you kill that dreadful thing?"

"I helped," she answered coolly.

And than the minister who had been biting his lips convulsively for some moments, burst into a peal of irresistible laughter.

"Miss Minot," he said at last, "if you should ever be thorwn upon your own resources, there is one very lucrative profession that will certainly be open to you."

"What is it?" she asked unsuspectingly.

"Snake charming."

"Thank you," she replied, as with flushed cheeks and proudly uplifted head she turned and left them.

"Molly's spirits sometimes run away with her" one of the girls remarked deprocatingly.

"She would make a splendid woman—under the right guidance," the minister rejoined.

Then two or three of her companions ran after her, saying:

"Molly we have a compliment for you from Mr. Ashland."

"He may keep his compliments to himself," she said. "Telling me I would make a good snake charmer. Such impudence!"

"But, Molly he says you would make a splendid woman under the right guidance,"

"Right guidance, indeed. Does he mean to insinuate that my mother has not brought me up properly?"

"Of course not, but you are determined to misinterpret everything Mr. Ashland says."

They did not see her crying in her room. It was an unusual thing for her, as she did not resem ble the Niobelike heroine of the "Wide, Wide World."

The minister's remark rankled in her breast, and declared to herself repeatedly.

"I hate him! I hate him!"

Yet, strangely enough, she was suddenly inspired with an ardent desire to do something grand—heroic. And why? Simply to prove herself the "splendid woman" that hateful minister had said she might become under proper guidance.

But now she avoided him so pointedly that eyes less keen than his would have noticed it, and he realized with extreme regret that he had offended her Although he sought for an opportunity to apologize, Molly prevented anything of the kind.

The young girl's secretly cherished wish, however, was gratified in the most unexpected manner.

She lived near big, tumuluous Lake Michigan, and rowing was her delight, often tempting her to venture upon its very treacherous bosom, against the wishes and prayers of her anxious friends.

One day when the lake was rougher even than usual, she saw two men preparing to go out in a miserable little sail boat.

Although strangers, she addressed them, saying that they would surely be capsized if they ventured upon the lake with the wind blowing as it did then.

"Can you swim?" she asked.

"No," they replied.

"Then you must be crazy," she said. "But if you persist in going I will have my boat all ready, and row to your assistance when you are upset, as you will be most assuredly."

"They thanked her with the laughing incredulity of ignorance, and started in their frail skiff.

But they were not more than a half a mile from the shore, when a sudden gust of wind upset the boat—as Molly had predicted.

The men managed to keep hold of the sides, and then the brave girl sprang into her own little boat and started to the rescue.

It was a pretty hazardous undertaking, but fortunately she was strong and experienced.

The most difficut part of the exploit was getting the men into her boat, as they were almost exhausted and helpless.

She came near falling into the water herself, but finally accomplished her purpose, and started on her return. Others now came to render assistance, and just in time, for even Molly's youthful endurance had been too servely tried.

She was lifted into another boat by one man, while his companion seated himself in her place, and when she reached the shore it was almost impossible for her to stand upon her feet.

And who should be waiting there amongst others, but the offending minister who seeing her feeble condition, absolutely had the hardihood to life her in his strong arms and carry her to a carriage near by.

And she was too much exhausted to resist. Perhaps she did not want to.

"What a glorious girl you are!" he exclaimed impetuously.

"I supposed you thought me perfectly dreadful," she answered in a voice so meek and faint it hardly seemed her own.

"My dear child," he said, "do you suppose because I am a minister that I expect young girls to be like staid and quiet elderly women? I have a sister like you in many ways, but she does try to do what she thinks will please me. I am afraid, however, that she would never be capable of such nerve and courage as you have exhibited to-day.

"It was not anything for me," Molly declared, never dreaming for a moment that she had just performed the heroic action of which she had thought so much. "I am accustomed to being on the water, so that I was not at all nervous or frightened."

"Heroines are never conscious of their own heroism. But here we are at your home. I will carry you into the house."

"No, no!" she cried. "I can walk now, if you will help me a little."

And very tenderly he afforded the assistance necessary.

The next day he called, and found Molly bright and rosy as ever. She emphasized her welcome with a smile that assured him his past offences were forgiven.

"Molly," he asked after awhile "do you know what you did yesterday?"

"Pulled two men out of the water," she answered literally

"Ah, my dear child, you did more than that. You ssole your minister's heart. Will you give him yours in returns?"

"Such a dreadful girl as I am!" she exclaimed, the bright color tinging cheek and brow. "Oh Mr. Ashland, I have been so silly!"

"You were never silly, my darling, and not half 'so dreadful' as you imagined. Do you suppose I did not know that you were wickedly trying to shock the minister?"

"How did you know?"

"There are little birds always ready to whisper secrets, and when Molly was the theme, how could the minister help but listen?"

"Yet he has proved a match for me in more than one sense of the word," she said, putting her hand into her lover's with a tender, happy smile.

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