

## The Daily Short Story

### THE LILBRIDGE SCANDAL.

By Clarissa Mackie.

MISS TABITHA WAY scuttled across the street and entered the gate of her nearest neighbor, Fenella Mason.

"Fenny, what do you think?" she gasped as she sank into a chair.

Fenny Mason lifted her little brown eyes from the molasses cookies she was rolling out and spoke calmly: "My, Tab, but you're all het up!" she said.

"What if I be?" snapped Tabitha, mopping her face with a corner of her white apron in lieu of a pocket handkerchief.

"Makes you look so uncomfortable," remarked Fenny casually as she knelt before the stove to put a pan of cookies in the oven.

For a moment Tabitha glared at her friend, and then her eagerness to impart her news to Fenny Mason overcame her indignation, and she said: "I asked you if you'd heard the news?"

"You never asked me any such thing," retorted Fenny over her thin shoulder. "You asked me what I thought. You asked me what I looked all het up, so there!"

"I declare Fenny Mason, you air the greatest critter," Tabitha said. "You won't listen till you get good and ready, so I'm jest going to set right here until you say you're ready to hear about the scandal!"

"Scandal?" shrieked Fenny, sitting up straight in her chair, with open mouth. "Why didn't you say so before? I thought you'd come to tell me about the new twins down at Black Hannah's, and I heard all about that from the milkman."

"Well, I never!" gasped Tabby, for this was news to her. "Boys or girls?"

"Girls."

"I wonder what Hannah's going to name 'em?"

"They're all named—Magnolia and Pergolia."

"The idea! Now, for the news, I'll bet you haven't heard about Deacon Quigg's son."

"Not Alfred?"

"Yes, ma'am! He's robbed a bank!"

"No!" shrieked Fenny, for she was second cousin to the Quiggs and felt any disgrace that might come upon the family.

"Yes, ma'am. It's all out in this morning's New York paper. I had it from the grocerman, and he had it from the postmaster. So I guess it's straight enough."

Fenny Mason looked bewildered.

"I didn't know Alfred was in New York," she faltered. "I thought he was in Australia or Patagonia or some where."

"The newspaper said that Alfred Quigg, a clerk in the Kinticum National Bank of New York City, had absconded with \$10,000 of the bank's funds. It said that detectives were close on his trail and that they expected to apprehend him within a day or so. It said that he was the scapegrace son of Deacon Quigg of Lillbridge. There!" said Tabitha Way.

"Well, I don't believe it. There's some mistake," protested Fenella obstinately.

"Anything's possible nowadays, with folks running around in automobiles and airplanes as cool as you please," remarked Tabby, nibbling pensively at a ginger cookie.

Fenella turned and faced her friend. There was a look of obstinacy in her brown eyes.

"No matter what was told me about Alfred Quigg, I wouldn't believe it—not if it was real bad!" she declared loyally.

"Hurrah for you, Cousin Fenella!" cried a merry voice from the open window.

The women turned with one accord and stared at the sunbrowned, curly haired young man who leaned his

### NO ALUM



arms on the window sill and grinned at them, showing perfect rows of white teeth.

"Remember me, Cousin Fenella!" he asked with easy nonchalance.

"Alfred Quigg!" gasped Fenella, sinking into a chair and quite pale with alarm.

"And I guess Miss Tabby remembers me by this time," smiled Alfred, agreeably nodding at Miss Way.

"Last recollection I have of Miss Tabby is that she chased me around the mill pond and told me I'd end on the gallows, all because I teased her old turkey gobble!"

Fenella Mason looked at Tabitha Way, and Tabitha stared back at her with questioning eyes.

"Come inside, Alfred," whispered Fenella. "I've got something important to tell you."

"Thanks," said Alfred, going round to the screen door and setting himself inside.

As he stood there hat in hand, smiling good naturedly around at the familiar old fashioned room, he was startled at the actions of the two good spinsters whose earnest gossip he had interrupted.

"What's up?" demanded Alfred Quigg when they rushed breathlessly back to the kitchen and caught him by either arm.

"They're coming, Alfred, and you

must ride," demanded Fenella. "Remember, Tabby and I don't believe a word of it, but you don't want to be caught. Remember your poor parents. You just hide till the worst blows over, and then we'll know what to do. I'm so thankful you came to my house first. You will be safe here. No one would dream of looking for you in Fenella Mason's house. Come!"

So, half explaining, they dragged the bewildered young man up the narrow back stairway to the little closet Here they locked him in, confident in the loft room over the kitchen, that he could not suffocate, for the tiny diamond shaped ventilator would let in sufficient air.

"They're a pair of crazy loons, and I may as well let them have their own way until dark," decided Alfred when his indignation had cooled. "Then I can push out of this place and go home."

It was drawing toward sunset, and Fenella Mason and Tabby Way still sat in Fenella's kitchen, discussing the fugitive concealed in the loft room closet.

"They had been up there once and handed Alfred a wet laden tray of food, for which he had given them scanty thanks."

"I'm glad he came here first," Fenella was saying for the hundredth time that afternoon when there came a thundering knock at the kitchen door.

"It's them!" hissed Tabby.

Fenella went to the door and peeped through an opening in the shade.

"Tain't no one but Alfred's pa, the deacon," she whispered. "Guess I better let him in."

She cautiously opened the door and permitted the amazed old man to enter the darkened room.

"What in tarnation pumpkins is the matter with you, Fenny?" he asked testily. "Locked up here tight as a drum! You old maids air the confoundest critters! You act as if a hull regiment of marriageable men was lurking around the yard waiting to break into the house and clope with you! Have you seen Alfred?"

"Alfred?" gasped Fenella.

"Alfred?" echoed Tabitha.



"Yes, Alfred!" barked the deacon, flinging his cap down on the table.

"We had a telegram from him saying he'd just got back from Patagonia. You know he went as first mate on a freight steamer. Station master has just told me Alfred arrived on the 11 o'clock train this morning and somebody said they saw him coming into your gate. Ma and I are worn out waiting for him. Where is Alfred?"

"Up in the loft room closet," said Fenella faintly.

"Why?" thundered the deacon.

It was Tabitha who told him the news of the bank robbery and how Alfred Quigg, scapegrace son of Deacon Quigg of Lillbridge, had become an absconder and that the detectives were close on his trail.

"Bosh!" snorted the deacon when Tabby had concluded her tale. "I read that rubbish in the paper myself. Name was Twigg, not Quigg, and 'twasn't this Lillbridge he was from; it was Lillbridge in Connecticut. Where's my Alfred—the best sailor boy in the whole world?"

He stamped upstairs, and the two chagrined women heard him arguing with Alfred. They talked for a long time, and at last they heard the sound of muffled laughter.

When father and son came down stairs their eyes were twinkling.

"Come over to the house tonight, girls," said the deacon pleasantly. "We're going to have a little house warming for Alfred, and he's got some little presents from furrin' part for each of you. I declare from what Alfred tells me, he ain't forgot one of his old friends."

Fenella Mason looked Tabitha Way straight in the eye.

"I told you it couldn't have been our Alfred," she said proudly.

"You was in a mighty hurry to hide him just the same," retorted Tabitha.

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