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DR. T. A. SLOCUM, Limited, 179 King St. W., Toronto

**FICTION and FRICTION**

By Margaret Muzzev

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The most popular novel and "biggest seller" of the year was "Aunt Mary Moffat," written by an unknown author, whose name and fame had suddenly gone abroad throughout the land. Young Dr. Brandon, just returned from Europe, hastened to congratulate his successful friend, and to his amazement he found the writer in the depths of despair.

"John Hastings, what is the matter? Are you not satisfied with being the most admired and discussed man of the hour? You ought to be ecstatic, elated, delicious with joy, and you look as if you had swallowed a bad oyster."

"Why should I rejoice in success when the only reason I tried for it is gone?" John groaned.

"What do you mean?"

"I was engaged to Ethel Ransom, you remember, and only waiting for money to support her."

"Some people consider that an insignificant detail."

"Unfortunately Ethel's father did not, but now my fortune is assured she refuses to marry me altogether."

"May I ask why?"

"She declares that I have drawn the character of Aunt Mary Moffat from her grandmother and held her up to ridicule before everybody."

"She is crazy!" Brandon exclaimed.

There are plenty of others," pointing to a pile of letters. "All those are from people who recognize themselves for one of their relatives among the characters of my book. Listen to this:

"Dear Mr. Hastings—I was so pleased to find you made me the heroine of your book. I told the editor of our village na-

per, and he put a piece in the Huckleberry Junction Post about it. Please send me your autograph.

"There are more heroines, a number of heroes, and you remember the man I called the 'patriarchal parson'—the woods are full of grandfathers exactly like him, it appears. As for the Aunt Marys, their name is legion—there are at least three in every village in the states."

Brandon helped himself from the pile and read aloud:

"Dear Hastings—Perceiving, as I cannot fall to do so, the depiction of my late lamentable aunt in the title character of your book, I suggest that it would be a thankful act for you to put a monument on her grave. Her folks can't afford it. It would be a good ad. for the book too."

Brandon laughed heartily.

"What fun it would be to get these people together! Suppose we go to my house at Knowlbridge and give a party for them. Perhaps if Ethel sees the numerous other claimants she will give up her idea about grandma."

John demurred, but was finally persuaded by Brandon, who assumed the entire responsibility, and sent the following letter to each of the originals:

Mr. John Hastings requests the honor of your presence October the sixteenth at seven o'clock to meet the ladies and gentlemen from whom characters in his "Aunt Mary Moffat" were drawn.

"I have seen your capricious character and prevailed upon her to come to our party," said Brandon, a few days later. "She hesitated, but she will be there—the unmistakable glitter of curiosity was in her azure orbs."

First among the author's guests to arrive on the auspicious 16th was an alleged "patriarchal parson," personally conducted by a nephew named Samuel Bangs. The heroine was represented by a married woman (whose husband came also), a young widow and a sentimental maiden. Two clerks, a bank cashier and a commercial traveler appeared for the hero, and four Aunt Marys in various stages of senility came attended by enterprising relatives.

"I wish we had never invited them," said John nervously. "We will have a

few as 'sure as sparks fly upward.'" "Leave it to your uncle," said Brandon. "I wouldn't miss it for a golden corkscrew."

"Suppose they find one another out before supper?"

"They can't break loose and wax confidential between now and 7 o'clock." Brandon announced the guests as they entered the drawing room. Sam Bangs came last, his face radiant with smiles and soap; placing one hand on his spine, the other on his heart, he made a real dancing school bow and said:

"This is the proudest moment of my life."

John thanked him and Brandon said he was lucky to keep his heart where he could lay his hand on it so readily.

Ethel arrived and insisted on going with the housekeeper to the butler's pantry, where she stayed, looking through the door.

Brandon, opposite John at table, forced the conversation to be general, steering it off the book, until the dessert appeared, then John rose.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I have been fortunate enough to bring together a number of people represented in my book. We have the hero, Thomas Presley; the heroine, Jennie Jenkins; the patriarchal parson, and Aunt Mary Moffat herself. Will those I have named rise while I drink their good health?"

"Here is to Aunt Mary Moffat and all her friends, relatives and acquaintances," said John, and glasses were drained amid great applause.

Then, in order to identify each character, he suggested that all should be seated except the hero and heroine, and four Thomas Presleys and three Jenny Jenkinsses were left staring, first in perplexity, then in rage, at one another.

"There must be a misunderstanding," said John. "Surely there can be but one hero or heroine of a single book."

The three women talked at once, the heroes muttered bitterly, the personal conductors exchanged hasty confidences; John cast a glance toward the door, but Brandon laid a detaining hand on his shoulder.

"My friends," he said, "it is plain that Mr. Hastings has drawn composite characters, taking from each the quality for which you are best known. Is one clown in a three ringed circus less a clown because there are two others?"

Nothing could have been more ingeniously offensive, and smoldering irritation threatened to burst forth. The widow stood by John to protect him. Brandon tried again.

"We have all seen 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' with two Uncle Toms, a pair of Topsyies and a brace of Evass, and none of them differeth from another in glory."

Here the butler announced that the doctor was wanted across the street.

"For heaven's sake, don't go!" whispered John.

"Talk to them yourself; make 'em laugh."

Before John could utter a word Sam Bangs rose in wrath.

"This is a nice job you have put up on us. If these ain't the real folks in the book how do we know you are the real author?"

Approaching footsteps turned attention toward the door, through which marched a lively gentleman, who saluted and addressed the company.

"I am rejoiced, delighted, enchanted to see you all," he bawled, "the creatures of my imagination—the characters of my book. I—the famous—the clever—the inimitable—the greatest of authors, greet you."

"I knew it," Sam exclaimed. "Then you really wrote 'Aunt Mary Moffat,' and he is an impostor?" pointing to John.

"To perdition with him in five minutes! Certainly I did—I wrote all the books in all the libraries—I made the world, and the people are my children."

"It's genius," said the maiden.

"It's rum," said the widow.

"It's mania," said Brandon, entering, followed by a man who, stepping behind the elated gentleman, took him by the elbows and walked him out of the house.

"That is a parietic patient of mine, who overheard me speak of this party to his daughter today, and stole away from his attendant to come."

"I don't believe he is a bit crazier than you are, with your composite clowns, your three ringed Topsyies and your piratic patients," said Sam.

"There is no time to explain—I have terrible news," said Brandon. "One of the servants has developed malignant smallpox, and you must all leave the house as soon as possible to avoid infection. There is a train to New York in half an hour."

Sam made a bolt for the door, followed by all but the widow, who refused to leave John.

"You needn't wait—I will attend to him," said Ethel, confronting her suddenly.

"Who are you?" demanded the astonished widow.

"I am the girl who is to marry Mr. Hastings."

"Are you sure you are the original girl or only one of several?" asked the

**OVER-EATING OF XMAS FARE!**

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Eating more than is necessary is like choking a fire by putting on too much fuel. The food is not only undigested and useless, but a menace to health. Depression, drowsiness, headache, nausea, flatulence, and indigestion, are some of the consequences. A Bilean after dinner is the best help to the overburdened stomach. All sufferers from dyspepsia find Bileans indispensable. They enable you to eat what you like, when you like, and how you like. Unequaled as a family medicine.

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widow sarcastically. "But perhaps you are a composite."

Without saying goodby, she marched majestically out of the room. "Heaven forgive that lie about the smallpox," said Brandon, mopping his brow. "Nothing less would have saved the roof over our heads."

**Breaking the Chain.**

In 1881 a bill was introduced in the Massachusetts senate which provided for a bounty of \$5 for the killing of "a lynx or wildcat," says the Boston Herald. When the bill was under discussion Senator Rice of Essex, who had a habit of asking the committees to explain some parts of bills they had reported, said he would like to ask the committee who reported the bill whether the term "lynx or wildcat" referred to two different species of animals or whether it was the same kind of animal called by different names. Senator Rockwell of Pittsfield, who never let an opportunity to say a good thing pass, arose and said, "In the absence of the chairman of the committee who reported this bill I would say for the information of the honorable senator from Essex, who, having always lived in the eastern part of the state, is not probably aware that for years there has been a chain of wildcats roaming over the Berkshire hills, that the object of this bill is to take some of the links out of that chain."

**Bank Note Paper.**

The nine kinds of notes printed by the Bank of England are all on thin, white, crisp paper. The ink used is black, a hard, dry preparation, said to be made from naphtha smoke. A peculiarity of the English notes is that the engraving is simple and old fashioned, in contrast to the notes of other countries, which are most elaborately engraved by complicated machinery, the designs being difficult of imitation by hand and the lathes and ruling engines being so costly as to discourage counterfeiters. The English paper is made by a private concern, as is that in use in the United States, the pulp of the latter being a mixture of linen, cotton and silk, the silk threads coming into prominence after the printing. The French bank note paper is of similar texture, hair being used with the pulp instead of silk threads. Over 50,000 notes are issued by the Bank of England daily of an average value of £20.

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