

'You must go with me, Abel; mother can't walk so far,' she said.

She knew it was a proud moment for Old Giggles when he entered the crowded town hall beside his wife's daughter. To Abel's simple mind Emily was a princess miraculously dropped into his life from that fairyland, 'the city.' Indeed, she carried herself like one as she walked with him to the very front of the hall—for they were late, and had to run a long gauntlet of amazed glances before they found two vacant seats.

She glanced at him as he sat beside her, and found that his eyes had fastened at once on the platform, where were the descendants of the town's defenders in the Indian fight.

'It would have meant a good deal to Abel to be counted with them,' she said to herself. 'Why couldn't they have asked him?'

The exercises were long and tedious, and the two contrived to slip out quietly during the singing and cheering at the close.

'Let's sit in the band-stand to see the people come out,' proposed Abel. 'They are going to fall into line with the Indian-fighters on ahead, and march to the place where the tablet's to be put up.'

The band-stand was across the square, and they had just climbed into it when they became aware of a commotion in the town hall.

Careful persons had suggested that the old building was unsafe for such a gathering. But it was the only place large enough, and the new town hall, then being built, was as yet unfinished. Now as the audience began to leave the hall, there was a creaking sound and a settling of the floor at the front of the room; then a cry of alarm and a rush for the doorway.

The entrance was high above the street. Fortunately, the steps held, and the audience had passed out of the hall when a crash behind filled the air with noise and dust.

'The old floor's fallen down into the cellar,' Abel announced. 'Steady, cap'n, they're all out safe.'

But Emily started forward with a sharp cry: 'O, Abel, the children!'

The old building had a second floor that had been fitted up to serve as a rest room. Emily knew that many of the smallest children had been up there asleep while their mothers attended the exercises below.

The collapse of the first floor had pulled the rickety building awry. A long rent in the front wall showed that the second floor was sagging dangerously, and a broken beam protruded at the edge of the roof.

'The whole thing is comin' down!' muttered Abel. Then he understood the meaning of Emily's cry; a child's curly head appeared at one of the upper windows.

A wild clamor rose from the crowd that filled the street. Mothers, frantic with fear for the lives of their children, rushed toward the entrance of the tottering building; they fought with the men who tried to keep them out of danger.

And then, before any one knew what was happening, a queer figure appeared on the broken front wall above their heads.

It was Old Giggles climbing up to the second floor, apparently as unconcerned as if he had been climbing to the masthead of the *Ella Maria* in calm weather. He took no notice of the uproar till he sat astride the sill of the window where a moment before the child had looked out.

Then he put his hands to his mouth, and shouted, 'Fetch a horse-blanket, quick!'

People hastened to do his bidding. Presently strong hands were holding blankets by the corners, and one by one the babies fell safely from the grasp of the man at the window.

The old building was swaying and settling. Fifteen children had been dropped to safety when the walls suddenly bulged, and something inside went down with a crash.

Abel dived into the obscurity behind the window. He reappeared with three children in his arms and one clinging to his coat. Those four were saved, and

Abel went back once more. He emerged with the last child in his arms, the doctor's four-year-old son.

As he flung the child out, the building crashed in a heap, and the man went down inside the ruin.

'It's a miracle we got him out,' the doctor said, a little later, when four men, bearing Old Giggles on a litter, started down the street.

They carried him into the front room of the old house in Blue's Hole—and there the doctor pulled him through.

'You told me you couldn't do without me, Emily,' Abel said, with a whimsical smile at his nurse as she fastened a bandage on his arm. 'So you've got to put up with me no knowin' how many years. Withams are tough, I tell you. Do you b'lieve, cap'n, that right up on top o' that teeterin' buildin' I thought of what you said. It came into my head like a flash, "Why, there's Emily begins to think I am somebody. She as good as said Old Giggles was worth his salt. Walked me right up front, too, fore the whole town, just as if she was my own girl. I'll back her up in it; I'll prove she was right; yes, sir, I'll do it for Cap'n Blue.'

Abel was well enough to be carried to the platform of the new town hall when they finished the interrupted anniversary celebration. In fact, the town had unanimously agreed not to have it till he could be present. He was not strong yet, however, and that day he almost made up his mind that fame was not what he had been led to suppose. He looked much oppressed when the silver hero medal was presented to him. The hall was crowded, and almost every person there was determined to shake his hand.

He brightened up at last when Emily came and laid a peremptory grasp on his arm.

'Where away now, cap'n?' he asked.

'Home,' she answered.

'That's good, Cap'n Blue,' said Abel.

SOME SILK STOCKINGS AND ANNIE EGAN

(By NORA McAULIFFE, for the *N.Z. Tablet*.)

'Miracles,' declared Polly O'Reilly, from her seat on the top step of the grotto, 'are happening every minute of the day. Why at this very moment people down in the city are praying, and at this very moment God may be choosing any one of us as His instrument to bring them their heart's desire.'

Her listeners hung upon her words, and, intoxicated by their silent attention, Polly continued to, as Maggie Ryan irreverently called it, 'bubble over.' 'Our smallest actions may have a world-wide influence, just as when we drop a stone into the lagoon—the hole the stone makes in the water is small, but the ripple spreads and spreads, till at last it kisses the rim of the lake.' She paused. Annie Egan squeezed her arm ecstatically. 'Oh, Polly, how beautifully you talk!'

'You'd think her father was a lay preacher,' said Maggie Ryan disgusted; 'she's always saying pious things, and turning up the whites of her eyes.'

The white face of the little Queensland girl grew still whiter with passion. Her red hair flamed with indignation. Even Maggie Ryan was frightened by the tempest she had evoked.

'Maggie didn't mean it, Polly.'—Ellie O'Neill, the peace-lover, had her arms round Polly's neck—'she was only joking. Weren't you, Maggie?'

'Her jests are in decidedly bad taste,' said Polly, dismissing the affair and Maggie Ryan, with a gesture a Siddons might have envied.

'I think we ought to commence decorating the grotto,' hurried on Ellie before Maggie could recover. 'Timothy says if we like we can take the blossom from the apple tree by the big green gate, because it never bears any fruit.'

'I'll get the blossom,' volunteered Annie Egan, and, rising, discovered a pair of long, slim, silk-clad legs. Polly O'Reilly dropped a handful of flowers. 'Annie, your legs are beautiful!' she breathed.

Silk stockings! The girls thrilled at the thought. They had gazed at them, dreamed of them, but Annie Egan was the first to really introduce them into their

Ken. Mayo

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