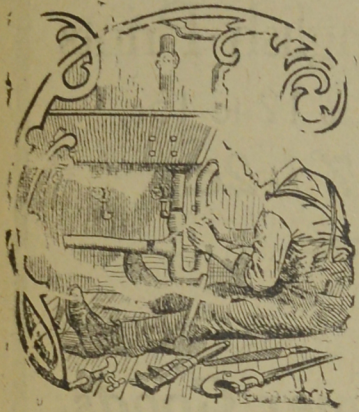


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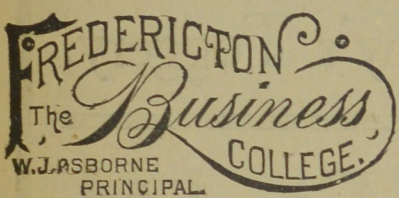
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CY WHITTAKER'S PLACE

But Bailey declined to go in. He
declared he was going on to the black-
smith's shop to have that wheel fixed.
He would not feel safe to start for
home with it as it was. He drove off,
and Miss Dawes, knowing from life-
long experience that front doors are
merely for show, passed around the
main body of the house and rapped on
the door in the el. The rap was not
answered, though she could hear some
one moving about within and a shrill
voice singing "The Sweet By and By."
So she rapped again and again, but
still no one came to the door. At last
she ventured to open it.

A thin woman with her head tied up
in a colored cotton handkerchief was
in the room vigorously wielding a
broom. She was singing in a high
cracked voice. The opening of the
door let in a gust of cold wind, which
struck the singer in the back of the
neck and caused her to turn around
hastily.

"Hey!" she exclaimed. "Land sakes!
You scare a body to death! Shut that
door quick! I ain't hankerin' for in-
fluenza. Who are you? What do you
want? Why didn't you knock? Where's
my specs?"

She took a pair of spectacles from
the mantelshelf and set them on the
bridge of her thin nose.

"I beg pardon for coming in!" shout-
ed Phoebe. "You are Mrs. Beasley,
aren't you?"

"I don't want none," replied Debby,
with emphasis. "So there's no use
your wastin' your breath."

After some strenuous minutes the
visitor managed to make it clear to
Mrs. Beasley's mind that she was not a
peddler. She tried to add a word of
further explanation, but it was effort
wasted.

"Tain't no use!" snapped Debby.
"I can't hear you, you speak so faint.
Wait till I get my horn. It's in the
settin' room."

Phoebe's wonder as to what the
"horn" might be was relieved by the
widow's appearance a moment later
with the biggest ear trumpet her caller
had ever seen.

"There, now," she said, adjusting
the instrument and thrusting the bell
shaped end under the teacher's nose.
"Talk into that. If you ain't a peddler,
what be you—sewin' machine agent?"

Phoebe explained that she had come
some distance on purpose to see Mrs.
Beasley. She was interested in the
Thayers, who used to live in Orham,
particularly in Mr. John Thayer, who
died in 1854. She had been told that
Debby formerly lived with the Thayers
and could no doubt remember a
great deal about them.

Mrs. Beasley, her hearing now with-
in forty-five degrees of the normal,
grew interested. She ushered her vis-
itor into the adjoining room and pro-
ffered her a chair.

"What you so interested in the
Thayers for?" inquired Debby. "One
of the heirs, be you? They didn't
leave nothin'."

No, the schoolmistress was not an
heir, was not even a relative of the
family. But she was—was interested
just the same. A friend of hers was
a relative and—

"What is your friend," inquired the
inquisitor—"a man?"

There was no reason why Miss
Dawes should have changed color, but,
according to Debby's subsequent tes-
timony, she did; she blushed, so the
widow declares.

"No," she protested. "Oh, no! It's a
—she's a chyd, that's all—a little girl."
Mrs. Beasley remembered many
things, but nothing at all concerning
John Thayer's life in the west.

"He never wrote home but once or
twice afore he died," she said, "and
when he did Emily, his wife, never
told me what was in his letters. She
always burnt 'em, I guess. I used to
hunt around for 'em when she was
out, but she burnt 'em to spite me, I
call 'em. Her and me didn't get along
any too well. She said I talked too
much to other folks about what was
none of their business. Now, anybody
that knows me knows that ain't one
of my failin's. I told her so; says I—"

And so on for ten minutes. Then
Phoebe ventured to repeat the words
"out west," and her companion went
off on a new tack. She had just been
west herself. She had been on a visit
to her husband's niece, who lived in
Arizona—in Blazeton, Ariz. "It's the
nicest town ever you see," she contin-
ued, "and the smartest, most up to
date place. Talk about the west bein'
uncivilized! My land, you ought to
see that town—electric lights and tel-
ephones and—and—I don't know what
all!"

This was but the beginning. It was
evident that Mrs. Beasley had thor-
oughly enjoyed herself in Blazeton and
that the sorrows of the bereaved De-
sire Higgins had been one of the prin-
cipal sorrows of that enjoyment. The
schoolmistress endeavored to turn the
subject, but it was useless.

"I fetched home a whole pile of
them newspapers," continued Debby.
"They was awful interestin'; full of
pictures of Blazeton buildin's and
leadin' folks and all. And in some of
the back numbers was the advertise-
ment about Mr. Higgins. I do wish I
could show 'em to you, but I lent 'em
to Mrs. Atwood, up to the Center. If
'twan't such a ways I'd go and fetch
'em. Mrs. Atwood's been awful nice
to me. She took care of my trunks and
things when I went west—yes, and
afore that when I went to Bayport to

keep house for that miser die Cap'n
Whittaker. I ain't told you about that,
but I will by and by. Them trunks
had lots of things in 'em that I didn't
want to lose or have anybody see. My
diaries—I've kept a diary since 1850—
and—"

"Diaries?" interrupted Phoebe, grasp-
ing at straws. "Did you keep a diary
while you were at the Thayers?"

"Yes. Now, why didn't I think of
that afore? More'n likely there'd be
somethin' in that to help you with that
geographical tree. I used to put down
everything that happened and— Where
you goin'?"

Miss Dawes had risen and was peer-
ing out of the window.

"I was looking to see if my driver
was anywhere about," she replied. "I
thought perhaps he would drive over to
Mrs. Atwood's and get the diary for
you. But I don't see him."

Just then, from around the corner of
the house, peeped an agitated face; an
agitated forefinger beckoned. Debby
stepped to the window beside her vis-
itor, and the face and finger went out
of sight as if pulled by a string.

Miss Phoebe smiled.

"I think I'll go out and look for
him," she said. "He must be near
here. I'll be right back, Mrs. Beas-
ley."

Without stopping to put on her jack-
et, she hurried through the dining
room, out of the door and around the
corner. There she found Mr. Bangs
in a highly nervous state.

"Why didn't you tell me 'twas Deb-
by? By Beasley you was comin' to see?"
he demanded. "If you'd mentioned
that deaf image's name you'd never
got me to drive you, I tell you that!"

"Yes," answered the teacher sweet-
ly. "I imagined that. That's why I
didn't tell you, Mr. Bangs. Now I
want you to do me a favor. Will you
drive over to Trimmer Center and
deliver a note and get a package for me?"

Then you can come back here, and I
shall be ready to start for home."

"Drive—drive nothin'! The black
smith's out and won't be back for an
other hour. His boy's there, but he's
a big enough lunkhead to try baulin'
out a dory with a fork, and that buggy
axle is bent so it's simply got to be
fired. I'd no more go home to Ketury
with that buggy as 'tis than I'd— Oh,
my land of love!"

The ejaculation was almost a groan.
There, at the corner, ear trumpet ad-
justed and spectacles glistening, stood
Debby Beasley. Bailey appeared to
wilt under her gaze as if the spectacles
were twin suns.

"How—how d'y'e do, Mrs. Beasley?"
faltered Mr. Bangs. "I hope you're
smart."

"Yes," she answered. "I'm pretty
toler'ble, thank you. What was the
matter, Mr. Bangs? Why didn't you
come in? Do you usually make your
calls round the corner?"

The schoolmistress came to the res-
cue.

"You mustn't blame Mr. Bangs, Mrs.
Beasley," she explained. "He wasn't
responsible for what happened at Cap-
tain Whittaker's. He is the gentleman
who drove me over here. I was going
to send him to Mrs. Atwood's for the

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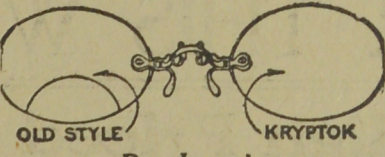
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