

Why the Minister Said You Must Not Marry

Amazing Edict of the Daring "Sky Pilot" Robs All the Young Women of Whole City of Their Fiances; It Dooms the Bachelors to Capture of Wives from Armed Camps in Neighboring Towns

The "Little Minister," the Rev. Floyd Burnett, who has published the ban against weddings.

To left—Miss Lulu Davis, the Belle of Mosquero, the power behind the young women's organized defiance of the ban upon them.



Above—These are what Mosquero calls its "Prize Bakers' Dozen"—admittedly the pick of the city's young women; to left—Blanche Hall, treasurer of the Young Women's Association, and Aurelia Trujillo, the ex-edress.

"YOU shall not marry any young woman in this city. The time has come when the Scriptures are too openly violated by your sisters, your sweethearts and the sisters and sweethearts of your friends. No girl in this town is worthy of marriage to any young man within my congregation. You must, if necessary, go to England, France, Belgium or even Germany for wives that are worthy of you. I ask you all to sign a pledge that you will observe my command, and I warn you that I will not perform the marriage ceremony for any of the young women in this community."

One may well imagine what consternation was caused in the church when the pastor spoke these words in the course of his Sunday morning sermon. The minister was the Rev. Floyd Burnett. His church is the principal one in the thriving little city of Mosquero, in New Mexico. In his congregation that morning were all the young ladies of the town and also all the young men of the city, together with many of their elders.

The Rev. Mr. Burnett had just finished a stirring sermon directed generally against modern fashions and, in particular, against what he described as the unwholesomeness of the young women who were seated in the church pews in front of him. He quoted liberally from the Bible in his denunciations of such things as rolled stockings, short skirts, peekaboo waists and bobbed hair, and ended these quotations by reading from Apostle Paul: "Let your women dress as becoming women."

The little city of Mosquero is in a country where every man carries a gun, and where nearly all young women frequently enjoy themselves by shooting at a target. It is safe to say, even though there was no census taken at the time, that every young girl in the church was the sweetheart of some young man in some nearby town, and that this young man carried, either in his belt or in a pocket, a thoroughly reliable and quickly reached pistol or revolver. It is also safe to say that each gun was a large one and had been much practiced with.

So it may be said that the Rev. Mr. Burnett carried his life in his hands when he stood before the assembled population of the city, knowing that there were almost as many guns in front of him as there were young men, and told all the swains there assembled that their sweethearts were not fit for love and marriage. And almost any one would have assumed the young minister that his death warrant most certainly would be executed should

he go so far as to use in connection with his other denunciations the forbidden term "maverick." And yet with only the thin boards of his lectern between him and the bullets in the audience he plainly and with calm punctuations declared: "I say to all you girls who are hearing me this morning that you are 'mavericks,' maverick fappers, to be more exact, and you may take that characterization just as it is spoken, for I mean it, every word."

Certainly the older men and women in that congregation were sure that there would be a fusillade of shots to greet the young sky pilot when he would emerge that morning from the church door. But there was not—for a strange thing happened. Pastor Burnett is a little man who strongly reminds those of his parishioners who have read Sir James Barrie of the letter's "Little Minister." He is a man who most any youngster in Mosquero could floor with a single blow. Yet his shoulders were square, his chin was up, and there were brave fires in his eyes when he walked boldly out the church door and confronted the young men of the congregation whose sweethearts he had just so bitterly denounced. There were two ways for Pastor Burnett to turn—one, down the path that led away from town, which was deserted and along which he hardly would have met another man. The other way was along the road that led to the city, and this would lead him directly among the young men who had gathered to discuss his sermon and his attack upon the young women.

The little minister turned along the road to the city. As if he were courting death itself, he walked into the midst of the loud talking young men. Their leader, the son of the city's most prominent banker,

clapped his hand on the minister's shoulder and said to him: "Well, parson, we have decided you were right. What shall we do about it?"

And thus was born what certainly is one of the most interesting and, without, amazing societies in the entire United States. With the city's most prominent attorney as its president, a wealthy oil land owner as its secretary, and the publisher of a local newspaper as its treasurer, the Young Men's Mutual Protective Association was that morning organized. In the minister's study bylaws and a constitution were drawn up. With the help of the minister a pledge was also worded. This pledge binds its signers to not propose marriage, to pay attention to or consider with any sort of matrimonial purpose any young woman who shall wear her stockings rolled down from the top, who shall wear her skirts any higher than nine inches from the ground, or who shall wear a gown or shirtwaist with the neck cut lower than meets the approval of Parson Burnett, or who shall bob her hair. The minister himself, who until this Sunday had been considered the foremost matrimonial catch in seven counties, was the first to attach his signature to this remarkable document.

It needs but one photograph to make evident that this extraordinary pledge and society wholly removes from local matrimonial prospect every young woman whose home is in Mosquero. This photograph is copyrighted, 1922, by The New York Herald.

published on this page, and includes every girl who is unmarried in the entire city.

On the other hand, every young man of marriageable condition of the city joined the Little Minister's society. Each one of them states openly that he is in the market for a wife. Each one admits that he either had an exclusive interest in one of the young ladies of the town or was a rival for the favor of some one of them. Until Pastor Burnett preached his startling sermon all of them admit they thought the young women of Mosquero were the most pleasing and the most beautiful, the most charming and the most modest young women in the village, especially if punctuated by well dimpled knees, were especially attractive. Bobbed hair, they had thought, was the mark of proper observance of the most admirable Eastern fashions. Open necks and short skirts, they all agreed, were decidedly to be encouraged.

The picture of immodesty presented them by the minister that Sunday morning completely persuaded them otherwise on all these points, and now they are unanimous in declaring that they will import their wives even if they have to raid the neighboring cities in order to obtain an adequate supply.

One would suppose that in the face of such unanimous condemnation and with their immediate prospects of marriage seemingly suddenly threatened, they would without hesitation resort to the expediency of lowering their skirts, pulling up their stockings, binding their hair and buttoning up their shirtwaists.

But there seems to be no such inclination on the part of these attractive young Western girls. They, too, held a meeting that same Sunday evening to receive and discuss the extraordinary pledge which by that time all their sweethearts had signed. There was no statement of contrition agreed upon. Instead, each girl voted "yes" to the proposition that each young man should be individually told that, with the full consent of the feminine members of the community, the said young man might go to Denver.

With the receipt of this message from the girls the boys declared a war was on, and the girls likewise declared that the war was over, for the simple reason that they would never accept defeat. They would not, they said, become old fashioned just in order to acquire an old fashioned husband. Therefore, the young women of Mosquero no longer go to church on Sunday, but say their prayers at home. If they have

made any alterations at all in their costumes, it is that they have rather shortened their skirts and rolled their stockings down an inch or two further.

Novelists have built many romances around the keen and dramatic rivalries of Western cities in the matter of civic accomplishments. Alfred Henry Lewis, Bret Harte, and even Mark Twain, have entertained themselves and their public with thrilling stories of how the cowboys of one section, backing the claims of their own village, frequently rode at night time into the village favored by the boys of a neighboring ranch, there to shoot up the heels of the local Chinese, to kidnap the pretty postmistress and to shave one side of the face of the rival village's Mayor.

Certainly, however, no weaver of fiction ever has had for his imagination to dwell upon the situation which now exists among the neighboring cities of Mosquero.

How all is changed.

Automatic bolts and other brands of dependable revolver are being oiled and cleaned.

In some of the neighboring cities preparations are being made for the erection of barricades at the Mosquero end of the main streets.

In fact, it would seem as if old Sabine times are about to be revived.

The entire masculine citizenry of the neighboring towns are prepared for the raid expected from the Mosquerettes, who have so openly announced that they intend to go forth in search of brides from other tribes. The Rev. Burnett, it seems, visited many nearby communities to make a study of femininity as it comported itself in the other cities, and reported back to his newly formed protective society that the girls of the other cities were not so forward, bold and generally ultra-fashionable as those at home. Only a few, however, he said, could be looked upon with favor as prospective wives. It is for these few that the young men of Mosquero are threatening to raid the outlying territory, leaving to others the necessity of going far abroad, perhaps to England and Belgium, for the sort of demure young wife which the newly organized society declares to be the only acceptable ideal.

On the other hand, the young men of Mosquero are these days keeping themselves well armed and their pocket pistols handy. They have declared that no raids from the outside upon their own young maidens, even though these be now taboo among them, shall be permitted. In other

words, they state most emphatically that not only will they themselves not marry any of the local young women but will not permit any strangers to come and marry them.

The protective organization was formed only a week ago. So far no armed engagements have resulted. The volcano which is expected soon to break forth remains quiescent, much in the fashion of a can of dynamite. The outstanding fact remains, however, that the young men have no intention of remaining bachelors, they have no intention of marrying any of their former sweethearts until the latter revise their fashion in dress and deportment, and they have no intention of allowing any one else to marry these blacklisted young ladies. Such a situation, in the West, and in that part of the West where the best man still is measured according to his quickness on the draw, is indeed akin to dynamite.

And now what of the young women themselves? At the head of their organization is Miss Aurelia Trujillo, who, until recently, was the editress of the local newspaper, the Mosquero Sun.

Miss Aurelia, by the way, is such a stickler for principles that when she discovered that her paper, by order of its owner and editor, W. G. Root, would editorially support the decision of the young town as editress and took the stump as organizer of the Young Ladies' Defiance Association.

Backed by Miss Shirley Nutter, who represents a great insurance corporation, and who has a most forceful and at the same time charming personality, Miss Aurelia gathered all the women of the city around her and persuaded them to jointly assert the inalienable right of woman to dress as she pleases, to act as she pleases, to be as fresh as she pleases and to marry whom she pleases.

Miss Aurelia, as the editress, preferred that the Defiance Society should issue a dignified, sedate announcement, properly drawn up and attested by the local notary, setting forth in literary phraseology, the exact position of the young women. Miss Shirley, however, proposed a brief summing up of the entire situation from the viewpoint of the young ladies in language more expressive and ornamental. Miss Shirley won, and so the young women merely signed a document which set forth that besides having permission to go to Denver, the young men of Mosquero also have their feet in the mud, and as far as the young women are concerned, can jolly well keep them there.

Among the membership of the girls' society there are several who backed their determination with flashing black eyes in which there is considerable evidence of Spanish blood and Spanish grit. There are others whose blonde hair reveals the quiet determination of the northlands. And there are others who, neither blonde nor Spanish, nevertheless are of the sort that the plains provide and who may well be expected to not be tremendously upset by a lifting from any sweetheart who does not approve of her theory as to the proper latitude for a stocking top.

To quote from the editor of a rival paper published in one of the nearby cities, the entire situation is such as to justify the prospect that "a good time is expected by all."

