

***MARIETTA  
HOLLEY***



***MY OPINIONS  
AND BETSEY  
BOBBET'S***

**Marietta Holley**

# **My Opinions and Betsey Bobbet's**

EAN 8596547228639

DigiCat, 2022

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# **PREFACE.**

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Which is to be read, if it haint askin' too much of the kind hearted reader.

In the first days of our married life, I strained nearly every nerve to help my companion Josiah along and take care of his children by his former consort, the subject of black African slavery also wearin' on me, and a mortgage of 200 and 50 dollars on the farm. But as we prospered and the mortgage was cleared, and the children were off to school, the black African also bein' liberated about the same time of the mortgage, then my mind bein' free from these cares—the great subject of Wimmen's Rites kept a goarin' me, and a voice kept a sayin' inside of me,

"Josiah Allen's wife, write a book givin' your views on the great subject of Wimmen's Rites." But I hung back in spirit from the idea and says I, to myself, "I never went to school much and don't know nothin' about grammer, and I never could spell worth a cent."

But still that deep voice kept a 'swaiden me—"Josiah Allen's wife, write a book."

Says I, "I can't write a book, I don't know no underground dungeons, I haint acquainted with no haunted houses, I never see a hero suspended over a abyss by his gallusses, I never beheld a heroine swoon away, I never see a Injun tommy hawked, nor a ghost; I never had any of these advantages; I can't write a book."

But still it kept a sayin' inside of my mind, "Josiah Allen's wife write a book about your life, as it passes in front of you

and Josiah, daily, and your views on Wimmen's Rites. The great publick wheel is a rollin' on slowly, drawin' the Femail Race into liberty; Josiah Allen's wife, put your shoulder blades to the wheel."

And so that almost hauntin' voice inside of me kept a 'swaidin me, and finally I spoke out in a loud clear voice and answered it—

"I *will* put my shoulder blades to the wheel."

I well remember the time I said it, for it skairt Josiah almost to death. It was night and we was both settin' by the fire relapsted into silence and he—not knowin' the conversation goin' on inside of my mind, thought I was crazy, and jumped up as if he was shot, and says he, in tremblin' tones,

"What is the matter Samantha?"

Says I, "Josiah I am goin' to write a book."

This skairt him worse than ever—I could see, by his ghastly countenance—and he started off on the run for the camfire bottle.

Says I, in firm but gentle axcents, "camfire can't stop me Josiah, the book will be wrote."

He see by my pale but calm countenance, that I was not delirious any, and (by experience) he knows that when my mind is made up, I have got a firm and almost cast iron resolution. He said no more, but he sot down and sithed hevily; finally he spoke out in a despairin' tone, he is pretty close (but honest),

"Who will read the book Samantha? Remember if you write it you have got to stand the brunt of it yourself—I haint no money to hire folks with to read it." And again he

sithed two or three times. And he hadn't much more than got through sithein' when he asked me again in a tone of almost agony—

“Who will read the book Samantha after you write it?”

The same question was fillin' me with agonizin' apprehension, but I concealed it and answered with almost marble calm,

“I don't know Josiah, but I am determined to put my shoulder blades to the wheel and write it.”

Josiah didn't say no more then, but it wore on him—for that night in the ded of night he spoke out in his sleep in a kind of a wild way,

“Who will read the book?”

I hunched him with my elbo' to wake him up, and he muttered—“I won't pay out one cent of my money to hire any body to read it.”

I pitied him, for I was afraid it would end in the Night Mair, and I waked him up, and promised him then and there, that I never would ask him to pay out one cent to hire any body to read it. He has perfect confidence in me and he brightened up and haint never said a word sense against the idea, and that is the way this book come to be wrote.

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# MARRIED TO JOSIAH ALLEN.

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If anybody had told me when I was first born that I would marry to a widower, I should have been mad at 'em. I lived up to this idee quite a number of years, how many, is nobody's business, that I will contend for. I laughed at the idee of love in my blindness of eye. But the first minute I sot my grey eye onto Josiah Allen I knew my fate. My heart was a pray to feelin's it had heretofore been a stranger to.

Sez I to myself "Is this love?" I couldn't answer, I was too agitated.

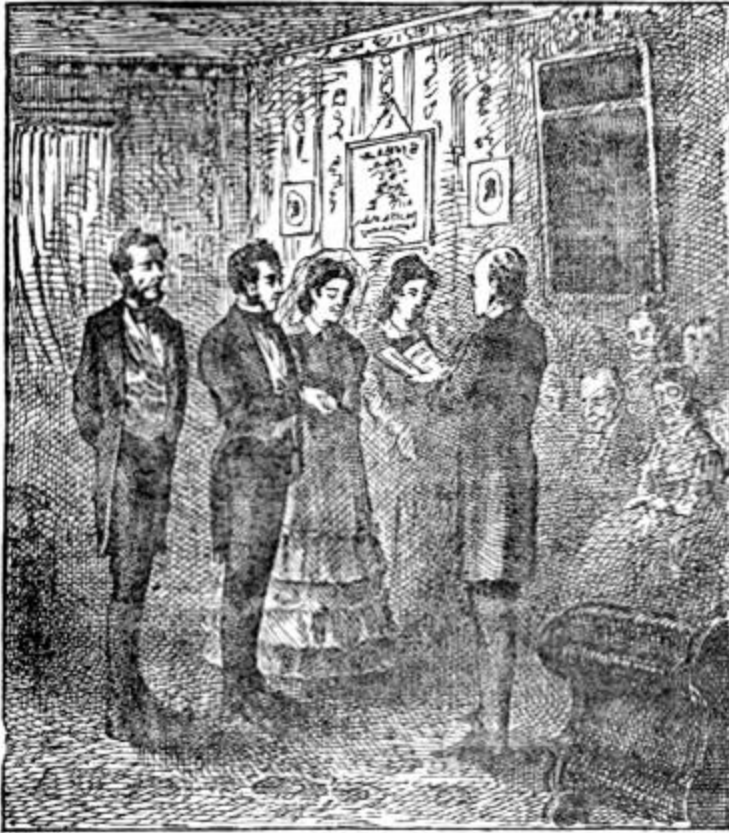
Josiah told me afterwards that he felt jest exactly the same, only, when his heart wildly put the question to him, "Is it love you feel for Samantha Smith?" he havin' experience in the same, answered, "Yes, it is love."

I married Josiah Allen (in mother's parlor, on the fourteenth day of June, in a bran new silk dress with a long boddis waist) from pure love. Though why I loved him, I know not. I looked at his mild face beamin' on me from above his black silk stock, which kep' his head kinder stiff, and asked myself this question, "Why do you love him?" I reckolected then, and I have recalled it to his mind several times sense in our little differences of opinion, which occur in the happiest families—that I had had offers from men, handsomer than him, with more intelect than him, with more riches than him, with less children than him. Why didn't I love these various men? I knew not. I can only repeat in the immortal and almost deathless lines of the poet, "Love will go where it is sent."

Yes, Josiah Allen was my fate, and when I laid my light silk glove in his'en (they was almost of a color, a kind of cinnemen broun) before the alter, or that is before Elder Wesley Minkley, I did it with the purest and tenderest emotions of love.

And that love has been like a Becon in our pathway ever sense. Its pure light, though it has sputtered some, and in tryin' times such as washin' days and cleanin' house times has burnt down pretty low,—has never gone out.

When I married him the bald spot on his head wuzn't much bigger than a new silver dollar. Now the top of his head is as smooth and clean as one of my stun china dinner plates, and if any horse jocky was to try to judge of his age by lookin' at his teeth, they would be baffled, not but what he has got some teeth, but they are pretty scatterin'. But still that Becon shines, that pure love triumphs over lost teeth and vanished sandy hair. There haint a man on the face of the earth that looks so good to me as Josiah Allen. I don't tell him this, mind you, 14 years experience of married life has taught me caution. Josiah is as good as they'll average generally, but no man can't stand too much flattery, men are naturally vain.



I AND JOSIAH.

As I said in the commencement of this plain and unvarnished history, I had almost a deadly objection to widowers owin' to their habit of comparin' their second wives to their first relict, to the disadvantage of the first-named pardner. Josiah tride it with me when we was first married. But I *didn't encourage him in it*. He began on several various times, "It seems to me Samantha that Polly Ann used to fry up her meat a little cripsier," or "It seems as if Polly Ann used to make my collers a little stiffer." He stopped it before we had been married a year, for *I didn't encourage it in him*.

As I mean that this book shall be a Becon light, guidin' female wimmen, to life, liberty, and the pursuit of true happiness, I would insert right here this word of solem'

warnin' to my sect situated in the tryin' place of second consorts, if the relict goes to comparin' you to his foregone consort, *don't encourage him in it*. On this short rule hangs the hope of domestick harmony.





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## ABOUT JOSIAH AND THE CHILDREN.

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But step-mothers have a pretty hard row to hoe, though I don't complain. I like children, clean children first rate, and I have tried to do my duty by his'en. I have done as well by 'em as I knew how to, and I think a sight of Thomas Jefferson and Tirzah Ann. Tirzah Ann is dreadful sentimental, that is what spiles her mostly. And Thomas Jefferson thinks he knows more than his father, that is his greatest failin'. But take 'em all through, they are *full* as good as other folks'es children, and I know it. Thomas Jefferson is dreadful big feelin', he is 17 years old, he wears a stove pipe hat, and is tryin' to raise a moustache, it is now jest about as long as the fuzz on cotton flannel and most as white. They both go to Jonesville to high school, (we hire a room for 'em to Mother Allen's, and they board themselves,) but they are to home every Saturday, and then they kinder quarell all day jest as brothers and sisters will. What agravates

Thomas J. the worst is to call him “bub,” and Tirzah Ann don’t call him anything else unless she forgets herself.

He seems to think it is manly to have doubts about religion. I put him through the catechism, and thought he was sound. But he seems to think it is manly to argue about free moral agency, foreordination, and predestination, and his father is just fool enough to argue with him. Sez he last Saturday,

“Father, if it was settled beyond question six or seven thousand years ago that I was goin’ to be lost what good does it do for me to squirm? and if it was settled that I was goin’ to be saved, how be I goin’ to help myself?” sez he, “I believe we can’t help ourselves, what was meant to happen, will happen.”

Before his father had time to speak—Josiah is a slow spoken man, Tirzah Ann spoke up—

“Bub, if it was settled six or seven thousand years ago that I should take your new jockey club and hair oil, and use ’em all myself, why then I shall.”

“Tirzah Ann,” says he “If you should touch ’em it was foreordained from creation that you would get dreadfully hurt.” But I spoke up then for the first time, says I,

“You see Thomas J. that come to fighting you have moral agency enough—or immoral agency. Now,” says I, “I won’t hear another word from you, you Thomas J. are a young fool, and you Josiah Allen are a old one, now,” says I “go to the barn, for I want to mop.”

Tirzah Ann as I said is dreadful sentimental, I don’t know which side she took it from, though I mistrust that Josiah if he had any encouragement would act spoony. I am not the

woman to encourage any kind of foolishness. I remember when we was first engaged, he called me “a little angel.” I jest looked at him calmly and says I,

“I weigh two hundred and 4 pounds,” and he didn’t call me so again.



TIRZAH ANN.

No! sentiment aint my style, and I abhor all kinds of shams and deceitfulness. Now to the table you don’t ketch me makin’ excuses. I should feel as mean as pusley if I did. Though once in a while when I have particuler company, and my cookin’ turns out bad, I kinder turn the conversation on to the sufferin’s of our four fathers in the Revolution, how they eat their katridge boxes and shoe leather. It don’t do us no hurt to remember their sufferin’s, and after talkin’ about eatin’ shoe leather most any kind of cake seems tender.

I spose that life runs along with Josiah and the children and me about as easy as it does with most men and female wimmen. We have got a farm of 75 acres of land all paid for. A comfortable story and a half yeller house—good barns, and a bran new horse barn, and health. Our door yard is large and shady with apple, and pear, and cherry trees; and Tirzah Ann has got posy beds under the winders that look first rate. And where there haint no posy beds nor shade trees, the grass grows smooth and green, and it is a splendid place to dry clothes. On the north side of the house is our orchard, the trees grow clear up to our kitchen winder, and when the north door is open in the spring of the year, and I stand there ironin', the trees all covered with pink blows it is a pleasant sight. But a still pleasanter sight is it in the fall of the year to stand in the door and see Josiah and Thomas Jefferson pickin' up barells of the great red and yeller grafts at a dollar a bushel. Beyond the orchard down a little bit of a side hill runs the clear water of the canal. In front of the house towards the south—but divided from it by a good sized door yard and a picket fence, runs the highway, and back of the house, if I do say it that ortn't to, there is as good a garden as there is in these parts. For I set my foot down in the first ont, that I *would* have garden sass of all kinds, and strawberrys, and gooseberrys, and currant, and berry bushes, and glad enough is Josiah now to think that he heard to me. It took a little work of course, but I believe in havin' things good to eat, and so does Josiah. That man has told me more'n a hundred times sense that "of all the sass that ever was made, garden sass was the best sass." To the south of the house is our big meadow—

the smell of the clover in the summer is as sweet as anything, our bees get the biggest part of their honey there, the grass looks beautiful wavin' in the sunshine, and Josiah cut from it last summer 4 tons of hay to the acre.

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## **AN UNMARRIED FEMALE.**

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I suppose we are about as happy as the most of folks, but as I was sayin', a few days ago to Betsy Bobbet a neighborin' female of ours—"Every Station house in life has its various skeletons. But we ort to try to be contented with that spear of life we are called on to handle." Betsey haint married and she don't seem to be contented. She is awful opposed to wimmen's rights, she thinks it is wimmen's only spear to marry, but as yet she can't find any man willin' to lay holt of that spear with her. But you can read in her daily life and on her eager willin' countenance that she fully realizes the sweet words of the poet, "while there is life there is hope."

Betsey haint handsome. Her cheek bones are high, and she bein' not much more than skin and bone they show plainer than they would if she was in good order. Her complexion (not that I blame her for it) haint good, and her eyes are little and sot way back in her head. Time has seen fit to deprive her of her hair and teeth, but her large nose he has kindly suffered her to keep, but she has got the best white ivory teeth money will buy; and two long curls fastened behind each ear, besides frizzles on the top of her head, and if she wasn't naturally bald, and if the curls was

the color of her hair they would look well. She is awful sentimental, I have seen a good many that had it bad, but of all the sentimental creeters I ever did see Betsey Bobbet is the sentimentalest, you couldn't squeeze a laugh out of her with a cheeze press.



BETSEY BOBBET.

As I said she is awful opposed to wimmin's havein' any right only the right to get married. She holds on to that right as tight as any single woman I ever see which makes it hard and wearin' on the single men round here. For take the men that are the most opposed to wimmin's havin' a right, and talk the most about its bein' her duty to cling to man like a vine to a tree, they don't want Betsey to cling to them, they *won't let* her cling to 'em. For when they would be a goin' on about how wicked it was for wimmin to vote—and it was her only spear to marry, says I to 'em "Which had you ruther do, let Betsey Bobbet cling to you or let her vote?" and they would every one of 'em quail before that question. They would drop their heads before my keen grey eyes—and move off the subject.