

The DIM LANTERN

By TEMPLE BAILEY

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THE STORY THUS FAR

Young, pretty Jane Barnes, who lived with her brother, Baldwin, in Sherwood Park, near Washington, was not particularly impressed when she read that rich, attractive Edith Towne had been left at the altar by Delafield Simms, wealthy New Yorker. However, she still mused over it when she met Evans Follette, a young neighbor, whom the war had left completely discouraged and despondent. Evans had always loved Jane. That morning Baldwin Barnes, on his way to work in Washington, offered assistance to a tall, lovely girl in distress. Later he found a bag she had left in the car, containing a diamond ring on which was inscribed "Del to Edith—Forever." He knew then that his passenger had been Edith Towne. Already he was half in love with her. That night he discussed the matter with Jane, and they called her uncle, worldly, sophisticated Frederick Towne. He visited them at their home, delighted with Jane's simplicity. He told them Edith's story. Because her uncle desired it, Edith Towne had accepted Delafield Simms, whom she liked but did not love. She disappeared immediately after the wedding was to have taken place. The next day Jane received a basket of fruit from Towne, and a note asking if he might call again.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

Mrs. Follette had, too, an admirable courage. Her ambitions had been wrapped up in her son. What her father might have been, Evans was to be. They had scrimped and saved that he might go to college and study law. Then, at that first dreadful cry from across the seas, he had gone. There had been long months of fighting. He had left her in the flower of his youth, a wonder-lad, with none to match him among his friends. He had come back crushed and broken. He, whose career lay so close to his heart—could do now no sustained work. Mentally and physically he must rest. He might be years in getting back. He would never get back to gay and gallant boyhood. That was gone forever.

Yet if Mrs. Follette's heart had failed her at times, she had never shown it. She was making the farm pay for itself. She supplied the people of Sherwood Park and surrounding estates with milk. But she never was in any sense—a milk-woman. It was, rather, as if in selling her milk she distributed favors. It was on this income that she subsisted, she and her son.

Later he and Jane walked together in the clear cold. She was in a gay mood. She was wrapped in her old orange cape, and the sun, breaking the bank of sullen clouds in the west, seemed to turn her lithe young body into flame.

"Don't you love a day like this, Evans?" She pressed forward up the hill with all her strength. Evans followed, panting. At the top they sat down for a moment on an old log—which faced the long aisles of snow between thin black trees. The vista was clear-cut and almost artificial in its restraint of color and its wide bare spaces.

Evans' little dog, Rusty, ran back and forth—following this trail and that. Finally in pursuit of a rabbit, he was led far afield. They heard him barking madly in the distance. It was the only sound in the stillness.

"Jane," Evans said, "do you remember the last time we were here?"

"Yes." The light went out of her eyes.

"As I look back it was heaven, Jane. I'd give anything on God's earth if I was where I was then."

All the blood was drained from her face. "Evans, you wouldn't," passionately, "you wouldn't give up those three years in France—"

He sat very still. Then he said tensely, "No, I wouldn't, even though it has made me lose you—Jane—"

"You mustn't say such things—" "I must. Don't I know? You were such an unawakened little thing, my dear. But I could have—waked you. And I can't wake you now. That's my tragedy. You'll never wake up—for me—"

"Don't—"

"Well, it's true. Why not say it? I've come back a—scarecrow, the shadow of a man. And you're just where I left you—only lovelier—more of a woman—more to be worshiped—Jane—"

As he caught her hand up in his, she had a sudden flashing vision of him as he had been when he last sat with her in the grove—the swing of his strong figure, his bare head borrowing gold from the sun—the touch of assurance which had been so compelling.

"I never knew that you cared—"

"I knew it, but not as I did after your wonderful letters to me over there. I felt, if I ever came back, I'd move heaven and earth." He stopped. "But I came back—different. And I haven't any right to say these things to you. I'm not going to say them—Jane. It might spoil our—friendship."

"Nothing can spoil our friendship, Evans—"

He laid his hand on hers. "Then

you are mine—until somebody comes along and claims you?" "There isn't anybody else," she turned her fingers up to meet his, "so don't worry, old dear," she smiled at him but her lashes were wet. Her hand was warm in his and she let it stay there, and after a while she said, "I have sometimes thought that if it would make you happy, I might—"

"Might—love me?"

"Yes."

He shook his head. "I didn't say it for that. I just had to have the truth between us. And I don't want—pity. If—if I ever get back—I'll make you love me, Jane." There was a hint of his old masterfulness—and she was thrilled by it.

She withdrew her hand and stood up. "Then I'll pray—that you—get back—"

"Do you mean it, Janey?"

"I mean it, Evans."

"Then pray good and hard, my dear, for I'm going to do it."

They smiled at each other, but it was a sacred moment.

The things they did after that were rendered unimportant by the



She was in a gay mood.

haze of enchantment which hung over Evans' revelation. No man can tell a woman that he loves her, no woman can listen, without a throbbing sense of the magnitude of the thing which has happened. From such beginnings is written the history of humanity.

Deep in a hollow where the wind had swept up the snow, and left the ground bare they found crowfoot in an emerald carpet—there were holly branches dripping red berries like blood on the white drifts. They filled their arms, and at last they were ready to go.

Evans whistled for Rusty but the little dog did not come. "He'll find us; he knows every inch of the way."

But Rusty did not find them, and they were on the ridge when that first awful cry came to them.

Jane clutched Evans. "What is it—oh, what is it?"

He swallowed twice before he could speak. "It's—Rusty—one of those steel traps—he was panting now—his forehead wet—the Negroes put them around for rabbits—"

Again that frenzied cry broke the stillness. "They're hellish things—"

Jane began to run in the direction of the sound. "Come on, Evans—oh, come quick—"

He stumbled after her. At last he caught at her dress and held her. "If he's hurt I can't stand it."

It was dreadful to see him. Jane felt as if clutched by a nightmare.

"Stay here, and don't worry. I'll get him out—"

It was a cruel thing to face. There was blood and that little trembling body. The cry reduced now to an agonized whimpering. How she opened the trap she never knew, but she did open it, and made a bandage from her blouse which she tore from her shoulders regardless of the cold. And after what seemed to be ages, she staggered back to Evans with her dreadful burden wrapped in her cape. "We've got to get him to a veterinary. Run down to the road and see if there's a car in sight."

There was a car, and when Evans stopped it, two men came charging up the bank. Jane gave the dog into the arms of one of them. "You'll have to go with them, Evans," she said and wrapped herself more closely in her cape. "There are several doctors at Rockville. You'd better ask the stationmaster about the veterinary."

It was late when Evans came to Castle Manor with his dog in his arms. Rusty was comfortable and he had wagged a grateful tail. The pain had gone out of his eyes and the veterinary had said that in a few days the wound would heal. There were no vital parts affected—and he would give some medicine which would prevent further suffering.

Mrs. Follette was out, and old Mary was in the kitchen, singing. She stopped her song as Evans came through. He asked her to help him and she brought a square, deep basket and made Rusty a bed. "You-all jes' put him heah by the fah, and I'll look after him."

Evans shook his head. "I want him in my room. I'll take care of him in the night."

He carried the dog upstairs with him, knelt beside him, drew hard deep breaths as the little fellow licked his hand.

"What kind of a man am I?" Evans said sharply in the silence. "God, what kind of a man?"

Through the still house came old Mary's thin and piping song:

"Stay in the fiel',
Stay in the fiel', oh, wah-yah—
Stay in the fiel'
Till the wah is ended."

Evans got up and shut the door.

Jane was waked usually by the hoarse crow of an audacious little rooster, who sent his challenge to the rising sun.

But on Thanksgiving morning, she found herself sitting up in bed in the deep darkness—slim and white and shivering—oppressed by some phantom of the night.

She came to it gradually. The strange events of yesterday. Evans. Her own share in his future.

Her own share in Evans' future? Had she really linked her life with his? She had promised to pray that he might get back—she had pledged youth, hope and constancy to his cause. And she had promised before she had seen that stumbling figure in the snow!

In the matters of romance, Jane's thoughts had always ventured. She had dreamed of a gallant lover, a composite hero, one who should combine the reckless courage of a Robin Hood with the high moralities of a Galahad. With such a lover one might gallop through life to a piping tune. Or if the Galahad predominated in her hero, to an inspiring procession!

And here was Evans, gray and gaunt, shaken by tremors, fitting himself into the background of her future. And she didn't want him there. Oh, not as he had been out there in the snow!

Yet she was sorry for him with a sympathy that wrung her heart. She couldn't hurt him. She wouldn't. Was there no way out of it?

Her hands went up to her face. She had a simple and childlike faith. "Oh, God," she prayed, "make us all—happy—"

Her cheeks were wet as she lay back on her pillows. And a certain serenity followed her little prayer. Things would work together in some way for good. . . . She would let it rest at that.

When at last the rooster crowed, Jane cast off the covers and went to the windows, drawing back the curtains. There was a faint whiteness in the eastern sky—amethyst and pearl, aquamarine, the day had dawned!

Well, after all, wasn't every day a new world? And this day of all days. One must think about the thankful things!

Baldy wanted to hear from Edith Towne so much that he did not go to church lest he miss her call. But Jane went, and sat in the Barnes' pew, and was thankful, as she had said, for love and warmth and light.

Evans, with his mother in the pew, looked straight ahead of him. He seemed worn and weary—a dark shadow set against the brightness of those comrades on the glowing glass.

After church, he waited in the aisle for Jane. "I'll walk down with you. Mother is going to ride with Dr. Hallam."

They walked a little way in silence, then he said, "Rusty is comfortable this morning."

"Your mother told me over the telephone."

He limped along at her side. "Jane, I didn't sleep last night—thinking about it. It is a thing I can't understand. A dreadful thing."

"I understand. You love Rusty. It was because you love him so much—"

"But to let a woman do it. Jane, do you remember—years ago? The mad dog?"

She did remember. Evans had killed it in the road to save a child. It had been a horrible experience, but not for a moment had he hesitated.

"I wasn't afraid then, Janey." "This was different. You couldn't see the thing you loved hurt. It wasn't fear. It was affection."

"Oh, don't gloss it over. I know what you felt. I saw it in your eyes."

"Saw what?"

"Contempt."

She turned on him. "You didn't. Perhaps, just at first. I didn't understand. . . ." She fought for self-control, but in spite of it, the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Don't, Janey, Don't." He was in an agony of remorse. "I've made you cry."

She blinked away the tears. "It wasn't contempt, Evans."

"Well, it should have been. Why not? No man who calls himself a man would have let you do it."

They had come to the path under the pines, and were alone in that still world. Jane tucked her hand in the crook of Evans' arm. "Dear boy, stop thinking about it." "I shall never stop."

"I want you to promise me that you'll try. Evans, you know we are going to fight it out together. . . ."

His eyes did not meet hers. "Do you think I'd let you? Well, you think wrong." He began to walk rapidly, so that it was hard to keep pace with him. "I'm not worth it."

And now quite as suddenly as she had cried, she laughed, and the laugh had a break in it. "You're worth everything that America has to give you." She told him of the things she had thought of in church. "You are as much of a hero as any of them."

He shook his head. "All that hero stuff is dead and gone, my dear. We idealize the dead, but not the living."

It was true and she knew it. But she did not want to admit it. "Evans," she said, and laid her cheek for a moment against the rough sleeve of his coat, "don't make me unhappy. Let me help."

"You don't know what you are asking. You'd grow tired of it. Any woman would."

"Why look ahead? Can't we live for each day?"

She had lighted a flame of hope in him. "If I might—" eagerly.

"Why not? Begin right now. What are you thankful for, Evans?"

"Not much," uneasily.

"Well, I'll tell you three things. Books and your mother and me. Say that over—out loud."

He tried to enter into her mood. "Books and my mother and Jane."

She caught at another thought. "It almost rhymes with Stevenson's 'books and food and summer rain,' doesn't it?"

"Yes. What a man he was—cheerful in the face of death. Jane, I believe I could face death more cheerfully than life—"

"Don't say such things—they had come to the little house on the terrace, "don't say such things. Don't think them."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

The Photographic Film

Until developed, a photographic film or plate which has been normally exposed cannot be distinguished, even by experts using a microscope, from one which has not been used, observes a writer in Collier's Weekly.

Our Presidents

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON was the oldest President when inaugurated. He was sixty-eight.

Zachary Taylor had never held any political office prior to his election to the Presidency.

The following Presidents were United States ambassadors: John Adams, Jefferson, Monroe, J. Q. Adams, Van Buren and Buchanan.

When Lincoln was inaugurated there were five ex-presidents alive: Van Buren, Tyler, Fillmore, Pierce and Buchanan.

Five Presidents, Madison, Monroe, Polk, Buchanan and Garfield, had the name of James.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the last President to be inaugurated on March 4 and the first to be inaugurated on January 20.

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