

## The Case of Jennie Brice

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"What's the matter with the Ladleys?" he asked. "I can't read for their quarreling."

"Booze, probably," I said. "When you've lived in the flood district as long as I have, Mr. Reynolds, you'll know that the rising of the river is a signal for every man in the vicinity to stop work and get full. The fuller the river the fuller the male population."

"Then this flood will likely make 'em drink themselves to death!" he said. "It's a lulu."

"It's the neighborhood's annual debauch. The women are busy in the cellars, or they'd get full too. I hope, since it's come this far, it will come farther, so the landlord will have to paper the parlor."

That was at 3 o'clock. At 4 Mr. Ladley went down the stairs, and I heard him getting into a skiff in the lower hall. There were boats going back and forth all the time carrying crowds of curious people and taking the flood sufferers to the corner grocery, where they were lowering groceries in a basket on a rope from an upper window.

I had been making tea when I heard Mr. Ladley go out. I fixed a tray with a cup of it and some crackers and took it to their door. I had never liked Mrs. Ladley, but it was chilly in the house with the gas shut off and the lower floor full of ice water. And it is hard enough to keep boarders in the flood district.

She did not answer to my knocks, so I opened the door and went in. She was at the window, looking after him, and the brown valise that figured in the case later was opened on the floor. Over the foot of the bed was the black and white dress with the red collar.

When I spoke to her she turned around quickly. She was a tall woman, about twenty-eight, with very white teeth and yellow hair, which she parted a little to one side and drew down over her ears. She had a sullen face and large well shaped hands, with her nails long and very pointed.

"The 'she devil' has brought you some tea," I said. "Where shall she put it?"

"'She devil'?" she repeated, raising her eyebrows. "It's a very thoughtful she devil. Who called you that?"

But with the sight of the valise and the fear that they might be leaving I thought it best not to quarrel. She had left the window and, going to her dressing table, had picked up her nail file.

"Never mind," I said. "I hope you are not going away. These floods don't last, and they're a benefit. Plenty of the people around here rely on 'em every year to wash out their cellars."

"No, I'm not going away," she replied lazily. "I'm taking that dress to Miss Hope at the theater. She is going to wear it in 'Charlie's Aunt' next week. She hasn't half enough of a wardrobe to play leads in stock. Look at this thumb nail, broken to the quick!"

If I had only looked to see which thumb it was! But I was putting the tea tray on the washstand and moving Mr. Ladley's papers to find room for it. Peter, the spaniel, begged for a lump of sugar, and I gave it to him.

"Where is Mr. Ladley?" I asked.

"Gone out to see the river."

"I hope he'll be careful. There's a drowning or two every year in these floods."

"Then I hope he won't," she said calmly. "Do you know what I was doing when you came in? I was looking after his boat and hoping it had a hole in it."

"You won't feel that way tomorrow, Mrs. Ladley," I protested, shocked. "You're just nervous and put out. Most men have their ugly times. Many a time I wished Mr. Pitman was gone—until he went. Then I'd have given a good bit to have him back again."

She was standing in front of the dresser, fixing her hair over her ears.

She turned and looked at me over her shoulder.

"Probably Mr. Pitman was a man," she said. "My husband is a fiend, a devil."

Well, a good many women have said that to me at different times. But just let me say such a thing to them, or repeat their own words to them the next day, and they would fly at me in a fury. So I said nothing and put the cream into her tea.

I never saw her again.

There is not much sleeping done in the flood district during a spring flood. The gas was shut off and I gave Mr. Reynolds and the Ladleys each a lamp. I sat in the back room that I had made into a temporary kitchen with a candle and with a bedquilt around my shoulders. The water rose fast in the lower hall, but by midnight at the seventh step it stopped rising and stood still. I always have a skiff during the flood season, and as the water rose I tied it to one spindle of the staircase after another.

I made myself a cup of tea and at 1 o'clock I stretched out on a sofa for a few hours' sleep. I think I had been sleeping only an hour or so when some one touched me on the shoulder and I started up. It was Mr. Reynolds, partly dressed.

"Some one has been in the house. Mrs. Pitman," he said. "They went away just now in the boat."

"Perhaps it was Peter," I suggested. "That dog is always wandering around at night."

"Not unless Peter can row a boat," said Mr. Reynolds dryly.

I got up, being already full dressed, and taking the candle we went to the staircase. I noticed that it was a minute or so after 2 o'clock as we left the room. The boat was gone, not untied, but cut loose. The end of the rope was still fastened to the stair rail. I sat down on the stairs and looked at Mr. Reynolds.

"It's gone!" I said. "If the house catches fire we'll have to drown."

"It's rather curious when you consider it." We both spoke softly not to disturb the Ladleys. "I've been awake and I heard no boat come in. And yet if no one came in a boat and came from the street they would have had to swim in."

To be continued.

Mr. and Mrs. George Eilers of George, entertained a number of friends at dinner last Sunday.

## Future Corn Growing

Only a few years ago, the successful growing and ripening of field corn in Clackamas county was supposed to be an impossibility, but in the past two years, this part of the county has come to the front in the experimental work, in connection with the acclimating of corn.

Much credit for this pioneer work is due to such men as John Ely of Currinsville, Edw. Still of Barton and E. N. Foster of Eagle Creek. The corn raised by these men and others last year, exhibited at the county, state and Portland fairs attracted much attention.

Reports of the planting for this year, are as follows:—John Ely, 20 acres; Jas. Linn, 5 acres; C. C. Saling, 10 acres; and Neil Taylor, 10 acres; in the Currinsville district; W. W. Porter, 10 acres in Upper Garfield; E. N. Foster of Eagle Creek, 10 acres and a planting of about 50 acres in George. Probably this list does not comprise one quarter of the planting in this part of the county, but gives an idea of the extensiveness and growth of this important new industry.

Much of the seed for local planting has been obtained from John Ely, whose corn exhibits at last year's fairs, have acted as a valuable advertisement for the community.

The George Commercial & Social Club are offering special prizes this fall for the best corn grown by the younger folks, from seed furnished to them by John Ely, through the courtesy of the P. R. L. & P. Co.

The successful raising of corn in this section will solve the economical production of hogs and live stock, in the future.

Keep a watch out for future notice of the Easter party to be given by the C. I. C.

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