

The Case of Jennie Brice

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I went to Ladley's door and knocked. Mr. Ladley answered from just beyond.

"The theater is asking where Mrs. Ladley is."

"Tell them I don't know," he snarled, and shut the door. I took his message to the telephone.

Whoever it was swore and hung up the receiver.

All the morning I was uneasy—I hardly knew why. Peter felt it as I did. There was no sound from the Ladleys' room, and the house was quiet, except for the lapping water on the stairs and the police patrol going back and forth.

At 11 o'clock a boy in the neighborhood, paddling on a raft, fell into the water and was drowned. I watched the police boat go past, carrying his little cold body, and after that I was good for nothing. I went and sat with Peter on the stairs. The dog's conduct had been strange all morning. He had sat just above the water, looking at it and whimpering. Perhaps he was expecting another kitten or—

It is hard to say how ideas first enter one's mind. But the notion that Mr. Ladley had killed his wife and thrown her body into the water came to me as I sat there. All at once I seemed to see it all—the quarreling the day before, the night trip in the boat, the water soaked slipper, his haggard face that morning—even the way the spaniel sat and stared at the flood.

Terry brought the boat back at half past 11, towing it behind another.

"Well," I said from the stairs, "I hope you've had a pleasant morning."

"What doing?" he asked, not looking at me.

"Rowing about the streets. You've had that boat for hours."

He tied it up without a word to me, but he spoke to the dog. "Good morning, Peter," he said. "It's nice weather—for fishes, ain't it?"

He picked out a bit of floating wood from the water, and, showing it to the dog, flung it into the parlor. Peter went after it with a splash. He was pretty fat, and when he came back I heard him wheezing. But what he brought back was not the stick of wood. It was the knife I use for cutting bread. It had been on a shelf in the room where I had slept the night before, and now Peter brought it out of the flood where its wooden handle had kept it afloat. The blade was broken off short.

It is not unusual to find one's household goods floating around during flood time. More than once I've lost a chair or two and seen it after the water had gone down, new scrubbed and painted, in Molly Maguire's kitchen next door. And perhaps now and then a bit of luck would come to me—a dog kennel or a chicken house, or a kitchen table, or even, as happened once, a month old baby in a wooden cradle, that lodged against my back fence and had come forty miles, as it turned out, with no worse mishap than a cold in its head.

But the knife was different. I had put it on the mantel over the stove I was using upstairs the night before and hadn't touched it since. As I sat staring at it, Terry took it from Peter and handed it to me.

"Better give me a penny, Mrs. Pitman," he said in his impudent Irish way. "I hate to give you a knife. It may cut our friendship."

I reached over to hit him a clout on the head, but I did not. The sunlight was coming in through the window at the top of the stairs, and shining on the rope that was tied to the banister. The end of the rope was covered with stains, bright with a glint of red in them.

I got up shivering. "You can get the meat at the butcher's, Terry," I said, "and come back for me in half an hour." Then I turned and went upstairs, weak in the knees, to put

on my hat and coat. I had made up my mind that there had been murder done.

I looked at my clock as I went downstairs. It was just 12:30. I thought of telephoning for Mr. Reynolds to meet me, but it was his lunch hour, and besides, I was afraid to telephone from the house while Mr. Ladley was in it.

Peter had been whimpering again. When I came down the stairs he had stopped whimpering and was wagging his tail. A strange boat had put into the hallway and was coming back.

"Now, old boy!" somebody was saying from the boat. "Steady, old chap! I've got something for you!"

A little man, elderly and alert, was standing up in the boat, polling it along with an oar. Peter gave vent to joyful yelps. The elderly gentleman brought his boat to a stop at the foot of the stairs and, reaching down into a tub at his feet, held up a large piece of raw liver. Peter almost went crazy, and I remember suddenly that I had forgotten to feed the poor beast for more than a day.

"Would you like it?" asked the gentleman. Peter sat up, as he had been taught to do, and barked. The gentleman reached down again, got a wooden platter from a stack of them at his feet and, placing the liver on it, put it on the step. The whole thing was so neat and businesslike that I could only gaze.

"That's a well trained dog, madam," said the elderly gentleman, beaming at Peter over his glasses. "You should not have neglected him."

"The flood put him out of my mind," I explained, humbly enough, for I was ashamed.

"Exactly. Do you know how many starving dogs and cats I have found this morning?" He took a notebook

To be continued.

State Fruit Inspector Pomeroy, was one of the speakers at last Saturday's meeting of the Garfield Grange and while here conferred with the local inspector, regarding the work that is being done. Mr. Pomeroy expects to spend a few days in this vicinity in the next week or so, helping along the good work.

Bond Bids Opened

Members of the South Fork water commission, last Tuesday opened up the bids for the sale of the \$375,000. bonds, with which to finance the project. There was a slight disappointment felt because no eastern bond house had put in a bid, but the bids which were received were good, ranging from \$94.03 to \$95.56 which was a little below the \$97. price which had been hoped for.

There is a rumor of some technicality having appeared in the legality of the voting on the issue which may interfere with the immediate pushing ahead of the pipe line, altho this delay is not likely, as the Supreme Court will probably uphold the past election.

Tractor Replaces Horses

In keeping with the up-to-the-minute farming methods that have characterized eastern Clackamas farmers, W. R. Reid and sons of Garfield have purchased a Samson Sieve-Grip Tractor, for use on their "Bannockburn" ranch.

The machine is due here in a few days, being shipped direct from the factory at Stockton, California. This marks a new epoch in local farming, being the advent of mechanical power to replace the horse. Harry and Ralph Reid have also taken the exclusive agency for the sale of this tractor in this county and as soon as their machine arrives, will be in a position to demonstrate the practicability and economy of this means of mechanical farming. This tractor, while costing about as much as a Ford automobile, is capable of a four to five horse draw bar pull, and double that capacity for stationary work.

It is not unlikely that this is but the entering wedge to the adoption of this economical means of farming, in Clackamas County.

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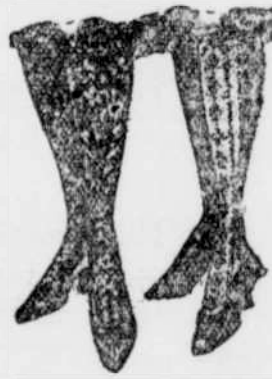
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