

CLOVERDALE COURIER.

VOL. 11.

CLOVERDALE, TILLAMOOK COUNTY, OREGON, DECEMBER 24, 1915

NO. 24

The TINDER BOX

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"THE MELTING OF MOLLY"



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CHAPTER 9—Continued.

"My dear Miss Shelby, how fortunate I am to find you alone!" he exclaimed, with such genuine delight beaming from his nice, good, friendly gray eyes that I beamed up myself a bit out of pure responsiveness.

"I am so glad to see you, Mr. Haley. Hasn't it been a lovely day?"

"It has indeed, and I don't know when I have been so deeply happy. This hour with you will be the very climax of the day's perfections, I feel sure."

To follow you, Jane, I "let a man look freely into my heart, and, thus encouraged, he opened his to mine," and, behold! I found Sallie and the twins and Henrietta all squatting in the dominie's cardiac regions just as comfortably as they do it at Wide-gables.

"My sympathies have become so en-

listed in the struggle which Mrs. Carruthers is having to curb the eccentricities of her oldest daughter that I feel I must lay definite plans to help her. It is very difficult for a young and naturally yielding woman like Mrs. Carruthers to discipline alone even so young a child as Henrietta. I know you will help me all you can to help her. Believe me, my dear friend, even in the short time you have been in Glendale you have become a tower of strength to me. I feel that I can take my most difficult and sacred perplexities to you."

Now, what do you think of that, Jane? Be sure and rub this situation in on all the waiting five disciples. I defy any of them to do so well in less than three months. This getting on a plane of common citizenship with a fellow man is easy—that is, with some men.

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Still, while you are getting on the plane somebody else gets the man. What about that? I didn't want Mr. Haley, but what if I had?

"Yes, Henrietta is a handful, Mr. Haley," I answered with enthusiasm, for even the mention of Henrietta enlivens me, and somehow Mr. Haley's getting in the game of "curbing" her stirred up my risibles. "But—but Sallie already has a good many people to help her with the children. I have been trying to—influence Henrietta—and she does not swear except on the most exasperating occasions now."

"The dear little child created a slight consternation in her Sunday school class last week when they were being taught the great dramatic story of Jonah's three days' incarceration in the whale. To quote her exactly, so that you may see how it must have affected the other children, she said, 'I swallowed a live fly once myself and I'm not dern fool enough to believe that whale kept Jonah down three days, alive and kicking, no matter who says so.'

"She then marched out of the class and has not returned these two succeeding Sabbaths. It was to talk over the matter I called on Mrs. Carruthers this afternoon, and I have never had my sympathies so stirred. We must help her, my dear friend!"

I never enjoyed anything more in my life than the hour I spent helping that dear, good, funny man plan first aids to the rearing of Sallie's children. Besides my co-operation he has planned to enlist that of Aunt Augusta, and I was wicked enough to let him do it. In a small village where the inhabitants have no chance at diversions like Wagnerian operas and collapsing skyscrapers I felt that I had no right to avert the spectacle of Aunt Augusta's disciplining Henrietta.

I'll write you all about it, Jane, in a special delivery letter.

Jasper whipped Petunia with great apparent severity day before yesterday, and we have been having the most heavenly waffles and broiled chicken ever since. I dismissed Jasper for doing it, but Petunia came into my room and cried about it a half hour, so I had to go out where he was rubbing the silver and hire him over.

"When a woman gits her mouth stuck out at a man and the world in general three days hand running they ain't nothing to cure it but a stick."

(Continued on last page)

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