

'THE TINDER BOX'

(Continued from first page)

mission for the series of station gardens. I think you will probably work better after this side of your nature is at rest. Of course, a union with Mr. Hall would be ideal for you. You must consider it seriously."

There are some men who are big enough to take a woman with a wound in her heart and heal both it and her by their love. Richard is one of that kind. What could any woman want more than her work and a man like that?

After Jane had laid her strong minded head on the hard pillow that I had had to have concocted out of bats of cotton for her I laid my face against my own, made of the soft breast feathers of a white flock of hovering hen mothers, and wept on their softness.

A light was burning down in the lodge at the gate of Widegables. He hasn't gone back to his room to sleep even when I have Jane's strong mindedness in the house with me. I remember that I gave my word of honor to myself that I wouldn't try any of my modern emotional experiments on him the first night I slept in this house alone, with only him over there to keep me from dying with primitive woman fright. I shall keep my word to myself and propose to Richard if my contract with Jane and the five seems to call for it. In the meantime if I choose to cry myself to sleep it is nobody's business.

Jane has arisen early several mornings and spent an hour before breakfast composing a masterly and Machiavellian letter of invitation from the Equality league to the inhabitants of Glendale and the surrounding countryside to and beyond Bollvar to attend the rally given by them in honor of the C. and G. railroad commission on Tuesday next. It is to come out today in the weekly papers of Glendale, Bollvar, Hillsboro and Providence, and I hope there will not be so many cases of heart failure from rage that the gloom of many funerals will put out the light of the rally. I hope no man will beat any woman in the Harpeth valley for it, and if he does I hope he will do it so neither Jane nor I will hear of it.

It was Aunt Augusta who thought up the insulting and incendiary plan of having the rally as an offering of hospitality from the league, and I hope if Uncle Peter is going to die over it he will not have the final explosion in my presence.

Privately I spent a dollar and a half sending a night letter to Richard all about it and asking him if the commissioners would be willing to stand for this feminist plank in the barbecue deal. He had sent me the nicest letter of acceptance from the board when I had written the invitation to them through him as coming from the perfectly ladylike feminine population of Glendale, and I didn't like to get them into a woman whirlwind without their own consent. I paid the boy at the telegraph office \$5 not to talk about the matter to a human soul and threatened to have him dismissed if he did, so the bombshell was kept in until this afternoon.

Richard replied to the telegram with characteristic directness:

Delighted to be in at the fight. Seven of us rabid suffragists, two on the fence, and a half roast pig will convert the other. Found no answer to my question in letter of last Tuesday. Must!

RICHARD.

It was nice of Jane to write out and get ready her bombshell and then go off with Polk as not to see it explode. But I'm glad she did. However, I did advise her to take a copy of it along with the reels and the lunch basket to read to him as a starter of their day to be devoted to the establishment of a perfect friendship between

them.

Polk didn't look at me even once as I helped pack them and their traps into his auto, but Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like Polk in his white flannels, and he and Jane made a picture of perfectly blended tailored smartness as they got ready for the breakaway.

There are some men that acquire feminine obligations as rough chevot does lint, and Henrietta is one of Polk's when it comes to the fishing days. He takes her so often that she thinks she owns him and all the trout in Little Harpeth, and she landed in the midst of the picnic with her fighting clothes on.

"Where are you and her going at-fishing?" she asked in a calmly controlled voice that both of them had heard before and which made us quail in our boots and metaphorically duck our heads.

"Yes, we—er—thought we would," he answered with an uncertainty of voice and manner that bespoke abject fear.

"I'll be d—if you shall!" came the explosion, hot and loud. "I want to go fishing with you, Polk, my ownself, and she ain't no good for nothing anyway. You can't take her!"

"Henrietta!" I both beseeched and commanded in one breath.

"No, she ain't no good at all," was reiterated in the stormy young voice as Henrietta caught hold of the nose of the panting auto and stood directly in the path of destruction if Polk had turned the driving wheel a half's breadth. "Uncle Peter says that she is er going to turn the devil loose in Glendale, so they won't be no more whisky and no more babies borned and men will get they noses rubbed in their plates if they don't eat the awful truck she is er going to teach the women to cook for their husbands. An' the men won't marry no more then at all, and I'll have to be a old maid like her."

CHAPTER XIV.

Jane Versus Henrietta.

NOW, why did I write weeks ago that I would like to witness an encounter between Jane and Henrietta? I didn't mean it, but I got it!

Without ruffling a hair or changing color, Jane stepped out of the auto and faced the foe. Henrietta is a tiny scrap of a woman, intense in a wild, beautiful, almost hunted kind of way, and she is so thin that it makes my heart ache. She is being fairly crushed with the beautiful depending weight of her mother and the responsibility of the twins, and somehow she is most pathetic. I made a motion to step between her and Jane, but one look in Jane's face stopped me.

"Dear," she said, in her rich, throaty, strong voice as she looked pleadingly at the militant midget facing her. Suddenly I was that lonesome, homesick freshman by the waters of Lake Waban, with Jane's awkward young arm around me, and I stood aside to let Henrietta come into her heritage of Jane. "Don't you want to come with us?" was the soft question that followed the commanding word of endearment.

"No!" was the short but slightly mollified answer as Henrietta dug her toes into the dust and began to look fascinated.

"I'm glad you don't want to come because I've got some very important business to ask you to attend for me," answered Jane in the brisk tone of voice she uses in doing business with women, and which interests them intensely by its very novelty and flatters them by seeming to endow them with a kind of brain they didn't know they possessed. "I want you to go upstairs and get my pocketbook. Be careful, for there is over a hundred dollars in the roll of bills—Evelina will give you the key to the desk—and go

down to the drugstore, where they keep nice little clocks, and buy me the best one they have. Then please you



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wind it up yourself and watch it all day to see if it keeps time with the clock in your hall, and if it varies more than one minute, take it back and get another. While you are in the drug store, if you have time, won't you please select me a new toothbrush and some nice kind of paste that you think is good? Make them show you all they have. Pay for it out of one of the bills."

"Want any good, smelly soap?" I came out of my trance of absolute admiration to hear Henrietta ask in the capable voice of a secretary to a millionaire. Her thin little face was flushed with excitement and importance, and she edged two feet nearer the charmer.

"It would be a good thing to get about a half dozen cakes, wouldn't it?" answered Jane, with slight uncertainty in her voice, as if leaving the decision of the matter partly to Henrietta.

"Yes, I believe I would," Henrietta decided judicially. "The 'New Mown Hay' is what Jasper got for Petunia because he hit her too hard last week and swelled her eye. They is a perfumery that goes with it at one quarter a bottle. That makes it all cheaper."

"Exactly the thing, and we mustn't spend money unnecessarily," Jane agreed. "But I don't want to trespass on your time, Henrietta, dear," she added with the deference she would have used in speaking to the president of the Nation league or the founder of Hull House.

"No, ma'am, I'm glad to do it, and I'll go quick 'fore it gets any later in the day for me to watch the clock," answered Henrietta in stately tones that were very like Jane's and which I had never heard her employ before.

And before any of the three of us got our breath her bare little feet were flashing up my front walk.

"Help!" exclaimed Polk as he leaned back from his wheel and fanned himself with his hat. "Do you use the same methods with grown beasts that you do with cubs?" he added weakly.

"It's the same she has always used

on me, only this is more dramatic. Beware!" I said with a laugh as I insisted on just one squeeze of Jane's white linen arm as she was climbing back into the car.

"That's a remarkably fine child, and she should have good, dependable, businesslike habits put in the place of faulty and useless ones. Her profanity will make no difference for the present and can be easily corrected. Don't interfere with her attending to my commissions, Evelina. Let's start, Mr. Hayes." And Jane settled herself calmly for the spin out Providence road.

"All the hundred dollars all by herself, Jane?" I called after them.

"Yes," floated back positively in the wake of the auto.

For several hours I attended to the business of my life in a haze of meditation. If Henrietta ticks off the same number of minutes on the woman clock from Jane's standpoint that Jane has marked off from her own mother's high noon is going to strike before we are ready for it.

But it was only an hour or two of high minded communing with the future that I got the time for before I was involved in the whirl of dust that swirled around the storm center to darken and throw a shadow over Glendale about the time of the publication of the Glendale News, which occurs every Thursday near the hour of noon, so that all the subscribers can take that enterprising sheet home to consume while waiting for dinner and can leave it for the women of their families to enjoy in the afternoon.

I suspect that the digestion of Jane's equality rally invitation interfered with the digestion of much fried chicken, corn and sweet potatoes under the roof trees of the town, and I spent the afternoon in hearing results and keeping up the spirits of the insurgents.

Caroline came in with her head so high that she had difficulty in seeing over her very slender and aristocratic nose with a note from Lee Greenfield which had just come to her, asking her to go with him in his car over to Hillsboro to spend the day with Tom Pollard's wife, a visit he knows she has been dying to make for two months, for she was one of Pet's bridesmaids. He made casual and dastardly mention that there would be a moon to come home by, but ignored completely the fact that Tuesday was the day on which he had been invited by the league, of which he knew she was a member, to meet and rally around the C. and G. commission.

I helped her compose the answer, and I must say we hit Lee only in high spots. I could see she was scared to death, and so was I, but her dander was up, and I backed mine up along side it for the purpose of support. Besides I feel in my heart that that note will dynamite the rocky old situation between them into something more easily handled.

She had just gone to dispatch the missive by their negro gardener when Mamie and Sallie came clucking in. Mamie's face was pink and high spirited, but Sallie was in one complete slump of mind and body.

(To be continued)

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