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The TINDER BOX

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"THE MELTING OF MOLLY"



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CHAPTER 14—Continued.

"Mr. Haley has just stopped by to say that he thinks no price is too great to pay for peace and fellowship and good will in a community," she said as she dropped into a rocker and looked pensively after the retreating figure of the handsome young dominie, who had accompanied them to the gate, but wisely no farther. He didn't know that Jane had gone with Polk.

"And women to pay the price," answered Mamie spiritedly. "I have just told Ned that as yet I do not know enough to argue the question of woman's wrongs with him, but I have learned a few of her rights. One of mine is to have him accept any invitation I am responsible for having my friends offer him and to accompany me to the entertainment if I desire to go. I reminded him that I had not troubled him often as an escort since

my marriage. He was so scared that he almost let little Ned drop out of his arms, and he got in an awful hurry to go to town, but he asked me to have his gray flannels pressed before Tuesday and to buy him a blue tie to go with a new shirt he has. I never like to spank Ned or the children, but I must say it does clear the atmosphere."

"You don't think we could put it off or—er"—Sallie faltered.

"No!" answered Mamie and I together, and as I spoke I called Jasper to set out more rockers and have Petunia get the tea tray ready, for I saw Aunt Augusta go across the road to collect Cousin Martha and Mrs. Hargrove and the rest, while Nell whirled by in her rakish little car on her way to the square and called that she would be back.

And it was most interesting to listen

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to a minute description of the composite fit thrown by the male population of Glendale at their rally invitation, but as time was limited I finally coaxed the conversation around to the subject of the viands to be offered the lordly creatures in the way of propitiation for the insult that we were forcing them to swallow by taking matters in our own hands, and then we had a really glorious time.

gate for Caroline.

Just as Henrietta had taken a last peep at the clock on the hall table and

gone to answer Sallie's call to come and help Aunt Dilsie in the bedding of the kitten and the pup Polk's auto stopped at the gate, and he and Jane came up the front walk in the twilight together.

She had on his flannel coat over her linen one, and his expression was one of glorified and translucent daze. I didn't look at her. I felt as if I couldn't. I was scared! For a second she held me in her arms and kissed me, really—the first time she had ever done it in all my life—and then went on upstairs with a nice, cool good night and "thank you" to Polk.

"Evelina," he said as he handed me the empty lunch basket and also the empty fish bucket, the first he had ever in his life brought in from Little Harpeth, "I was right about that hallelujah chorus being the true definition of the real woman, only they are more so. I have seen a light, and you pointed the way. Will you forgive me for being what I was—and trust me—with—good night!" He was gone!

Jane's kiss had been one of revelation to me.

For a long time I sat out there in the cool, hazy, windy autumn twilight breeze that was heavy with the scent of luscious wild grapes and tasseled corn, fanning the flame of loneliness in me until I couldn't have stood it any longer if a tall gray figure of relief had not come up the street and called me down to my front gate.

"Hail the instigator of a bloodless revolution," laughed the Crag as I stopped myself with difficulty on the opposite side of the gate from him. "The city fathers will have to capitulate, and now for the reign of the mothers!"

"And the same old route to subjection chosen, through their stomachs to their civic hearts," I answered impudently.

Overlooking my pertness, he went on: "Mayor Shelby was at home with Mrs. Augusta for two hours after dinner, and as I came by the postoffice I heard him telling Polk in remarkably chastened if not entirely chaste language that it was 'better to let the



"Is this right?" he asked as he gently took me in his arms.

The afternoon wore away on the wings of magic, and the long, purple shadows were falling across the street, a rustle of cool night wind was stirring the treetops, and the first star was coming timidly out into the gloaming before they all realized that it was time to hurry and scurry under roof trees.

Lee Greenfield was waiting at the

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