

"THE TINDER BOX"

(Continued from first page)

women have their kick-up on a feeding proposition than on something worse," as he classically put it.

"I know it is a great victory," I answered weakly, "but I'm too tired to glory in it. I wish I was Sallie's puppy being trotted across Aunt Dilsie's knee or kit getting a rocking in Cousin Martha's arms."

"Would any other arms do for the rocking?" came in a queer, audacious voice, with a note in it that stilled something in me and made all the world seem to be holding its breath.

"I'm tired of revolting, and it's—its tenderness I want," I faltered in a voice that hardly seemed strong enough to get so far up out of my heart as to reach the ears of the Crag as he bent his head down close over mine. He had come on my side of the gate at the first weak little cry I had let myself make a minute or two before.

"Is this right?" he asked as he gently took me in his arms, hollowed his shoulder for a place for my head, and, leaning against the old gate, he began to swing me gently to and fro, his cheek against my hair and humming Aunt Dilsie's "Swing low, sweet chariot, for to carry me home."

It was. I know what I want, and I shall have it. I'll fight the whole world with naked hands for him. And I'm also going to find some way to get him with all his absurd niceties of honor intact, just because that will make him happier.

I'll begin at the beginning and some way unclasp those gourd tendrils that Sallie has been strangling him with. I will bunch all the rest of his feminine collection and take them on my own hands. I'm going to make a governor out of him and then a United States senator and finally a supreme judge. Help! Think of the old moss-back being a progressive! But that's my party and Jane's.

I know he is going to hate terribly to have me ask him to marry me, and I hate to hurt him so, but it is my duty to get Jane's \$50,000 so the five may be as happy as I am tonight, only there aren't five other Craggs. I know it will be a lifelong mortification to him to have me do it, but he lost his chance tonight grandmothering me. Still, I did turn my lips away. I was not quite ready then. I am now.

If he wants to go on wearing clothes like that I'm going to let him, even on the senate floor, but I can't ever stand for Cousin Jasmine to cut his hair any more. I want to do it myself, and I'm going to tell her so and why. She and I have cried over that miniature of the lost young Confederate cousin of hers, and she'll understand me. I am sure.

But as I think it over—it always is best to be kind, and I believe I'll let him get through this rally—it's just four days—a free and happy man.

I don't know whether to go in and wake up Jane or not. I would like to go to sleep with that kiss revelation between us, but maybe it is my duty to the five to extract some data from her while it is fresh on the foam. I am afraid it is going to go hard with her, but somehow I have a newborn faith in Polk that makes me feel that he will make it as easy as he can for her.

Isn't it a glorious thing to realize that neither she nor I will have to sit and be tortured by waiting to see what those men are going to do?

CHAPTER XV.

Dynamite.

WHEN a man injures a woman's feelings by any particular course of conduct to which she objects the mater-

nal in her eyes to the surface, and she treats and forgives him as she would a naughty child, but a man makes any kind of woman affront into a lover's quarrel. That is what masculine Glendale has been doing to its women folks for four days, and I believe everybody has been secretly enjoying it.

As to the rally, they have stood aside with their hands in their pockets and their noses in the air, and if it hadn't been for Aunt Augusta and Nell and Jane being natural born carpenters and draymen we might have had to give it up and let them go on with it to their own glory.

When Nell and Jane went to see Mr. Dodd about building the long tables to serve the barbecue dinner on he said he was too busy to do it and hadn't even any lumber to sell.

Then things happened in my back yard that it sounds like a romance to write about. Jane sent me over to borrow the Crag's team and wagon and Henrietta and Cousin Martha and any of the rest of his woman impedimenta that I could get. He was out of town, trying a case over at Bolivar, and wouldn't get back until Monday night.

Jane and Nell and Aunt Augusta took the two axes and one large hammer and tore down my back fence while I and the others loaded the planks on the wagon. Jane appointed Henrietta to sit and hold the slow old horses in case they should have got demoralized by the militant atmosphere pervading Glendale and try to bolt. I never saw any human being enjoy herself as Henrietta did, and it was worth it all just to look into her radiant countenance.

Jane took all the hard top blows to do herself and left the unloosening of the lower nails to Aunt Augusta while Nell ripped off the planks that stuck. I could almost hear Nell's long, polished finger nails go with a rip every time she jerked a particularly tough old plank into subjection, and Aunt Augusta dispensed encouraging axioms about pioneer work as she banged along behind Jane. Jane herself looked as cool as a cucumber, didn't get the least bit ruffled and had the expression on her face that the truly normal woman has while she is hemming a baby's flannel petticoat.

And though during the day many delightful crises were precipitated the most interesting were the expressions that devastated Polk Hayes' and Lee Greenfield's faces as they came around the side of the house to see what all that hammering was about.

"Caroline!" exclaimed Lee, in perfect agony, as he beheld the lady of his ardent, though long restrained, affections poised across the wheel of the wagon tugging at the middle of a heavy plank which Mrs. Dodd and I were pushing up to her, while Mamie, the mother of seven, stood firmly on top of the wagon guiding it into place.

"Help!" gasped Polk, as he started to take the ax from Jane by force.

Then we all stopped while Jane quietly gurgled the molasses of the situation to them, and sent them on down the street sadder and wiser men. I thought Polk was going to cry on her shoulder before he was finally persuaded to go and leave us to our fate, and the expression on Lee's face as he looked up at torn, dirty, perspiring Caroline, with a smudge on her nose and blood on her hand from an absolutely insignificant scratch, was such as ought to have been on Ned's face as he ought to have been standing by Mamie with the asafetida bottle. That's mixed up, but the five ought to catch the point.

It took up all of Saturday afternoon and part of Monday morning, but we built those tables, thereby disciplining masculine Glendale with a severity that I didn't think could have been in us.

We all rested on Sunday—that is, ostensibly. Jane put down all sorts of things on paper that everybody had to do on Monday and on Tuesday. Henrietta sat by her in a state of trance, and it did me good to see Sallie out in the hammock at Widegables taking care of both the kit and the pup, laboriously assisted by painting Aunt Dilsie, because Jane explained to her so beautifully that she needed a lot of Henrietta's time, that Sallie acquiesced with good natured bewilderment. Of course Cousin Jasmine helped her some, but she was busy aiding Cousin Martha to beat up some mysterious eggs in the kitchen, with the shutters shut because it was Sunday. It was something that takes two days to "set" and was to be the piece de resistance, after the barbecue.

Mrs. Hargrove couldn't help Sallie at all with the kiddies either, because she was looking through all her boxes and bundles for a letter from her son which she thought said something about favoring woman's rights, and if it is like she thinks it is she is going to go to the barbecue and get things nice and hot instead of having them brought to her cold.

I had hoped to get a few minutes Sunday afternoon to myself so I could go up into the garret and look through one of the trunks I brought from Paris with me to see how many sets of things I have got left. I am going to need a trousseau pretty soon, and I might need it more suddenly than I expect. I don't see any reason for people's not marrying immediately when they make up their minds, and my half of ours is made up strong enough to decidedly influence rapidly in his. But then I really don't believe that the Crag would care very much about the high lights of a trousseau, and it was just as well that Nell came in to get me to help her write a letter to national headquarters to know if she could have any kind of assignment in the campaign for the convention to alter the constitution in Tennessee when it meets next winter.

"Have you made up your mind fully to go in for public life, Nell?" I asked mildly. "Some of your friends might not like it very much and—and—"

"If you mean Polk Hayes, Evelina," Nell answered with the positiveness that only a very young person can get up the courage to use. "I have forgot that I was ever influenced by his narrow minded, primitive personality at all. If I ever love and marry it will be a man who can appreciate and further my real woman's destiny."

"Well, then, that's all right," I answered, with such relief in my heart that it must have showed in my voice and face. I had worried about Nell since I could see plainly, though she hasn't told me yet, and I am sure she doesn't realize it, that Jane had decided Polk's destiny. Nell is not twenty-one yet, and she will find lots of men in the world that will be fully capable of making her believe they feel that way about her destiny until they succeed in tying her up to using it for the real utilitarian purposes they are sure such a pretty woman is created for.

It will take men in general another hundred years yet and lots of suffering to realize that a woman's destiny is anything but himself and get to house-keeping with her on that basis.

The Crag didn't jog into Glendale on his rawboned old horse until 1:30 Monday night. I had been watching down Providence road for him from my pillow ever since I put out my light at 11 because Jane had decided that it was our duty to go to bed early so as to be as fresh as possible for the rally in the morning. She had walked to the gate with Polk at 10 and hadn't come back until 11, so, of course, she was ready to turn in. It was just foolish, primitive old convention that kept me from slipping on my slippers and dressing gown—I've got the prettiest

ones that ever came across the Atlantic, Louise de Mereton, Rue de Rivoli, Paris—and going down to the gate to see him for just a minute. That second he stood undecided in the middle of the road looking at my darkened house was agony that I'm not going to put up with very much longer.

Jane and I with Henrietta were out by the old gray moss rock at the first break of day installing Jasper and Petunia and a few of their confreres. Jasper had always been king of all Glendale barbecue pits, and he had had them dug the day before and filled with dry hickory fires all night, and his men was so haughty that I trembled for the slaves under his command. His basket of "yarbs" was under the side of the rock in hoodoo-like shadows, and the wagons of poor, innocent, sacrificed lambs and turkeys and sucking pigs were backed up by the largest infernal pit. Petunia was already elbow deep in a cedar tub of cornmeal for the ponies, and another minion was shucking late roasting ears and washing the sweet potatoes to be packed down with the meat by 8 o'clock. A wagon was to collect the baked hams and sandwiches and biscuits and confections of all variety and pedigree from the rest of the league at 10 o'clock.

We didn't know it then, but another wagon was already being loaded very privately in town with ice and bottles, glasses and lemons and mint and kegs and schooners. I am awfully glad that the Equality league had forgotten all about the wetting up of the rally, because I don't believe we would have



"Yes; they're our guests," I answered.

been equal to the situation with Aunt Augusta and Jane both prohibition enthusiasts.

"Evelina," gasped Jane as we stood on the edge of the bluff that commands a view of almost all the Harpeth valley stretched out like the very garden of Eden itself, crossed by silver creeks, lined with broad roads and mantled in the richness of the harvest haze, "can all those wagons full of people be coming to accept our invitation?"

(To be continued)

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