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The TINDER BOX

by
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"THE MELTING
OF MOLLY"



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CHAPTER 18—Continued.

And as for the daytime, I am so busy all day long providing for this perpetual house party that I am dead to even friendship by night. Jane is doing over Glendale from city limits to the river, and I have to spend my time keeping the dear town from finding out what is being done to it.

She is hunting out everybody's pet idea or ideal for some sort of change or improvement to his, especially his, native town, and then leading him gently up to accomplishing it so that he will think he has done it entirely by himself, but will tell the next man he meets that there is nothing in the world like a fine energetic woman with good horse sense. In fact, Jane is courting the entire male population in a most scandalous fashion and they'll be won before they know it.

"Now, that Confederate monument ought to have been built long ago out of that boulder from the river instead of hauling in a slicked up granite slab that would er made the Glendale volunteers of sixty-one feel uncomfortable like they would do in the beds in the city hotels. Great idea of mine and that Yankee girl's—great idea—hey?" sputtered Uncle Peter, after Jane had spent the evening down with him and Aunt Augusta.

"It is a fine idea, Uncle Peter," I agreed, with a concealed giggle.

"I've subscribed the first \$5 of the \$50 for hauling, setting up and inscribing it, and we are going to let the women give half of it out of the egg money they have got in that Equality Quilting society. Some kind of horse sense epidemic has broken out in this town—horse sense, Evelina, hey?" And he went on down the street perfectly

delighted at having at last accomplished his pet scheme. He thought of it as exclusively his own by now, of course.

And the monument is just the beginning of what is going to begin in Glendale. Jane says so.

"There could be no better place than this rural community to try out a number of theories I have had in political economy as related to the activities of women, Evelina," she said to me today, looking at me in a benign and slightly confused way from behind her glasses. "Mr. Hayes and I were just talking some of them over tonight, and he seems so interested in seeing me institute some of the most important ones. How could you have ever thought such a man as he is lacking in seriousness of purpose, dear?"

"I feel sure that it was just my own frivolous streak that called out the frivolous in Polk, Jane dear," I answered, with trepidation, hoping and praying that the Inquisition would not go much further and trying to remember just what I had written her about Polk.

"It may have been that," Jane answered in a most naively relieved tone of voice. "But you don't know how happy I am, dear, to see that that streak is only an occasional charming vein that shows in you, but that you are now settling down steadily to your profession. I feel sure that when these garden drawings are done you and Mr. Hall will have found your correct places in each other's lives, and it will be just a glorious example of how superbly a man and woman can work together at the same profession. Mr. Hardin and I were talking about it just last night out on the side porch, and, though he said very little, I could see how gratified he was at the honors that had come to you and how much he likes Mr. Hall."

That settled it, and I made up my mind that when the harvest lady left us tonight to sink behind old Harpeth she wasn't going to leave me weakly lonesome. She doesn't set until 2 o'clock, and I'm going to take all the time I need.

And as serious and solemn as I feel over taking such a step for two as I am deciding on I can't help looking forward to scribbling a terse and impersonal account of my having propos-

ed to the man of my choice in this strong minded book, adding a few words of sage advice for the five, locking it and handing it, key and all, to Jane, with a dramatic demand that she put her \$100,000 in the trust company and begin to choose the five from those she has had in mind.

Then before she has had time to read it I am going sneakily to get it back and blot or tear out some of the things I have written. I can decide later what will be data and what will be dangerous to the cause.

"And you will be glad to have me—come and live for a time in your home life, dear?" Jane recalled me to the question in hand by saying wistfully, "I feel that I have never had such good friends before, anywhere, as these of yours are to me, Evelina," she added.

That's one time I got Jane completely in my arms and showed her what a really good hugging means south of Mason and Dixon's line. From later developments I am glad she had that slight initiation. It must have been serviceable to her New England disposition.

Then, just as I was going to ask some of the plans she—and Polk—had made, over came Cousin Jasmine, with Cousin Annie and Mary, with Mrs. Hargrove puffing along behind them. They had come to see Jane, but I was allowed to stay and have my breath knocked out by their mission.

It seems Jane had got a great big book from some firm in New York that tells all about herb growing and how difficult it is to get the ones needed for condiments and perfumes and offering to buy first class lavender and thyme and bergamot and sweet fern and things of that kind in any quantities at a good price. She had shown it to the little ladies, who had been secretly grieving at the separation from their garden out on their poorly rented farm, and the leaven had worked—on Mrs. Hargrove also. They go back to the farm and she with them. She had decided on raising mint to both dry and ship fresh because he of the gay pajamas always liked to have it strong and fresh for the julep of his ancestors. I hope she won't forget to take that pattern of Japanese extraction with her and make some for Crag

(Continued on last page)

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