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HOW JANICE DAY WON

by

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"The Testing of Janice Day,"
"The Mission of Janice Day," Etc.

Illustrated by Corinne Turner

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HOW JANICE DAY WON

CHAPTER I

TROUBLE FROM NEAR AND FAR

At the corner of High Street, where the lane led back to the stables of the Lake View Inn, Janice Day stopped suddenly, startled by an eruption of sound from around an elbow of the lane—a volley of voices, cat-calls, and ear-splitting whistles which shattered Polktown's usual afternoon somnolence.

One youthful imitator expelled a laugh like the bleating of a goat:

"Na-ha-ha-ha! Ho! Jim Nar-ha-nay! There's a brick in your hat!"

Another shout of laughter and a second boy exclaimed:

"Look out, old feller! You'll spill it!"

All the voices seemed those of boys; but this was an hour when most of the town lads were supposed to be under the more or less eagle eye of Mr. Nelson Haley, the principal of the Polktown school. Janice attended the Middletown Seminary, and this chanced to be a holiday at that institution. She stood anxiously on the corner now to see if her cousin, Marty, was one of this crowd of noisy fellows.

With stumbling feet, and with the half dozen laughing, mocking boys tailing him, a bewhiskered, rough-looking, shabby man came into sight. His appearance on the pleasant main thoroughfare of the little lakeside town quite spoiled the prospect.

Before, it had been a lovely scene. Young Spring, garbed only in the tender greens of the quickened earth and the swelling buds of maple and lilac, had accompanied Janice Day down Hillside Avenue into High Street from the old Day house where she lived with her Uncle Jason, her Aunt 'Mira, and Marty. All the neighbors had seen Janice and had smiled at her; and those whose eyes were anointed by Romance saw Spring dancing by the young girl's side.

Her eyes sparkled; there was a rose in either cheek; her trim figure in the brown frock, well-built walking shoes of tan, and pretty toque, was an effective bit of life in the picture, the background of which was the sloping street to the steamboat dock and the beautiful, blue, dancing waters of the lake beyond.

An intoxicated man on the streets of Polktown during the three years of Janice Day's sojourn here was almost unknown. There had been no demand for the sale of liquor in the town until Lem Parraday, proprietor of the Lake View Inn, applied to the Town Council for a bar license.

The request had been granted without much opposition. Mr. Cross Moore, President of the Council, held a large mortgage on the Parraday premises, and it was whispered that this fact aided in putting the license through in so quiet a way.

It was agreed that Polktown was growing. The "boom" had started some months before. Already the sparkling waters of the lake were plied by a new *Constance Colfax*, and the C. V. Railroad was rapidly completing its branch which was to connect Polktown with the Eastern seaboard.

Whereas in the past a half dozen traveling men might visit the town in a week and put up at the Inn, there had been through this Winter a considerable stream of visitors. And it was expected that the Inn, as well as every house that took boarders in the town, would be well patronized during the coming Summer.

To Janice Day the Winter had been lovely. She had been very busy.

Well had she fulfilled her own tenet of "Do Something." In service she found continued joy. Janice loved Polktown, and almost everybody in Polktown loved her.

At least, everybody knew her, and when these young rascals trailing the drunken man spied the accusing countenance of Janice they fell back in confusion. She was thankful her cousin Marty was not one of them; yet several, she knew, belonged to the boys' club, the establishment of which had led to the opening of Polktown's library and free reading-room. However, the boys pursued Tim Narnay no farther. They slunk back into the lane, and finally, with shrill whoops and laughter, disappeared. The besotted man stood wavering on the curbstone, undecided, it seemed, upon his future course.

Janice would have passed on. The appearance of the fellow merely shocked and disgusted her. Her experience of drunkenness and with drinking people, had been very slight indeed. Gossip's tongue was busy with the fact that several weak or reckless men now hung about the Lake View Inn more than was good for them; and Janice saw herself that some boys had taken to loafing here. But nobody in whom she was vitally interested seemed in danger of acquiring the habit of using liquor just because Lem Parraday sold it.

The ladies of the sewing society of the Union Church missed "Marm" Parraday's brown face and vigorous tongue. It was said that she strongly disapproved of the change at the Inn, but Lem had overruled her for once.

"And, poor woman!" thought Janice now, "if she has to see such sights as this about the Inn, I don't wonder that she is ashamed."

The train of her thought was broken at the moment, and her footsteps stayed. Running across the street came a tiny girl, on whose bare head the Spring sunshine set a crown of gold. Such a wealth of tangled, golden hair Janice had never before seen, and the flowerlike face beneath it would have been very winsome indeed had it been clean.

She was a neglected-looking little creature; her patched clothing needed repatching, her face and hands were begrimed, and—

"Goodness only knows when there was ever a comb in that hair!" sighed Janice. "I would dearly love to clean her up and put something decent to wear upon her, and—"

She did not finish her wish because of an unexpected happening. The little girl came so blithely across the street only to run directly into the wavering figure of the intoxicated Jim Narnay. She screamed as Narnay seized her by one thin arm.

"What ye got there?" he demanded, hoarsely, trying to catch the other tiny, clenched fist.

"Oh! don't do it! don't do it!" begged the child, trying her best to slip away from his rough grasp.

"Ye got money, ye little sneak!" snarled the man, and he forced the girl's hand open with a quick wrench and seized the dime she held.

He flung her aside as though she had been a wisp of straw, and she would have fallen had not Janice caught her. Indignantly the older girl faced the drunken ruffian.

"You wicked man! How can you? Give her back that money at once! Why, you—you ought to be arrested!"

"Aw, g'wan!" growled the fellow. "It's my money."

He stumbled back into the lane again—without doubt making for the rear door of the Inn barroom from which he had just come. The child was sobbing.

"Wait!" exclaimed Janice, both eager and angry now. "Don't cry. I'll get your ten cents back. I'll go right in and tell Mr. Parraday and he'll make him give it up. At any rate he won't give him a drink for it."

The child caught Janice's skirt with one grimy hand. "Don't—don't do that, Miss," she said, soberly.

"Why not?"

"'Twon't do no good. Pop's all right when he's sober, and he'll be sorry for this. I oughter kep' my eyes open. Ma told me to. I could easy ha' dodged him if I'd been thinkin'. But—but that's all ma had in the house and she needed the meal."

"He—he is your father?" gasped Janice.

"Oh, yes. I'm Sophie Narnay. That's pop. And he's all right when he's sober," repeated the child.

Janice Day's indignation evaporated. Now she could feel only sympathy for the little creature that was forced to acknowledge such a man for a parent.

"Ma's goin' to be near 'bout distracted," Sophie pursued, shaking her tangled head. "That's the only dime she had."

"Never mind," gasped Janice, feeling the tears very near to the surface. "I'll let you have the dime you need. Is—is your papa always like that?"

"Oh, no! Oh, no! He works in the woods sometimes. But since the tavern's been open he's been drinkin' more. Ma says she hopes it'll burn down," added Sophie, with perfect seriousness.

Suddenly Janice felt that she could echo that desire herself. Ethically two wrongs do not make a right; but it is human nature to see the direct way to the end and wish for it, not always regarding ethical considerations. Janice became at that moment converted to the cause of making Polktown a dry spot again on the State map.

"My dear!" she said, with her arm about the tangle-haired little Sophie, "I am sorry for—for your father. Maybe we can all help him to stop drinking. I—I hope he doesn't abuse you."

"He's awful good when he's sober," repeated the little thing, wistfully. "But he ain't been sober much lately."

"How many are there of you, Sophie?"

"There's ma and me and Johnny and Eddie and the baby. We ain't named the baby. Ma says she ain't sure we'll raise her and 'twould be no use namin' her if she ain't going to be raised, would it?"

"No-o—perhaps not," admitted Janice, rather startled by this philosophy. "Don't you have the doctor for her?"

"Once. But it costs money. And ma's so busy she can't drag clean up the hill to Doc Poole's office very often. And then—well, there ain't been much money since pop come out of the woods this Spring."

Her old-fashioned talk gave Janice a pretty clear insight into the condition of affairs at the Narnay house. She asked the child where she lived and learned the locality (down near the shore of Pine Cove) and how to get to it. She made a mental note of this for a future visit to the place.

"Here's another dime, Sophie," she said, finding the cleanest spot on the little girl's cheek to kiss. "Your father's out of sight now, and you can run along to the store and get the meal."

"You're a good 'un, Miss," declared Sophie, nodding. "Come and see the baby. She's awful pretty, but ma says she's rickety. Good-bye."

The little girl was away like the wind, her broken shoes clattering over the flagstones. Janice looked after her and sighed. There seemed a sudden weight pressing upon her mind. The sunshine was dimmed; the sweet odors of Spring lost their spice in her nostrils. Instead of strolling down to the dock as she had intended, she turned about and, with lagging step, took her homeward way.

The sight of this child's trouble, the thought of Narnay's weakness and what it meant to his unfortunate family, brought to mind with crushing force Janice's own trouble. And this personal trouble was from afar.

Amid the kaleidoscopic changes in Mexican affairs, Janice's father had been laboring for three years and more to hold together the mining properties conceded to him and his fellow-stockholders by the administration of Porfirio Diaz. In the battle-ridden State of Chihuahua Mr. Broxton Day was held a virtual prisoner, by first one warring faction and then another.

At one time, being friendly with a certain chief of the belligerents, Mr. Day had taken out ore and had had the mine in good running condition. Some money had flowed into the coffers of the mining company. Janice benefited in a way during this season of plenty.

Now, of late, the Yaquis had swept down from the mountains, Mr. Day's laborers had run away, and his own life was placed in peril again. He wrote little about his troubles to his daughter, living so far away in the Vermont village, but his bare mention of conditions was sufficient to spur Janice's imagination. She was anxious in the extreme.

"If Daddy would only come home on a visit as he had expected to this Spring!" was the longing thought now in her mind. "Oh, dear me! What matter if the season does change? It won't bring him back to me. I'd—I'd sell my darling car and take the money and run away to him if I dared!"

This was a desperate thought indeed, for the Kremlin automobile her father had bought Janice the year before remained the apple of her eye. That very morning Marty had rolled it out of the garage he and his father had built for it, and started to overhaul it for his cousin. Marty had become something of a mechanic since the arrival of the Kremlin at the Day place.

The roads were fast drying up, and Marty promised that the car would soon be in order. But the thought now served to inspire no anticipation of pleasure in Janice's troubled mind.

She passed Major Price just at the foot of Hillside Avenue. The major was Polktown's moneyed man—really the magnate of the village. His was the largest house on the hill—a broad, high-pillared colonial mansion with a great, shaded, sloping lawn in front. An important looking house was the major's and the major was important looking, too.

But Janice noted more particularly than ever before that there were many purple veins distinctly lined upon the major's nose and cheeks and that his eyes were moist and wavering in their glance. He used a cane with a flourish; but his legs had an unsteadiness that a cane could not correct.

"Good day! Good day, Miss Janice! Happy to see you! Fine Spring weather—yes, yes," he said, with great cordiality, removing his silk hat. "Charming weather, indeed. It has tempted me out for a walk—yes, yes!" and he rolled by, swinging his cane and bobbing his head.

Janice knew that nowadays the major's walks always led him to the Lake View Inn. Mrs. Price and Maggie did their best to hide the major's missteps, but the children on the streets, seeing the local magnate making heavy work of his journey back up the hill, would giggle and follow on behind, an amused audience. This was another victim of the change in Polktown's temperance situation.

Poor Major Price——

"Hi, Janice! Did you notice the 'still' the major's got on?" called the cheerful voice of Marty, her cousin. "He's got more than he can carry comfortably already; Walky Dexter will be taking him home again. He did the other night."

"No, Marty! did he?" cried the troubled girl.

"Sure," chuckled Marty. "Walky says he thinks some of giving up the express business and buyin' himself a hack. Some of these old soaks around town will be glad to ride home under cover after a session at Lem Parraday's place. Think of Walky as a 'nighthawk'!" and Marty, who was a short, freckled-faced boy several years his cousin's junior, went off into a spasm of laughter.

"Don't, Marty!" cried Janice, in horror. "Don't talk so lightly about it! Why, it is dreadful!"

"What's dreadful? Walky getting a hack?"

"Be serious," commanded his cousin, who really had gained a great deal of influence over the thoughtless Marty during the time she had lived in Polktown. "Oh, Marty! I've just seen such a dreadful thing!"

"Hullo! What's that?" he asked, eyeing her curiously and ceasing his laughter. He knew now that she was in earnest.

"That horrid old Jim Narnay—you know him?"

"Sure," agreed Marty, beginning to grin faintly again.

"He was intoxicated—really staggering drunk. And he came out of the back door of the Inn, and some boys chased him out on to the street, hooting after him. Perry Grimes and Sim Howell and some others. Old enough to know better——"

"He, he!" chuckled Marty, exploding with laughter again. "Old Narnay's great fun. One of the fellows the other day told him there was a brick in his hat, and he took the old thing off to look into it to see if it was true. Then he stood there and lectured us about being truthful. He, he!"

"Oh, Marty!" ejaculated Janice, in horror. "You never! You don't! You *can't* be so mean!"

"Hi tunket!" exploded the boy. "What's the matter with you? What d'ye mean? 'I never, I don't, I can't! What sort of talk is that?"

"There's nothing funny about it," his cousin said sternly. "I want to know if *you* would mock at that poor man on the street?"

"At Narnay?"

"Yes."

"Why not?" demanded Marty. "He's only an old drunk. And he is great fun."

"He—he is disgusting! He is horrid!" cried the girl earnestly. "He is an awful, ruffianly creature, but he's nothing to laugh at. Listen, Marty!" and vividly, with all the considerable descriptive powers that she possessed, the girl repeated what had occurred when little Sophie Narnay had run into her drunken parent on the street.

Marty was a boy, and not a thoughtful boy at all; but, as he listened, the grin disappeared from his face and he did not look like laughing.

"Whew! The mean scamp!" was his comment. "Poor kid! Do you s'pose he hurts her?"

"He hurts her—and her mother—and the two little boys—and that unnamed baby—whenever he takes money to spend for drink. It doesn't particularly matter whether he beats her. I don't think he does that, or the child would not love him and make excuses for him. But tell me, Marty Day! Is there anything funny in a man like that?"

"Whew!" admitted the boy. "It does look different when you think of it that way. But some of these fellers that crook their elbows certainly do funny stunts when they've had a few!"

"Marty Day!" cried Janice, clasping her hands, "I didn't notice it before. But you even *talk* differently from the way you used to. Since the bar at the Inn has been open I believe you boys have got hold of an entirely new brand of slang."

"Huh?" said Marty.

"Why, it is awful! I had been thinking that Mr. Parraday's license only made a difference to himself and poor Marm Parraday and his customers. But that is not so. Everybody in Polktown is affected by the change. I am going to talk to Mr. Meddlar about it, or to Elder Concannon. Something ought to be done."

"Hi tunket! There ye go!" chuckled Marty. "More *do something* business. You'd better begin with Walky."

"Begin what with Walky?"

"Your temperance campaign, if that's what you mean," said the boy, more soberly.

"Not Walky Dexter!" exclaimed Janice, amazed. "You don't mean the liquor selling has done him harm?"

"Well," Marty said slowly, "Walky takes a drink now and then. Sometimes the drummers he hauls trunks and sample-cases for give him a drink. As long as he couldn't get it in town, Walky never bothered with the stuff much. But he was a little elevated Saturday night—that's right."

"Oh!" gasped Janice, for the town expressman was one of her oldest friends in Polktown, and a man in whom she took a deep interest.

A slow grin dawned again on Marty's freckled countenance. "Ye ought to hear him when he's had a drink or two. You called him 'Talkworthy' Dexter; and he sure is some talky when he's been imbibing."

"Oh, Marty, that's dreadful!" and Janice sighed. "It's just wicked! Polktown's been a sleepy place, but it's never been wicked before."

Her cousin looked at her admiringly. "Hi jinks, Janice! I bet you got it in your mind to stir things up again. I can see it in your eyes. You give Polktown its first clean-up day, and you've shook up the dry bones in general all over the shop. There's going to be *something doing*, I reckon, that'll make 'em all set up and take notice."

"You talk as though I were one of these awful female reformers the funny papers tell about," Janice

said, with a little laugh. "You see nothing in my eyes, Marty, unless it's tears for poor little Sophie Narnay."

The cousins arrived at the old Day house and entered the grass-grown yard. It was an old-fashioned, homely place, a rambling farmhouse up to which the village had climbed. There was plenty of shade, lush grass beneath the trees, with crocuses and other Spring flowers peeping from the beds about the front porch, and sweet peas already breaking the soil at the side porch and pump-bench.

A smiling, cushiony woman met Janice at the door, while Marty went whistling barnward, having the chores to do. Aunt 'Mira nowadays usually had a smile for everybody, but for Janice always.

"Your uncle's home, Janice," she said, "and he brought the mail."

"Oh!" cried the girl, with a quick intake of breath. "A letter from daddy?"

"Wal—I dunno," said the fleshy woman. "I reckon it must be. Yet it don't look just like Brocky Day's hand of write. See—here 'tis. It's from Mexico, anyway."

The girl seized the letter with a gasp. "It—it's the same stationery he uses," she said, with a note of thankfulness. "I—I guess it's all right. I'll run right up and read it."

She flew upstairs to her little room—her room that looked out upon the beautiful lake. She could never bring herself to read over a letter from her father first in the presence of the rest of the family. She sat down without removing her hat and gloves, pulled a tiny hairpin from the wavy lock above her ear and slit the thin, rice-paper envelope. Two enclosures were shaken out into her lap.

CHAPTER II

"TALKY" DEXTER, INDEED!

The moments of suspense were hard to bear. There was always a fluttering at Janice's heart when she received a letter from her father. She always dreamed of him as a mariner skirting the coasts of Uncertainty. There was no telling, as Aunt 'Mira often said, what was going to happen to Broxton Day next.

First of all, on this occasion, the young girl saw that the most important enclosure was the usual fat letter addressed to her in daddy's hand. With it was a thin, oblong card, on which, in minute and very exact script, was written this flowery note:

"With respect I, whom you know not, venture to address you humbly, and in view of the situation of your honorable father, the Señor B Day, beg to make known to you that the military authorities now in power in this district have refused him the privilege of sending or receiving mail. Yet, fear not, sweet Señorita; while the undersigned retains the boon of breath and the power of brain and arm, thy letters, if addressed in my care, shall reach none but thy father's eye, and his to thee shall be safely consigned to the government mails beyond the Rio Grande.

"Faithfully thine,

"JUAN DICAMPA."

Who the writer of this peculiar communication was, Janice had no means of knowing. In the letter from her father which she immediately opened, there was no mention of Juan Dicampa.

Mr. Day did say, however, that he seemed to have incurred the particular enmity of the Zapatist chief then at the head of the district because he was not prepared to bribe him personally and engage his ragged and barefoot soldiery to work in the mine.

He did not say that his own situation was at all changed. Rather, he joked about the half-breeds and the pure-blood Yaquis then in power about the mine. Either Mr. Broxton Day had become careless because of continued peril, or he really considered these Indians less to be feared than the brigands who had previously overrun this part of Chihuahua.

However, it was good to hear from daddy and to know that—up to the time the letter was written, at least—he was all right. She went down to supper with some cheerfulness, and took the letter to read aloud, by snatches, during the meal.

A letter from Mexico was always an event in the Day household. Marty was openly desirous of emulating "Uncle Brocky" and getting out of Polktown—no matter where or how. Aunt 'Mira was inclined to wonder how the ladies of Mexico dressed and deported themselves. Uncle Jason observed:

"I've allus maintained that Broxton Day is a stubborn and foolish feller. Why! see the strain he's been under these years since he went down to that forsaken country. An' what for?"

"To make a fortune, Dad," interposed Marty. "Hi tunket! Wisht I was in his shoes."

"Money ain't ev'rything," said Uncle Jason, succinctly.

"Well, it's a hull lot," proclaimed the son.

"I reckon that's so, Jason," Aunt Almira agreed. "It's his money makin' that leaves Janice so comfterble here. And her automobile——"

"Oh, shucks! Is money wuth life?" demanded Mr. Day. "What good will money be to him if he's stood up against one o' them dough walls and shot at by a lot of slantindicular-eyed heathen?"

"Hoo!" shouted Marty. "The Mexicans ain't slant-eyed like Chinamen and Japs."

"And they ain't heathen," added Aunt Almira. "They don't bow down to figgers of wood and stone."

"Besides, Uncle," put in Janice, softly, and with a smile, "it is *adobe* not *dough* they build their houses of."

"Huh!" snorted Uncle Jason. "Don't keer a continental. He's one foolish man. He'd better throw up the whole business, come back here to Polktown, and I'll let him have a piece of the old farm to till."

"Oh! that would be lovely, Uncle Jason!" cried Janice, clasping her hands. "If he only *could* retire to dear Polktown for the rest of his life and we could live together in peace."

"Hi tunket!" exclaimed Marty, pushing back his chair from the supper table just as the outer door opened. "He kin have *my* share of the old farm," for Marty had taken a mighty dislike to farming and had long before this stated his desire to be a civil engineer.

"At it ag'in, air ye, Marty?" drawled a voice from the doorway. "If repetition of what ye want makes detarmination, Mart, then you air the most detarmined man since Lot's wife—and she was a woman, er-haw! haw! haw!"

"Come in, Walky," said Uncle Jason, greeting the broad and ruddy face of his neighbor with a brisk nod.

"Set up and have a bite," was Aunt 'Mira's hospitable addition.

"No, no! I had a snack down to the tavern, Marthy's gone to see her folks terday and I didn't 'spect no supper to hum. I'm what ye call a grass-widderer. Haw! haw! haw!" explained the local expressman.

Walky's voice seemed louder than usual, his face was more beaming, and he was more prone to laugh at his own jokes. Janice and Marty exchanged glances as the expressman came in and took a chair that creaked under his weight. The girl, remembering what her cousin had said about the visitor, wondered if it were possible that Walky had been drinking and now showed the effects of it.

It was true, as Janice had once said—the expressman should have been named "Talkworthy" rather than "Walkworthy" Dexter. To-night he seemed much more talkative than usual.

"What were all you younkners out o' school so early for, Marty?" he asked. "Ain't been an eperdemic o' smallpox broke out, has there?"

"Teachers' meeting," said Marty. "The Superintendent of Schools came over and they say we're going to have fortnightly lectures on Friday afternoons—mebbe illustrated ones. Crackey! it don't matter what they have," declared this careless boy, "as long as 'tain't lessons."

"Lectures?" repeated Walky. "Do tell! What sort of lectures?"

"I heard Mr. Haley say the first one would proberbly be illustrated by a collection of rare coins some

rich feller's lent the State School Board. He says the coins are worth thousands of dollars."

"Lectures on coins?" cackled Walky. "I could give ye a lecture on ev'ry dollar me and Josephus ever airned! Haw! haw! haw!"

Walky rolled in his chair in delight at his own wit. Uncle Jason was watching him with some curiosity as he filled and lit his pipe.

"Walky," he drawled, "what was the very hardest dollar you ever airned? It strikes me that you allus have picked the softest jobs, arter all."

"Me? Soft jobs?" demanded Walkworthy, with some indignation. "Ye oughter try liftin' some o' them drummers' sample-cases that I hatter wrestle with. Wal!" Then his face began to broaden and his eyes to twinkle. "Arter all, it was a soft job that I airned my hardest dollar by, for a fac'."

"Let's have it, Walky," urged Marty. "Get it out of your system. You'll feel better for it."

"Why, ter tell the truth," grinned Walky, "it was a soft job, for I carried five pounds of feathers in a bolster twelve miles to old Miz' Kittridge one Winter day when I was a boy. I got a dollar for it and come as nigh bein' froze ter death as ever a boy did and save his bacon."

"Do tell us about it, Walky," said Janice, who was wiping the supper dishes for her aunt.

"I should say it was a soft job—five pounds of feathers!" burst out Marty.

"How fur did you haf to travel, Walky?" asked Aunt 'Mira.

"Twelve mile over the snow and ice, me without snowshoes and it thirty below zero. Yes, sir!" went on Walky, beginning to stuff the tobacco into his own pipe from Mr. Day's proffered sack. "That was some job! Miz Bob Kittridge, the old lady's darter-in-law, give me the dollar *and* the job; and I done it.

"The old lady lived over behind this here very mountain, all alone on the Kittridge farm. The tracks was jest natcherly blowed over and hid under more snow than ye ever see in a Winter nowadays. I believe there was five foot on a level in the woods.

"There'd been a rain; then she'd froze up ag'in," pursued Walky. "It put a crust on the snow, but I had no idee it had made the ice rotten. And with Mr. Mercury creepin' down to thirty below—jefers-pelters! I'd no idee Mink Creek had open air-holes in it. I ain't never understood it to this day.

"Wal, sir! ye know where Mink Creek crosses the road to Kittridge's, Jason?"

Mr. Day nodded. "I know the place, Walky," he agreed.

"That's where it happened," said Walky Dexter, nodding his head many times. "I was crossin' the stream, thinkin' nothin' could happen, and 'twas jest at sunup. I'd come six mile, and was jest ha'f way to the farm. I kerried that piller-case over my shoulder, and slung from the other shoulder was a gun, and I had a hatchet in my belt.

"Jefers-pelters! All of a suddint I slumped down, right through the snow-crust, and douced up ter my middle inter the coldest water I ever felt I did, for a fac'!"

"I sprung out o' that right pert, ye kin believe; and then the next step I went down ker-chug! ag'in—this time up ter my armpits."

"Crackey!" exclaimed Marty. "That was some slip. What did you do?"

"I got out o' that hole purty careful, now I tell ye; but I left my cap floatin' on the open pool o' water," the expressman said. "Why, I was a cake of ice in two minutes—and six miles from anywhere, whichever way I turned."

"Oh, Walky!" ejaculated Janice, interested. "What ever did you do?"

"Wal, I had either to keep on or go back. Didn't much matter which. And in them days I hated ter gin up when I'd started a thing. But I had ter git that cap first of all. I couldn't afford ter lose it nohow. And another thing, I'd a froze my ears if I hadn't got it.

"So I goes back to the bank of the crick and cut me a pole. Then I fished out the cap, wrung it out as

good as I could, and clapped it on my head. Before I'd clumb the crick bank ag'in that cap was as stiff as one o' them tin helmets ye read about them knights wearin' in the middle ages—er-haw! haw! haw!

"I had ter laig it then, believe me!" pursued the expressman. "Was cased in ice right from my head ter my heels. Could git erlong jest erbout as graceful as one of these here cigar-store Injuns—er-haw! haw! haw!

"I dunno how I made it ter Ma'am Kittridge's—but I done it! The old lady seen the plight I was in, and she made me sit down by the kitchen fire just like I was. Wouldn't let me take off a thing.

"She het up some kinder hot tea—like ter burnt all the skin off my tongue and throat, I swow!" pursued Walky. "Must ha' drunk two quarts of it, an' gradually it begun ter thaw me out from the inside. That's how I saved my feet—sure's you air born!

"When I come inter her kitchen I clumped in with feet's big as an elephant's an' no more feelin' in them than as though they'd been boxes and not feet. If I'd peeled off that ice and them boots, the feet would ha' come with 'em. But the old lady knowed what ter do, for a fac'.

"Hardest dollar ever I airned," repeated Walky, shaking his head, "and jest carryin' a mess of goose feathers—"

"Hullo! who's this here comin' aboard?"

Janice had run to answer a knock at the side door. Aunt 'Mira came more slowly with the sitting room lamp which she had lighted.

"Well, Janice Day! Air ye all deaf here?" exclaimed a high and rather querulous voice.

"Do come in, Mrs. Scattergood," cried the girl.

"I declare, Miz Scattergood," said Aunt 'Mira, with interest, "you here at this time o' night? I am glad to see ye."

"Guess ye air some surprised," said the snappy, birdlike old woman whom Janice ushered into the sitting room. "I only got back from Skunk's Holler, where I been visitin', this very day. And what d'ye s'pose I found when I went into Hopewell Drugg's?"

"Goodness!" said Aunt 'Mira. "They ain't none o' them sick, be they?"

"Sick enough, I guess," exclaimed Mrs. Scattergood, nodding her head vigorously: "Leastways, 'Rill oughter be. I told her so! I was faithful in season, and outer season, warnin' her what would happen if she married that Drugg."

"Oh, Mrs. Scattergood! What has happened?" cried Janice, earnestly.

"What's happened to Hopewell?" added Aunt 'Mira.

"Enough, I should say! He's out carousin' with that fiddle of his'n—down ter Lem Parraday's tavern this very night with some wild gang of fellers, and my 'Rill hum with that child o' his'n. And what d'ye think?" demanded Mrs. Scattergood, still excitedly. "What d'ye think's happened ter that Lottie Drugg?"

"Oh, my, Mrs. Scattergood! What *has* happened to poor little Lottie?" Janice cried.

"Why," said 'Rill Drugg's mother, lowering her voice a little and moderating her asperity. "The poor little thing's goin' blind again, I do believe!"

CHAPTER III

"THE SEVENTH ABOMINATION"

Sorrowful as Janice Day was because of the report upon little Lottie Drugg's affliction, she was equally troubled regarding the storekeeper himself. Janice had a deep interest in both Mr. Drugg and 'Rill Scattergood—"that was," to use a provincialism. The girl really felt as though she had helped more

than a little to bring the storekeeper and the old-maid school-teacher together after so many years of misunderstanding.

It goes without saying that Mrs. Scattergood had given no aid in making the match. Indeed, as could be gathered from what she said now, the birdlike woman had heartily disapproved of her daughter's marrying the widowed storekeeper.

"Yes," she repeated; "there I found poor, foolish 'Rill—her own eyes as red as a lizard's—bathing that child's eyes. I never did believe them Boston doctors could cure her. Yeou jest wasted your money, Janice Day, when you put up fer the operation, and I knowed it at the time."

"Oh, I hope not, Mrs. Scattergood!" Janice replied. "Not that I care about the money; but I do, *do* hope that little Lottie will keep her sight. The poor, dear little thing!"

"What's the matter with Lottie Drugg?" demanded Marty, from the doorway. Walky Dexter had started homeward, and Marty and Mr. Day joined the women folk in the sitting room.

"Oh, Marty!" Janice exclaimed, "Mrs. Scattergood says there is danger of the poor child's losing her sight again."

"And that ain't the wust of it," went on Mrs. Scattergood, bridling. "My darter is an unfortunate woman. I knowed how 'twould be when she married that no-account Drugg. He sartainly was one 'drug on the market,' if ever there was one! Always a-dreamin' an' never accomplishin' anything.

"Now Lem Parraday's opened that bar of his'n—an' he'd oughter be tarred an' feathered for doin' of it—I 'spect Hopewell will be hangin' about there most of his time like the rest o' the ne'er-do-well male critters of this town, an' a-lettin' of what little business he's got go to pot."

"Oh, Miz Scattergood," said Aunt 'Mira comfortably, "I wouldn't give way ter sech forebodin's. Hopewell is rather better than the ordinary run of men, I allow."

Uncle Jason chuckled. "It never struck me," he said, "that Hopewell was one o' the carousin' kind. I'd about as soon expec' Mr. Middler to cut up sech didoes as Hope Drugg."

Mrs. Scattergood flushed and her eyes snapped. If she was birdlike, she could peck like a bird, and her bill was sharp.

"I reckon there ain't none of you men any too good," she said; "minister, an' all of ye. Oh! I know enough about *men*, I sh'd hope! I hearn a lady speak at the Skunk's Holler schoolhouse when I was there at my darter-in-law's last week. She was one o' them suffragettes ye hear about, and she knowed all about men and their doin's.

"I wouldn't trust none o' ye farther than I could sling an elephant by his tail! As for Hopewell Drugg—he never was no good, and he never will be wuth ha'f as much again!"

"Well, well, well," chuckled Uncle Jason, easily. "How did this here sufferin-yet l'arn so much about the tribes o' men? I 'spect she was a spinster lady?"

"She was a Miss Pogannis," was the tart reply.

"Ya-as," drawled Mr. Day. "It's them that's never summered and wintered a man that 'pears ter know the most about 'em. Ev'ry old maid in the world knows more about bringin' up children than the wimmen that's had a dozen."

"Oh, yeou needn't think she didn't know what she was talkin' abeout!" cried Mrs. Scattergood, tossing her head. "She culled her examples from hist'ry, as well as modern times. Look at Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! All them men kep' their wimmen in bondage.

"D'yeou s'pose Sarah wanted to go trapesing all over the airth, ev'ry time Abraham wanted ter change his habitation?" demanded the argumentative suffragist. "Of course, he always said God told him to move, not the landlord. But, my soul! a man will say anything.

"An' see how Jacob treated Rachel——"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Uncle Jason, letting his pipe go out. "I thought Jacob was a fav'rite hero of you wimmen folks. Didn't he sarve—how many was it?—fourteen year, for Rachel?"

"Bah!" exclaimed the old lady. "I 'spect she wished he'd sarved fourteen year *more*, when she seen the big family she had to wash and mend for. Don't talk to me! Wimmen's never had their rights in this world yet, but they're goin' to get 'em now."

Here Aunt 'Mira broke in to change the topic of conversation to one less perilous: "I never did hear tell that Hopewell Drugg drank a drop. It's a pity if he's took it up so late in life—and him jest married."

"Wal! I jest tell ye what I know. There's my 'Rill cryin' her eyes out an' she confessed that Drugg had gone down to the tavern to fiddle, and that he'd been there before. She has to wait on store evenin's, as well as take care of that young one, while he's out carousin'."

"Carousin'! Gosh!" exploded Marty, suddenly. "I know what it is. There's a bunch of fellers from Middletown way comin' over to-night with their girls to hold a dance. I heard about it. Hopewell's goin' to play the fiddle for them to dance by. Tell you, the Inn's gettin' to be a gay place."

"It's disgustin whatever it is!" cried Mrs. Scattergood, rather taken aback by Marty's information, yet still clinging to her own opinion. It was not Mrs. Scattergood's nature to scatter good—quite the opposite. "An' no married man should attend sech didoes. Like enough he *will* drink with the rest of 'em. Oh, 'Rill will be sick enough of her job before she's through with it, yeou mark my words."

"Oh, Mrs. Scattergood," Janice said pleadingly, "I hope you are wrong. I would not want to see Miss 'Rill unhappy."

"She's made her bed—let her lie in it," said the disapproving mother, gloomily. "I warned her."

Later, both Janice and Marty went with Mrs. Scattergood to see her safely home. She lived in the half of a tiny cottage on High Street above the side street on which Hopewell Drugg had his store. Had it not been so late, Janice would have insisted upon going around to see "Miss 'Rill," as all her friends still called, the ex-school teacher, though she was married.

As they were bidding their caller good night at her gate, a figure coming up the hill staggered into the radiance of the street light on the corner. Janice gasped. Mrs. Scattergood ejaculated:

"What did I tell ye?"

Marty emitted a shrill whistle of surprise.

"What d'ye know about *that*?" he added, in a low voice.

There was no mistaking the figure which turned the corner toward Hopewell Drugg's store. It was the proprietor of the store himself, with his fiddle in its green baize bag tightly tucked under his arm; but his feet certainly were unsteady, and his head hung upon his breast.

They saw him disappear into the darkness of the side street. Janice Day put her hand to her throat; it seemed to her as though the pulse beating there would choke her.

"What did I tell ye? What did I tell ye?" cried the shrill voice of Mrs. Scattergood. "*Now* ye'll believe what I say, I hope! The disgraceful critter! My poor, poor 'Rill! I knew how 'twould be if she married that man."

It chanced that Janice Day's Bible opened that night to the sixth of Proverbs and she read before going to bed these verses:

"These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him.

"A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood.

"An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief.

"A false witness that speaketh lies, *and he that soweth discord among brethren.*"

CHAPTER IV

A RIFT IN THE HONEYMOON

Janice could not call at the little grocery on the side street until Friday afternoon when she returned from Middletown for over Sunday. While the roads were so bad that she could not use her car in which to run back and forth to the seminary she boarded during the school days near the seminary.

But 'Rill Drugg and little Lottie were continually in her mind. From Walky Dexter, with whom she rode home to Polktown on Friday, she gained some information that she would have been glad not to hear.

"Talk about the 'woman with the sarpint tongue,'" chuckled Walky. "We sartain sure have our share of she in Polktown."

"What is the matter now, Walky?" asked Janice, gaily, not suspecting what was coming. "Has somebody got ahead of you in circulating a particularly juicy bit of gossip?"

"Huh!" snorted the expressman. "I gotter take a back seat, *I* have. Did ye hear 'bout Hopewell Drugg gittin' drunk, an' beatin' his wife, an' I dunno but they say by this time that it's his fault lettles Lottie's goin' blind again——"

"Oh, Walky! it can't be true!" gasped the girl, horrified.

"What can't? That them old hens is sayin' sech things?" demanded the driver.

"That Lottie is truly going blind?"

"Dunno. She's in a bad way. Hopewell wants to send her back to Boston as quick's he can. I know that. And them sayin' that he's turned inter a reg'lar old drunk, an' sich."

"What do you mean, Walky?" asked Janice, seriously. "You cannot be in earnest. Surely people do not say such dreadful things about Mr. Drugg?"

"Fact. They got poor old Hopewell on the dissectin' table, and the way them wimmen cut him up is a caution to cats!"

"What women, Walky?"

"His blessed mother-in-law, for one. And most of the Ladies Aid is a-follerin' of her example. They air sayin' he's nex' door to a ditch drunkard."

"Why, Walky Dexter! nobody would really believe such talk about Mr. Drugg," Janice declared.

"Ye wouldn't think so, would ye? We've all knowed Hopewell Drugg for years an' years, and he's allus seemed the mildest-mannered pirate that ever cut off a yard of turkey-red. But now—Jefers-pelters! ye oughter hear 'em! He gits drunk, beats 'Rill Scattergood, *that was*, and otherwise behaves himself like a hardened old villain."

"Oh, Walky! I would not believe such things about Mr. Drugg—not if he told them to me himself!" exclaimed Janice.

"An' I reckon nobody would ha' dreamed sech things about him if Marm Scattergood hadn't got home from Skunk's Holler. I expect she stirred up things over there abeout as much as her son and his wife'd stand, and they shipped her back to Polktown. And Polktown—includin' Hopewell—will hafter stand it."

"It is a shame!" cried Janice, with indignation. Then she added, doubtfully, remembering the unfortunate incident she and Marty and Mrs. Scattergood had viewed so recently: "Of course, there isn't a word of truth in it?"

"That Hopewell's become a toper and beats his wife?" chuckled Walky. "Wal—I reckon not! Maybe Hopewell takes a glass now and then—I dunno. I never seen him. But they *do* say he went home airly from the dance at Lem Parraday's t'other night in a slightly elevated condition. Haw! haw! haw!"

"It is nothing to laugh at," Janice said severely.

"Nor nothin' ter cry over," promptly returned Walkworthy Dexter. "What's a drink or two? It ain't never hurt *me*. Why should it Hopewell?"

"Don't argue with me, Walky Dexter!" Janice exclaimed, much exasperated. "I—I *hate* it all—this drinking. I never thought of it much before. Polktown has been free of that curse until lately. It is a shame the bar was ever opened at the Lake View Inn. *And something ought to be done about it!*"

Walky had pulled in his team for her to jump down before Hopewell Drugg's store. "Jefers-pelters!" murmured the driver, scratching his head. "If that gal detarmines to put Lem Parraday out o' the licker

business, mebbe—mebbe I'd better go down an' buy me another drink 'fore she does it. Haw! haw! haw!"

Hopewell Drugg's store was a very different looking shop now from its appearance that day when Janice had led little blind Lottie up from the wharf at Pine Cove and delivered her to her father for safe keeping.

Then the goods had been dusty and fly-specked, and the interior of the store dark and musty. Now the shelves and showcases were neatly arranged, everything was scrupulously clean, and it was plain that the reign of woman had succeeded the pandemonium of man.

There was nobody in the store at the moment; but from the rear the sobbing tones of a violin took up the strains of "Silver Threads Among the Gold." Janice listened. There seemed, to her ear, a sadder strain than ever in Hopewell's playing of the old ballad. For a time this favorite had been discarded for lighter and brighter melodies, for the little family here on the by-street had been wonderfully happy.

They all three welcomed Janice Day joyfully now. The storekeeper, much sprucer in dress than heretofore, smiled and nodded to her over the bridge of his violin. His wife, in a pretty print house dress, ran out from her sitting room where she was sewing, to take Janice in her arms. As for little Lottie, she danced about the visitor in glee.

"Oh, Janice Day! Oh, Janice Day! Looker me!" she crowed. "See my new dress? Isn't it pretty? And Mamma 'Rill made it for me—all of it! She makes me lots and lots of nice things. Isn't she just the bestest Mamma 'Rill that ever was?"

"She certainly is," admitted Janice, laughing and kissing the pretty child. But she looked anxiously into the beautiful blue eyes, too. Nothing there betrayed growing visual trouble. Yet, when Lottie Drugg was stone-blind, the expression of her eyes had been lovely.

"Weren't you and your papa lucky to get such a mamma?" continued Janice with a swift glance over her shoulder at Hopewell.

The storekeeper was drawing the bow across the strings softly and just a murmur came from them as he listened. His eyes, Janice saw, were fixed in pride and satisfaction upon his wife's trim figure.

On her part, Mrs. Drugg seemed her usual brisk, kind self. Yet there was a cheerful note lacking here. The honeymoon for such a loving couple could not yet have waned; but there was a rift in it.

'Rill wanted to talk. Janice could see that. The young girl had been the school teacher's only confidant previous to her marriage to Hopewell Drugg, and she still looked upon Janice as her dearest friend. They left Lottie playing in the back room of the store and listening to her father's fiddle, while 'Rill closed the door between that room and the dwelling.

"Oh, my dear!" Janice hastened to ask, first of all, "is it true?"

'Rill flushed and there was a spark in her eye—Janice thought of indignation. Indeed, her voice was rather sharp as she asked:

"Is what true?"

"About Lottie. Her eyes—you know."

"Oh, the poor little thing!" and instantly the step-mother's countenance changed. "Janice, we don't know. Poor Hopewell is 'most worried to death. Sometimes it seems as though there was a blur over the child's eyes. And she has never got over her old habit of shutting her eyes and seeing with her fingers, as she calls it."

"Ah! I know," the girl said. "But that does not necessarily mean that she has difficulty with her vision."

"That is true. And the doctor in Boston wrote that, at times, there might arise some slight clouding of the vision if she used her eyes too much, if she suffered other physical ills, even if she were frightened or unhappy."

"The last two possibilities may certainly be set aside," said Janice, with confidence. "And she is as rosy and healthy looking as she could be."

"Yes," said 'Rill.

"Then what can it be that has caused the trouble?"

"We cannot imagine," with a sigh. "It—it is worrying Hopewell, night and day."

"Poor man!"

"He—he is changed a great deal, Janice," whispered the bride.

Janice was silent, but held 'Rill's hand in her own comforting clasp.

"Don't think he isn't good to me. He is! He is! He is the sweetest tempered man that ever lived! You know that, yourself. And I thought I was going to make him—oh!—so happy."

"Hush! hush, dear!" murmured Janice, for Mrs. Drugg's eyes had run over and she sobbed aloud. "He loves you just the same. I can see it in the way he looks at you. And why should he not love you?"

"But he has lost his cheerfulness. He worries about Lottie, I know. There—there is another thing——"

She stopped. She pursued this thread of thought no further. Janice wondered then—and she wondered afterward—if this unexplained anxiety connected Hopewell Drugg with the dances at the Lake View Inn.

CHAPTER V

"THE BLUEBIRD—FOR HAPPINESS"

Could it be possible that Janice Day had alighted from Walky Dexter's old carryall at the little grocery store for still another purpose? It was waning afternoon, yet she did not immediately make her way homeward.

Mrs. Beaseley lived almost across the street from Hopewell Drugg's store, and Nelson Haley, the principal of Polktown's graded school, boarded with the widow. Janice ran in to see her "just for a moment." Therefore, it could scarcely be counted strange that the young school principal should have caught the girl in Mrs. Beaseley's bright kitchen when he came home with his satchel of books and papers.

"There! I do declare for't!" ejaculated the widow, who was a rather lugubrious woman living in what she believed to be the remembrance of "her sainted Charles."

"There! I do declare for't! I git to talkin' and I forgit how the time flies. That's what my poor Charles uster say—he had *that* fault to find with me, poor soul. I couldn't never seem to git the vittles on the table on time when I was young.

"I was mindin' to make you a shortcake for your supper to-night, Mr. Haley, out o' some o' them peaches I canned last Fall! But it's so late——"

"You needn't hurry supper on my account, Mrs. Beaseley," said Nelson, cheerily, and without removing his gloves. "I find I've to go downtown again on an errand. I'll not be back for an hour."

Janice was smiling merrily at him from the doorway.

Mrs. Beaseley began to bustle about. "That'll give me just time to toss up the shortcake," she proclaimed. "Good-bye, Janice. Come again. Mr. Haley'll like to walk along with you, I know."

Mrs. Beaseley was blind to what most people, in Polktown knew—that Janice and the schoolteacher were the very closest of friends. Only their years—at least, only Janice's youth—precluded an announced engagement between them.

"Wait until I can come home and get a square look at this phenomenal young man whom you have found in Polktown," Daddy had written, and Janice would not dream of going against her father's expressed wish.

Besides, Nelson Haley was a poor young man, with his own way to make in the world. His work in the Polktown school had attracted the attention of the faculty of a college not far away, and he had already

been invited to join the teaching staff of that institution.

Janice had been the young man's inspiration when he had first come to Polktown, a raw college graduate, bent only on "teaching for a living" and on earning his salary as easily as possible. Awakened by his desire to stand well in the estimation of the serious-minded girl—eager to "make good" with her—Nelson Haley had put his shoulder to the wheel, and the result was Polktown's fine new graded school, with the young man himself at the head of it.

Nelson was good looking—extremely good looking, indeed. He was light, not dark like Janice, and he was muscular and sturdy without being at all fleshy. The girl was proud of him—he was always so well-dressed, so gentlemanly, and carried himself with such an assured air. Daddy was bound to be pleased with a young man like Nelson Haley, once he should see the schoolteacher!

In his companionship now, Janice rather lost sight of the troubles that had come upon her of late. Nelson told her of his school plans as they strolled down High Street.

"And I fancy these lectures and readings the School Committee are arranging will be a good thing," the young man said. "We'll slip a little extra information to the boys and girls of Polktown without their suspecting it."

"Sugar-coated pills?" laughed Janice.

"Yes. The old system of pounding knowledge into the infant cranium isn't in vogue any more."

"Poor things!" murmured Janice Day, from the lofty rung of the scholastic ladder she had attained. "Poor things! I don't blame them for wondering: 'What's the use?' Marty wonders now, old as he is. There is such a lot to learn in the world!"

They talked of other things, too, and it was the appearance of Jim Narnay weaving a crooked trail across High Street toward the rear of the Inn that brought back to the girl's mind the weight of new trouble that had settled upon it.

"Oh, dear! there's that poor creature," murmured Janice. "And I haven't been to see how his family is."

"Who—Jim Narnay's family?" asked Nelson.

"Yes."

"You'd better keep away from such people, Janice," the young man said urgently.

"Why?"

"You don't want to mix with such folk, my dear," repeated the young man, shaking his head. "What good can it do? The fellow is a drunken rascal and not worth striving to do anything for."

"But his family? The poor little children?" said Janice, softly.

"If you give them money, Jim'll drink it up."

"I believe that," admitted Janice. "So I won't give them money. But I can buy things for them that they need. And the poor little baby is sick. That cunning Sophie told me so."

"Goodness, Janice!" laughed Nelson, yet with some small vexation. "I see there's no use in opposing your charitable instincts. But I really wish you would not get acquainted with every rag-tag and bob-tail in town. First those Trimmises—and now these Narnays!"

Janice laughed at this. "Why, they can't hurt me, Nelson. And perhaps I might do them good."

"You cannot handle charcoal without getting some of the smut on your fingers," Nelson declared, dogmatically.

"But they are not charcoal. They are just some of God's unfortunates," added the young girl, gently. "It is not Sophie's fault that her father drinks. And maybe it isn't altogether *his* fault."

"What arrant nonsense!" exclaimed Nelson, with some exasperation. "It always irritates me when I hear these old toppers excused. A man should be able to take a glass of wine or beer or spirits—or let it alone."

"Yes, indeed, Nelson," agreed Janice, demurely. "He *ought* to."

The young man glanced sharply into her rather serious countenance. He suspected that she was not agreeing with him, after all, very strongly. Finally he laughed, and the spark of mischief immediately danced in Janice Day's hazel eyes.

"That is just where the trouble lies, Nelson, with drinking intoxicating things. People should be able to drink or not, as they feel inclined. But alcohol is insidious. Why! you teach that in your own classes, Nelson Haley!"

"Got me there," admitted the young school principal, with a laugh. Then he became sober again, and added: "But *I* can take a drink or leave it alone if I wish."

"Oh, Nelson! You *don't* use alcoholic beverages, do you?" cried Janice, quite shocked. "Oh! you *don't*, do you?"

"My, my! See what a little fire-cracker it is!" laughed Nelson. "Did I say I was in the habit of going into Lem Parraday's bar and spending my month's salary in fiery waters?"

"Oh, but Nelson! You don't *approve* of the use of liquor, do you?"

"I'm not sure that I do," returned the young man, more gravely. "And yet I believe in every person having perfect freedom in that as well as other matters."

"Anarchism!" cried Janice, yet rather seriously, too, although her lips smiled.

"I know the taste of all sorts of beverages," the young man said. "I was in with rather a sporty bunch at college, for a while. But I knew I could not afford to keep up that pace, so I cut it out."

"Oh, Nelson!" Janice murmured. "It's too bad!"

"Why, it never hurt me," answered the young schoolmaster. "It never could hurt me. A gentleman eats temperately and drinks temperately. Of course, I would not go into the Lake View Inn and call for a drink, now that I am teaching school here. My example would be bad for the boys. And I fancy the School Committee would have something to say about it, too," and he laughed again, lightly.

They had turned into Hillside Avenue and the way was deserted save for themselves. The warm glow of sunset lingered about them. Lights twinkling in the kitchens as they went along announced the preparation of the evening meal.

Janice clasped her hands over Nelson's arm confidingly and looked earnestly up into his face.

"Nelson!" she said softly, "don't even *think* about drinking anything intoxicating. I should be afraid for you. I should worry about the hold it might get upon you——"

"As it has on Jim Narnay?" interrupted the young man, laughing.

"No," said Janice, still gravely. "You would never be like him, I am sure——"

"Nor will drink ever affect me in any way—no fear! I know what I am about. I have a will of my own, I should hope. I can control my appetites and desires. And I should certainly never allow such a foolish habit as tipping to get a strangle hold on me."

"Of course, I know you won't," agreed Janice.

"I thank goodness I'm not a man of habit, in any case," continued Nelson, proudly. "One of our college professors has said: 'There is only one thing worse than a bad habit—and that's a good habit.' It is true. No man can be a well-rounded and perfectly poised man, if he is hampered by habits of any kind. Habits narrow the mind and contract one's usefulness in the world——"

"Oh, Nelson!" excitedly interrupted Janice. "See the bluebird! The first I have seen this Spring. The dear, little, pretty thing!"

"Good-*night!*" exploded the school teacher, with a burst of laughter. "My little homily is put out of business. A bluebird, indeed!"

"But the bluebird is so pretty—and so welcome in Spring. See! there he goes." Then she added softly, still clinging to Nelson's arm:

"The bluebird—for happiness."

CHAPTER VI

THE TENTACLES OF THE MONSTER

The sweet south wind blew that night and helped warm to life the Winter-chilled breast of Mother Earth. Her pulses leaped, rejuvenated; the mellowing soil responded; bud and leaf put forth their effort to reach the sun and air.

At Janice Day's casement the odors of the freshly-turned earth and of the growing things whispered of the newly begun season. The ruins of the ancient fortress across the lake to the north still frowned in the mists of night when Janice left her bed and peered from the open window, looking westward.

Behind the mountain-top which towered over Polktown it was already broad day; but the sun would not appear, to gild the frowning fortress, or to touch the waters of the lake with its magic wand, for yet several minutes.

As the first red rays of the sun graced the rugged prospect across the lake, Janice went through the barnyard and climbed the uphill pasture lane. She was bound for the great "Overlook" rock in the second-growth, from which spot she never tired of looking out upon the landscape—and upon life itself.

Janice Day took many of her problems to the Overlook. There, alone with the wild things of the wood, with nothing but the prospect to tempt her thoughts, she was wont to decide those momentous questions that come into every young girl's life.

As she sped up the path past the sheep sheds on this morning, her feet were suddenly stayed by a most unexpected incident. Janice usually had the hillside to herself at this hour; but now she saw a dark figure huddled under the shelter, the open side of which faced her.

"A bear!" thought Janice. Yet there had not been such a creature seen in the vicinity of Polktown for years, she knew.

She hesitated. The "bear" rolled over, stretched himself, and yawned a most prodigious yawn.

"Goodness, mercy, me!" murmured Janice Day. "It's a man!"

But it was not. It was a boy. Janice popped down behind a boulder and watched, for at first she had no idea who he could be. Certainly he must have been up here in the sheepfold all night; and a person who would spend a night in the open, on the raw hillside at this time of year, must have something the matter with him, to be sure.

"Why—why, that's Jack Besmith! He worked for Mr. Massey all Winter. What is he doing here?" murmured Janice.

She did not rise and expose herself to the fellow's gaze. For one thing, the ex-drug clerk looked very rough in both dress and person.

His uncombed hair was littered with straw and bits of corn-blades from the fodder on which he had lain. His clothing was stained. He wore no linen and the shoes on his feet were broken.

Never in her life had Janice Day seen a more desperate looking young fellow and she was actually afraid of him. Yet she knew he came of a respectable family, and that he had a decent lodging in town. What business had he up here at her uncle's sheepfold?

Janice continued her walk no farther. She remained in hiding until she saw Jack Besmith stumble out of the sheep pasture and down the hill behind the Day stables—taking a retired route toward the village.

Coming down into the barnyard once more, Janice met Marty with a foaming milk pail.

"Hullo, early bird!" he sang out. "Did you catch the worm this morning?"

Janice shuddered a trifle. "I believe I did, Marty," she confessed. "At least, I saw some such crawling thing."

"Hi tunket! Not a snake so early in the year?"

"I don't know," and his cousin smiled, yet with gravity.

"Huh?" queried the boy, with curiosity, for he saw that something unusual had occurred.

Janice gravely told him whom she had seen in the sheepfold. "And, Marty, I believe he must have been up there all night—sleeping outdoors such weather as this. What for, do you suppose?"

Marty professed inability to explain; but after he had taken the milk in to his mother, he slipped away and ran up to the sheep pasture himself.

"I say, Janice," he said, grinning, when he came back. "I can solve the mystery, I can."

"What mystery?" asked his cousin, who was flushed now with helping her aunt get breakfast.

"The mystery of the 'early worm' that you saw this mornin'." He brought his hand from behind him and displayed an empty, amber-colored flask on which was a gaudy label announcing its contents to have been whiskey and sold by "*L. Parraday, Polktown.*"

"Oh, dear! Is *that* the trouble with the Besmith boy?" murmured Janice.

"That's how he came to lose his job with Massey."

"Poor fellow! He looked dreadful!"

"Oh, he's a bad egg," said her cousin, carelessly.

Janice hurried through breakfast, for the car was to be brought forth to-day. Marty had been fussing over it for almost a week. The wind was drying up the roads and it was possible for Janice to take a spin out into the open country.

Marty's prospects of enjoying the outing, however, were nipped before he could leave the table.

"Throw the chain harness on the colts, Marty," said his father. "The 'tater-patch is dry enough to put the plow in. And I'll want ye to help me."

"Oh—Dad! I got to help Janice get her car out. This ain't no time to plow for 'taters," declared Marty.

"Your mouth'll be open wider'n anybody else's in the house for the 'taters when they're grown," said Uncle Jason, calmly. "You got to do your share toward raisin' 'em."

"Oh, Dad!" ejaculated the boy again.

"Now, Marty, you stop talkin'!" cried his mother.

"Huh! you wanter make a feller dumb around here, too. S'pose Janice breaks down on the road?" he added, with reviving hope.

"I guess she'll find somebody that knows fully as much about them gasoline buggies as you do, Son," observed Uncle Jason, easily. "You an' me'll tackle the 'tater field."

When his father spoke so positively Marty knew there was no use trying to change him. He frowned, and muttered, and kicked the table leg as he got up, but to no avail.

Janice, later, got into her car and started for a ride. She put the Kremlin right at the hill and it climbed Hillside Avenue with wonderful ease. The engine purred prettily and not a thing went wrong.

"Poor Marty! It's too bad he couldn't go, too," she thought. "I'd gladly share this with somebody."

Nelson, she knew, was busy this forenoon. It took no little of his out-of-school time to prepare the outline for the ensuing week's work. Besides, on this Saturday morning, there was a special meeting of the School Committee, as he had told her the afternoon before. Something to do with the course of lectures before mentioned. And the young principal of Polktown's graded school was very faithful to his duties.

She thought of Mrs. Drugg and little Lottie; but there was trouble at the Drugg home. Somehow, on this bright, sweet-smelling morning, Janice shrank from touching anything unpleasant, or coming into communication with anybody who was not in attune with the day.

She was fated, however, to rub elbows with Trouble wherever she went and whatever she did. She ran the Kremlin past the rear of Walky Dexter's place and saw Walky himself currying Josephus and his mate on the stable floor. The man waved his currycomb at her and grinned. But his well-known grimace did not cheer Janice Day.

"Dear me! Poor Walky is in danger, too," thought the young girl. "Why! the whole of Polktown is changing. In some form or other that liquor selling at the Inn touches all our lives. I wonder if other people see it as plainly as I do."

She ran up into the Upper Middletown Road, as far out as Elder Concannon's. The old gentleman—once Janice Day's very stern critic, but now her staunch friend—was in the yard when Janice approached in her car. He waved a cordial hand at her and turned away from the man he had been talking with.

"Well, there ye have it, Trimmins," the girl heard the elder say, as her engine stopped. "If you can find a man or two to help you, I'll let you have a team and you can go in there and haul them logs. There's a market for 'em, and the logs lie jest right for hauling. You and your partner can make a profit, and so can I."

Then he said to Janice: "Good morning, child! You're as fresh to look at as a morning-glory."

She had nodded and smiled at the patriarchal old gentleman; but her eyes were now on the long and lanky looking woodsman who stood by.

"Good day, Mr. Trimmins," she said, when she had returned Elder Concannon's greeting. "Is Mrs. Trimmins well? And my little Virginia and all the rest of them?"

"The fambly's right pert, Miss," Trimmins said.

Janice had a question or two to ask the elder regarding the use of the church vestry for some exercises by the Girl's Guild of which she had been the founder and was still the leading spirit.

"Goodness, yes!" agreed the elder. "Do anything you like, Janice, if you can keep those young ones interested in anything besides dancing and parties. Still, what can ye expect of the young gals when their mothers are given up to folly and dissipation?"

"There's Mrs. Marvin Petrie and Mrs. Major Price want to be 'patronesses,' I believe they call themselves, of an Assembly Ball, an' want to hold the ball at Lem Parraday's hotel. It's bad enough to have them dances; but to have 'em at a place where liquor is sold, is a sin and a shame! I wish Lem Parraday had lost the hotel entirely, before he got a liquor license."

"Oh, Elder! It is dreadful that liquor should be sold in Polktown," Janice said, from the seat of the automobile. "I'm just beginning to see it."

"That's what it is," said the elder, sturdily.

"It's a shame Mr. Parraday was ever allowed to have a license at the Lake View Inn."

"Wal—it does seem too bad," the elder agreed, but with less confidence in his tone.

"I know they say the Inn scarcely paid him and his wife, and he might have had to give it up this Spring," Janice said.

"Ahem! That would have been unfortunate for the mortgagee," slowly observed the old man.

"Mr. Cross Moore?" Janice quickly rejoined. "Well! he could afford to lose a little money if anybody could."

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed the elder, who had a vast respect for money. "Don't say that, child. Nobody can afford to lose money."

Janice turned her car about soberly. She saw that the ramification of this liquor selling business was far-reaching, indeed. Elder Concannon spoke only too truly.

Where self-interest was concerned most people would lean toward the side of liquor selling.

"The tentacles of the monster have insinuated themselves into our social and business life, as well as into our homes," she thought. "Why—why, what can *I* do about it? Just *me*, a girl all alone."

CHAPTER VII

Janice picked up Trimmins on the road to town. The lanky Southerner, who lived as a squatter with his ever-increasing family back in the woods, was a soft-spoken man with much innate politeness and a great distaste for regular work. He said the elder had just offered him a job in the woods that he was going to take if he could get a man to help him.

"I heard you talking about it, Mr. Trimmins," the young girl said, with her eyes on the road ahead and her foot on the gas pedal. "I hope you will make a good thing out of it."

"Not likely. The elder's too close for that," responded the man, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Yes. I suppose that Elder Concannon considers a small profit sufficient. He got his money that way—by 'littles and dribbles'—and I fancy he thinks small pay is all right."

"My glo-ree! You bet he does!" said Trimmins. "But the elder never had but one—leastways, two—chillen to raise. He wouldn't ha' got rich very fast with *my* family—no, sir!"

"Perhaps that is so," Janice admitted.

"Tell ye what, Miss," the woodsman went on to say, "a man ought to git paid accordin' to the mouths there is to home to feed. I was readin' in a paper t'other day that it took ten dollars a week to take proper care of a man and his wife, and there ought to be added to them ten dollars two dollars a week ev'ry time they got a baby."

"Why! wouldn't that be fine?" cried Janice, laughing.

"It sure would be a help," said Trimmins, the twinkle in his eye again. "I reckon both me an' Narnay would 'preciate it."

"Oh! you mean Jim Narnay?" asked Janice, with sudden solemnity.

"Yes ma'am. I'm goin' to see him now. He's a grand feller with the axe and I want him to help me."

Janice wondered how much work would really be done by the two men if they were up in the woods together. Yet Mrs. Narnay and the children might get along better without Jim. Janice had made some inquiries and learned that Mrs. Narnay was an industrious woman, working steadily over her washtub, and keeping the children in comparative comfort when Jim was not at home to drink up a good share of her earnings.

"Are you going down to the cove to see Narnay now, Mr. Trimmins?" Janice asked, as she turned the automobile into the head of High Street.

"Yes, ma'am. That is, if I don't find him at Lem Parraday's."

"Oh, Mr. Trimmins!" exclaimed Janice, earnestly. "Look for him at the house first. And don't you go near Lem Parraday's, either."

"Wal!" drawled the man. "I s'pose you air right, Miss."

"I'll drive you right down to the cove," Janice said. "I want to see little Sophie, and—and her mother."

"Whatever you say, Miss," agreed the woodsman.

They followed a rather rough street coveward, but arrived safely at the small collection of cottages, in one of which the Narnays lived. Jim Narnay was evidently without money, for he sat on the front stoop, sober and rather neater than Janice was used to seeing him. He was whittling a toy of some kind for the little boys, both of whom were hanging upon him.

Their attitude, as well as what Sophie Narnay had told her, assured Janice that the husband and father of the household was not a cruel man when he was sober. The children still loved him, and he evidently loved them.

"Got a job, Jim?" asked Trimmins, after thanking Janice for the ride, and getting out of the automobile.

"Not a smitch of work since I come out of the woods," admitted the bewhiskered man, rising quickly from the stoop to make way for Janice.

"Come on, old feller," said Trimmins. "I want to talk to you. If you are favorable inclined, I reckon I got jest the job you've been lookin' for."

The two went off behind the cottage. Janice did not know then that there was a short cut to High Street and the Lake View Inn.

Sophie came running to the door to welcome the visitor, her thin little arms red and soapy from dish-water.

"I knowed 'twas you," she said, smiling happily. "They told me you was the only girl in town that owned one o' them cars. And I told mom that you must be awful rich and kind. Course, you must be, or you couldn't afford to give away ten cent pieces so easy."

Mrs. Narnay came to the door, too, her arms right out of the washtub; but Janice begged her not to inconvenience herself. "Keep right on with your work and I'll come around to the back and sit on that stoop," said the young girl.

"And you must see the baby," Sophie urged. "I can bring out the baby if I wrap her up good, can't I, Marm?"

"Have a care with the poor child, Sophie," said Mrs. Narnay, wearily. "Where's your pop gone?"

"He's walked out with Mr. Trimmins," said the little girl.

The woman sighed, and Janice, all through her visit, could see that she was anxious about her absent husband. The baby was brought out—a pitifully thin, but pretty child—and Sophie nursed her little sister with much enjoyment.

"I wisht she was twins," confessed the little girl. "It must be awful jolly to have twins in the family."

"My soul, child!" groaned Mrs. Narnay. "Don't talk so reckless. One baby at a time is affliction enough—as ye'll find out for yourself some day."

Janice, leaving a little gift to be hidden from Jim Narnay and divided among the children, went away finally, with the determination that Dr. Poole should see the baby again and try to do something for the poor, little, weakly thing. Trimmins and Jim Narnay had disappeared, and Janice feared that, after all, they had drifted over to the Inn, there to celebrate the discovery of the job they both professed to need so badly.

"That awful bar!" Janice told herself. "If it were not here in Polktown those two ne'er-do-wells would have gone right about their work without any celebration at all. I guess Mrs. Scattergood is right—Mr. Lem Parraday ought to be tarred and feathered for ever taking out that license! And how about the councilmen who voted to let him have it?"

As she wheeled into High Street once more a tall, well groomed young man, with rosy cheeks and the bluest of blue eyes, hailed her from the sidewalk.

"Oh, Janice Day!" he cried. "How's the going?"

"Mr. Bowman! I didn't know you had returned," Janice said, smiling and stopping the car. "The going is pretty good."

"Have you been around by the Lower Road where my gang is working?"

"No," Janice replied. "But Marty says the turnout is being put in and that the bridge over the creek is almost done."

"Good! I'll get over there by and by to see for myself." He had set down a heavy suitcase and still held a traveling bag. "Just now," he added, "I am hunting a lodging."

"Hunting a lodging? Why! I thought you were a fixture with Marm Parraday," Janice said.

"I thought so, too. But it's got too strong for me down there. Besides, it is a rule of the Railroad Company that we shall find board, if possible, where no liquor is sold. I had a room over the bar and it is too noisy for me at night."

"Marm Parraday will be sorry to lose you, Mr. Bowman," Janice said. "Isn't it dreadful that they should have taken up the selling of liquor there?"

"Bad thing," the young civil engineer replied, promptly. "I'm sorry for Marm Parraday. Lem ought to be kicked for ever getting the license," he added vigorously.

"Dear me, Mr. Bowman," sighed Janice. "I wish everybody thought as you do. Polktown needs reforming."

"What! Again?" cried the young man, laughing suddenly. Then he added: "I expect, if that is so, you will have to start the reform, Miss Janice. And—and you'd better start it with your friend, Hopewell Drugg. Really, they are making a fool of him around the Inn—and he doesn't even know it."

"Oh, Mr. Bowman! what do you mean?" called Janice after him; but the young man had picked up his bag and was marching away, so that he did not hear her question. Before she could start her engine he had turned into a side street.

She ran back up Hillside Avenue in good season for dinner. The potato patch was plowed and Marty had gone downtown on an errand. Janice backed the car into the garage and went upstairs to her room to change her dress for dinner. She was there when Marty came boisterously into the kitchen.

"My goodness! what's the matter with you, Marty Day?" asked his mother shrilly. "What's happened?"

"It's Nelson Haley," the boy said, and Janice heard him plainly, for the door at the foot of the stairs was ajar. "It's awful! They are going to arrest him!"

"What do you mean, Marty Day? Be you crazy?" Mrs. Day demanded.

"What's this? One o' your cheap jokes?" asked the boy's father, who chanced to be in the kitchen, too.

"Guess Nelson Haley don't think it's a joke," said the boy, his voice still shaking. "I just heard all about it. There ain't many folks know it yet—"

"Stop that!" cried his mother. "You tell us plain what Mr. Haley's done."

"Ain't done nothin', of course. But they *say* he has," Marty stoutly maintained.

"Then what do they accuse him of?" queried Mr. Day.

"They accuse him of stealin'! Hi tunket! ain't that the meanest thing ye ever heard?" cried the boy. "Nelson Haley, stealin'. It gets *me* for fair!"

"Why—why I can't believe it!" Aunt 'Mira gasped, and she sat down with a thud on one of the kitchen chairs.

"I got it straight," Marty went on to say. "The School Committee's all in a row over it. Ye see, they had the coins—"

"*Who* had *what* coins?" cried his mother.

"The School Committee. That collection of gold coins some rich feller lent the State Board of Education for exhibition at the lecture next Friday. They only come over from Middletown last night and Mr. Massey locked them in his safe."

"Wal!" murmured Uncle Jason.

"Massey brought 'em to the school this morning where the committee held a meeting. I hear the committee left the trays of coins in their room while they went downstairs to see something the matter with the heater. When they come up the trays had been skinned clean—'for a fac'!" exclaimed the excited Marty.

"What's that got to do with Mr. Haley?" demanded Uncle Jason, grimly.

"Why—he'd been in the room. I believe he don't deny he was there. Nobody else was in the buildin' 'cept the janitor, and he was with Massey and the others in the basement.

"Then coins jest disappeared—took wings and flewed away," declared Marty with much earnestness.

"What was they wuth?" asked his father, practically.

"Dunno. A lot of money. Some says two thousand and some says five thousand. Whichever it is, they'll put him under big bail if they arrest him."

"Why, they wouldn't dare!" gasped Mrs. Day.

"Say! Massey and them others has got to save their own hides, ain't they?" demanded the suspicious Marty.

"Wal. 'Tain't common sense that any of the School Committee should have stolen the coins," Uncle Jason said slowly. "Mr. Massey, and Cross Moore, and Mr. Middler——"

"Mr. Middler warn't there," said Marty, quickly. "He'd gone to Middletown."

"Joe Pellet and Crawford there?" asked Uncle Jason.

"All the committee but the parson," his son admitted.

"And all good men," Uncle Jason said reflectively. "Schoolhouse locked?"

"So they say," Marty declared. "That's what set them on Nelson. Only him and the janitor carry keys to the building."

"Who's the janitor?" asked Uncle Jason.

"Benny Thread. You know, the little crooked-backed feller—lives on Paige Street. And, anyway, there wasn't a chance for him to get at the coins. He was with the committee all the time they was out of the room."

"And are they sure Mr. Haley was in there?" asked Aunt 'Mira.

"He admits it," Marty said gloomily. "I don't know what's going to come of it all——"

"Hush!" said Uncle Jason suddenly. "Shut that door."

But it was too late, Janice had heard all. She came down into the kitchen, pale-faced and with eyes that blazed with indignation. She had not removed her hat.

"Come, Uncle Jason," she said, brokenly. "I want you to go downtown with me. If Nelson is in trouble we must help him."

"Drat that boy!" growled Uncle Jason, scowling at Marty. "He's a reg'lar big mouth! He has to tell ev'rything he knows all over the shop."

CHAPTER VIII

REAL TROUBLE

It seemed to Janice Day as though the drift of trouble, which had set her way with the announcement by her father of his unfortunate situation among the Yaqui Indians, had now risen to an overwhelming height.

'Rill's secret misgivings regarding Hopewell Drugg, little Lottie's peril of blindness, the general tendency of Polktown as a whole to suffer the bad effects of liquor selling at the tavern—all these things had added to Janice's anxiety.

Now, on the crest of the threatening wave, rode this happening to Nelson Haley, an account of which Marty had brought home.

"Come, Uncle Jason," she said again to Mr. Day. "You must come with me. If Nelson is arrested and taken before Justice Little, the justice will listen to *you*. You are a property owner. If they put Nelson under bail——"

"Hold your hosses," interrupted Uncle Jason, yet not unkindly. "Noah didn't build the ark in a day. We'd best go slow about this."

"Slow!" repeated Janice.

"I guess you wouldn't talk about bein' slow, Jason Day, if *you* was arrested," Aunt 'Mira interjected.

"Ma's right," said Marty. "Mebbe they'll put him in the cell under the Town Hall 'fore you kin get downtown."

"There ain't no sech haste as all that," stated Uncle Jason. "What's the matter of you folks?"

He spoke rather testily, and Janice looked at him in surprise. "Why, Uncle!" she cried, "what do you mean? It's Nelson Haley who is in trouble."

"I mean to eat my dinner fust of all," said her uncle firmly. "And so had you better, my gal. A man can't be expected to go right away to court an' put up every dollar he's got in the world for bail, until he's thought it over a little, and knows something more about the trouble."

"Why, Jason!" exploded Aunt 'Mira. "Of course Mr. Haley is innocent and you will help him."

"Hi tunket, Dad!" cried Marty. "You ain't goin' back on Nelson?"

Janice was silent. Her uncle did not look at her, but drew his chair to the table. "I ain't goin' back on nobody," he said steadily. "But I can't do nothing to harm my own folks. If, as you say, Marty, them coins is so vallible, his bail'll be consider'ble—for a fac'. If I put up this here property that we got, an'—an' anything happens—not that I say anythin' will happen—where'd we be?"

"What ever do ye mean, Jason Day?" demanded his wife. "That Nelson Haley would run away?"

"Ahem! We don't know how strongly the young man's been tempted," said Mr. Day doggedly.

"Uncle!" cried Janice, aghast.

"Dad!" exclaimed Marty.

"Jase Day! For the land's sake!" concluded Aunt 'Mira.

"Sit down and eat your dinner, Janice," said Uncle Jason a second time, ignoring his wife and son. "Remember, I got a duty to perform to your father as well as to you. What would Broxton Day do in this case?"

"I—I don't know, Uncle Jason," Janice said faintly.

"Fust of all, he wouldn't let you git mixed up in nothin' that would make the neighbors talk about ye," Mr. Day said promptly. "Now, whether Nelson Haley is innercent or guilty, there is bound ter be slathers of talk about this thing and about ev'rybody connected with it."

"He is not guilty, Uncle," said Janice, quietly.

"That's my opinion, too," said Mr. Day, bluntly. "But I want the pertic'lars, jest the same. I want to know all about it. Where there's so much smoke there must be some fire."

"Not allus, Dad," growled Marty, in disgust. "Smoke comes from an oak-ball, but there ain't no fire."

"You air a smart young man," returned his father, coolly. "You'll grow up to be the town smartie, like Walky Dexter, I shouldn't wonder. Nelson must ha' done somethin' to put himself in bad in this thing, and I want to know what it is he done."

"He went into the schoolhouse," grumbled Marty.

"Howsomever," pursued Mr. Day, "if they shut Nelson Haley up on this charge and he ain't guilty, we who know him best will git together and bail him out, if that seems best."

"If that seems best!" repeated Aunt 'Mira. "Jason Day! I'm glad the Lord didn't make me such a moderate critter as you be."

"You're a great friend of Nelse Haley—I don't think!" muttered Marty.

But Janice said nothing more. That Uncle Jason did not rush to Nelson's relief as she would have done had it been in her power, was not so strange. Janice was a singularly just girl.

The hurt was there, nevertheless. She could not help feeling keenly the fact that everybody in

Polktown did not respond at once to Nelson's need.

That he should be accused of stealing the collection of coins was preposterous indeed. Yet Janice was sensible enough to know that there would be those in the village only too ready and willing to believe ill of the young schoolmaster.

Nelson Haley's character was not wishy-washy. He had made everybody respect him. His position as principal of the school gave him almost as much importance in the community as the minister. But not all the Polktown folk loved Nelson Haley. He had made enemies as well as friends since coming to the lakeside town.

There were those who would seize upon this incident, no matter how slightly the evidence might point to Nelson, and make "a mountain of a molehill." Nelson was a poor young man. He had come to Polktown with college debts to pay off out of his salary. To those who were not intimately acquainted with the school-teacher's character, it would not seem such an impossibility that he should yield to temptation where money was concerned.

But to Janice the thought was not only abhorrent, it was ridiculous. She would have believed herself capable of stealing quite as soon as she would have believed the accusation against Nelson.

Yet she could not blame Uncle Jason for his calm attitude in this event. It was his nature to be moderate and careful. She did not scold like Aunt 'Mira, nor mutter and glare like Marty. She could not, however, eat any dinner.

It was nerve-racking to sit there, playing with her fork, awaiting Uncle Jason's pleasure. Janice's eyes were tearless. She had learned ere this, in the school of hard usage, to control her emotions. Not many girls of her age could have set off finally with Mr. Day for the town with so quiet a mien. For she insisted upon accompanying her uncle on this quest. She felt that she could not remain quietly at home and wait upon his leisurely report of the situation.

First of all they learned that no attempt had been made as yet to curtail the young schoolmaster's liberty; otherwise the situation was quite as bad as Marty had so eagerly reported.

The collection of gold coins, valued at fifteen hundred dollars, had been left in the committee room next to the principal's office in the new school building. It being Saturday, the outer doors of the building were locked—or supposedly so.

Benny Thread, the janitor, was with the four committeemen in the basement for a little more than half an hour. During that half-hour Nelson Haley had entered the school building, using his pass key, had been to his office, and entered the committee room, and from thence departed, all while the committee was below stairs.

He had been seen both going in and coming out by the neighbors. He carried his school bag in both instances. The collection of coins was of some weight; but Nelson could have carried that weight easily.

The committee, upon returning to the second floor and finding the trays empty, had at once sent for Nelson and questioned him. In their first excitement over the loss of the coins, they had been unwise enough to state the trouble and their suspicions to more than one person. In an hour the story, with many additions, had spread over Polktown. A fire before a high wind could have traveled no faster.

Uncle Jason listened, digested, and made up his mind. Although a moderate man, he thought to some purpose. He was soon satisfied that the four committeemen, having got over their first fright, would do nothing rash. And Janice had much to thank her uncle for in this emergency; for he was outspoken, once having formed an opinion in the matter.

Finding the four committeemen in the drugstore, Uncle Jason berated them soundly:

"I did think you four fellers was safe to be let toddle about alone. I swan I did! But here ye ac' jest like ye was nuthin' but babies!

"Jest because ye acted silly and left that money open for the fust comer to pocket, ye hafter run about an' squeal, layin' it all to the fust person that come that way. If Mr. Middler or Elder Concannon had come inter that school buildin', I s'pose it'd ha' been jest the same. You fellers would aimed ter put it on them—one or t'other. I'm ashamed of ye."

"Wal, Jase Day, you're so smart," drawled Cross Moore, "who d'ye reckon could ha' took the coins?"

"Most anybody *could*. Mr. Haley sartinly did *not*," Uncle Jason returned, briskly.

"How d'ye know so much?" demanded Massey, the druggist.

"Cause I know him," rejoined Mr. Day, quite as promptly as before.

"Aw—that's only talk," said Joe Pellet, pulling his beard reflectively. "Mr. Haley's a nice young man ___"

"I've knowed him since ever he come inter this town," Mr. Day interrupted, with energy. "He's too smart ter do sech a thing, even if he was so inclined. You fellers seem ter think he's an idiot. What! steal them coins when he's the only person 'cept the janitor that's knowed to have a key to the school building?"

"Huh!" pursued Uncle Jason, with vast disgust. "You fellers must have a high opinion of your own judgment, when you choosed Mr. Haley to teach this school. Did ye hire a nincompoop, I wanter know? Why! if he'd wanted ever so much ter steal them coins, he'd hafter been a fule ter done it in this way."

"There's sense in what ye say, Jason," admitted Mr. Crawford.

"I sh'd hope so! But there ain't sense in what you fellers have done—for a fac! Lettin' sech a story as this git all over town. By jiminy! if I was Mr. Haley, I'd sue ye!"

"But what are we goin' ter do, Jason?" demanded Cross Moore. "Sit here an' twiddle our thumbs, and let that feller 't owns the coins come down on us for their value?"

"You'll have to make good to him anyway," said Mr. Day, bluntly. "You four air resposnerble."

"Hi tunket!" exploded Joe Pellet. "And let the thief git away with 'em?"

"Better git a detecertif, an' put him on the case," said Mr. Day. "Of course, you air all satisfied that nobody could ha' got into the schoolhouse but Mr. Haley?"

"He an' Benny is all that has keys," said Massey.

"Sure about this here janitor?" asked Uncle Jason, slowly.

"Why, he was with us all the time," said Crawford, in disgust.

"And he's a hardworkin' little feller, too," Massey added. "Not a thing wrong with Benny but his back. That is crooked; but he's as straight as a string."

"How's his fambly?" asked Uncle Jason.

"Ain't got none—but a wife. A decent, hard-working woman," proclaimed the druggist. "No children. Her brother boards with 'em. That's all."

"Well, sir!" said Uncle Jason, oracularly. "There air some things in this worl' ye kin be sure of, besides death and taxes. There's a few things connected with this case that ye kin pin down. F'r instance: The janitor didn't do it. Nelse Haley didn't do it. None o' you four fellers done it."

"Say! you goin' to drag us under suspicion, Jase?" drawled Cross Moore.

"If you keep on sputterin' about Nelse Haley—yes," snapped Mr. Day, nodding vigorously. "Howsomever, there's still another party ter which the finger of suspicion p'int's."

"Who's that?" was the chorus from the school committee.

"A party often heard of in similar cases," said Mr. Day, solemnly.

"His name is *Unknown*! Yes, sir! Some party unknown entered that building while you fellers was down cellar, same as Nelson Haley did. This party, Unknown, stole the coins."

"Aw, shucks, Jase!" grunted Mr. Cross Moore. "You got to give us something more satisfactory than that if you want to shunt us off'n Nelson Haley's trail," and the other three members of the School Committee nodded.

CHAPTER IX

HOW NELSON TOOK IT

Something more than mere curiosity drew Janice Day's footsteps toward the new school building. There were other people drawn in the same direction; but their interest was not like hers.

Somehow, this newest bit of gossip in Polktown could be better discussed at the scene of the strange robbery itself. Icivilly Sprague and Mabel Woods walked there, arm in arm, passing Janice by with side glances and the tossing of heads.

Icivilly and Mabel had attended Nelson's school the first term after Miss 'Rill Scattergood gave up teaching; but finding the young schoolmaster impervious to their charms, they had declared themselves graduated.

They were not alone among the older girls who found Nelson provokingly adamant. He did not flirt. Of late it had become quite apparent that the schoolmaster had eyes only for Janice Day. Of course, that fact did not gain Nelson friends among girls like Icivilly and Mabel in this time of trial.

Janice knew that they were whispering about her as she passed; but her real thought was given to more important matters. Uncle Jason had told her just how the affair of the robbery stood. There was a mystery—a deep, deep mystery about it.

In the group about the front gate of the school premises were Jim Narnay and Trimmins, the woodsmen. Both had been drinking and were rather hilarious and talkative. At least, Trimmins was so.

"Wish *we'd* knowed there was all that cash so free and open up here in the schoolhouse—heh, Jim?" Trimmins said, smiting his brother toper between the shoulders. "We wouldn't be diggin' out for no swamp to haul logs."

"You're mighty right, Trimmins! You're mighty right!" agreed the drunken Narnay. "Gotter leave m' fambly—hate ter do it!" and he became very lachrymose. "Ter'ble thing, Trimmins, f'r a man ter be sep'rated from his fambly jest so's ter airn his livin'."

"Right ye air, old feller," agreed the Southerner. "Hullo! here's the buddy we're waitin' for. How long d'ye s'pose he'll last, loggin?"

Janice saw the ex-drug clerk, Jack Besmith, mounting the hill with a pack on his back. Rough as the two lumbermen were, Besmith looked the more dissolute character, despite his youth.

The trio went away together, bound evidently for one of Elder Concannon's pieces of woodland, over the mountain.

Benny Thread came out of the school building and locked the door importantly behind him. Several of the curious ones surrounded the little man and tried to get him into conversation upon the subject of the robbery.

"No, I can't talk," he said, shaking his head. "I can't, really. The gentlemen of the School Committee have forbidden me. Why—only think! It was more by good luck than good management that I wasn't placed in a position where I could be suspected of the robbery. Lucky I was with the committeemen every moment of the time they were down cellar. No, I am not suspected, thanks be! But I must not talk—I must not talk."

It was evident that he wanted to talk and he could be over-urged to talk if the right pressure was brought to bear. Janice came away, leaving the eagerly curious pecking at him—the one white blackbird in the flock.

Uncle Jason had given her some blunt words of encouragement. Janice felt that she must see Nelson personally and cheer him up, if that were possible. At least, she must tell him how she—and, indeed, all his friends—had every confidence in him.

Some people whom she met as she went up High Street looked at her curiously. Janice held her head at a prouder angle and marched up the hill toward Mrs. Beaseley's. She ignored these curious glances.

But there was no escaping Mrs. Scattergood. That lover of gossip must have been sitting behind her blind, peering down High Street, and waiting for Janice's appearance.

She hurried out of the house, beckoning to the girl eagerly. Janice could not very well refuse to approach, so she walked on up the hill beyond the side street on which Mrs. Beaseley's cottage stood, and met the birdlike little woman at her gate.

"For the good land's sake, Janice Day!" exploded Mrs. Scattergood. "I was wonderin' if you'd never git up here. Surely, you've heard about this drefful thing, ain't you?"

Janice knew there was no use in evasion with Mrs. Scattergood. She boldly confessed.

"Yes, Mrs. Scattergood, I have heard about it. And I think Mr. Cross Moore and those others ought to be ashamed of themselves—letting people think for a moment that Mr. Haley took those coins."

"Who *did* take 'em?" asked the woman, eagerly. "Have they found out?"

"Why, nobody but the person who really is the thief knows who stole the coins; but of course everybody who knows Nelson at all, is sure that it was not Mr. Haley."

"Wal—they gotter lay it to somebody," Mrs. Scattergood said, rather doubtfully. "That's the best them useless men could do," she added, with that birdlike toss of the head that was so familiar to Janice.

"If there'd been a woman around, they'd laid it on to her. Oh! I know 'em all—the hull kit an' bilin' of 'em."

Janice tried to smile at this; but the woman's beadlike eyes seemed to be boring with their glance right through the girl and this made her extremely uncomfortable.

"I expect you feel pretty bad, Janice Day," went on Mrs. Scattergood. "But it's allus the way. You'll find as you grow older that there ain't much in this world for females, young or old, but trouble."

"Why, Mrs. Scattergood!" cried the girl, and this time she did call up a merry look. "What have you to trouble you? You have the nicest time of any person I know—unless it is Mrs. Marvin Petrie. No family to trouble you; enough to live on comfortably; nothing to do but go visiting—or stay at home if you'd rather—"

"Tut, tut, tut, child! All is not gold that glitters," was the quick reply. "I ain't so happy as ye may think. I have my troubles. But, thanks be! they ain't about men. But you've begun yours, I kin see."

"Yes, I am troubled because Mr. Haley is falsely accused," admitted Janice, stoutly.

"Wal—yes. I expect you air. And if it ain't no worse than you believe—Wal! I said you was a new-fashioned gal when I fust set eyes on you that day comin' up from the Landing in the old *Constance Colfax*; and you be."

"How am I different from other girls?" asked Janice, curiously.

"Wal! Most gals would wait till they was sure the young man wasn't goin' to be arrested before they ran right off to see him. But mebbe it's because you ain't got your own mother and father to tell ye diff'rent."

Janice flushed deeply at this and her eyes sparkled.

"I am sure Aunt 'Mira and Uncle Jason would have told me not to call on Nelson if they did not believe just as I do—that he is guiltless and that all his friends should show him at once that they believe in him."

"Hoity-toity! Mebbe so," said the woman, tartly. "Them Days never did have right good sense—yer uncle an' aunt, I mean. When *I* was a gal we wouldn't have been allowed to have so much freedom where the young fellers was consarned."

Janice was quite used to Mrs. Scattergood's sharp tongue; but it was hard to bear her strictures on this occasion.

"I hope it is not wrong for me to show my friend that I trust and believe in him," she said firmly, and nodding good-bye, turned abruptly away.

Of herself, or of what the neighbors thought of her conduct, Janice Day thought but little. She went on to Mrs. Beaseley's cottage, solely anxious on Nelson's account.

She found the widow in tears, for selfishly immured as Mrs. Beaseley was in her ten-year-old grief over the loss of her "sainted Charles," she was a dear, soft-hearted woman and had come to look upon Nelson Haley almost as her son.

"Oh, Janice Day! what ever are we going to do for him?" was her greeting, the moment the girl

entered the kitchen. "If my poor, dear Charles were alive I know he would be furiously angry with Mr. Cross Moore and those other men. Oh! I cannot bear to think of how angry he would be, for Charles had a very stern temper.

"And Mr. Haley is such a pleasant young man. As I tell 'em all, a nicer and quieter person never lived in any lone female's house. And to think of their saying such dreadful things about him! I am sure *I* never thought of locking anything away from Mr. Haley in this house—and there's the 'leven sterling silver teaspoons that belonged to poor, dear Charles' mother, and the gold-lined sugar-basin that was my Aunt Abby's, and the sugar tongs—although they're bent some.

"Why! Mr. Haley is jest one of the nicest young gentlemen that ever was. And here he comes home, pale as death, and won't eat no dinner. Janice, think of it! I allus have said, and I stick to it, that if one can eat they'll be all right. My sainted Charles," she added, stating for the thousandth time an uncontrovertible fact, "would be alive to this day if he had continued to eat his victuals!"

"I'd like to speak to Mr. Haley," Janice said, finally "getting a word in edgewise."

"Of course. Maybe he'll let you in," said the widow. "He won't me, but I think he favors you, Janice," she added innocently, shaking her head with a continued mournful air. "He come right in and said: 'Mother Beaseley, I don't believe I can eat any dinner to-day,' and then shut and locked his door. I didn't know what had happened till 'Rene Hopper, she that works for Mrs. Cross Moore, run in to borrow my heavy flat-iron, an' she tol' me about the stolen money. Ain't it *awful*?"

"I—I hope Nelson will let me speak to him, Mrs. Beaseley," stammered Janice, finding it very difficult now to keep her tears back.

"You go right along the hall and knock at his door," whispered Mrs. Beaseley, hoarsely. "An' you tell him I've got his dinner down on the stove-hearth, 'twixt plates, a-keepin' it hot for him."

Janice did as she was bidden as far as knocking at the door of the front room was concerned. There was no answer at first—not a sound from within. She rapped a second time.

"I am sorry, Mrs. Beaseley; I could not possibly eat any dinner to-day," Nelson's voice finally replied.

There was no tremor in the tone of it. Janice knew just how proud the young man was, and no matter how bitterly he was hurt by this trouble that had fallen upon him, he would not easily reveal his feelings.

She put her lips close to the crack of the door. "Nelson!" she whispered. "Nelson!" a little louder.

She heard him spring to his feet and overturn the chair in which he had been sitting.

"Nelson! it's only me," Janice quavered, the pulse beating painfully in her throat. "Let me in—do!"

He came across the room slowly. She heard him fumble at the key and knob. Then the door opened.

"Oh, Nelson!" she repeated, when she saw him in the darkened parlor.

The pallor of his face went to her heart. His hair was disheveled; his eyes red from weeping. After all, he was just a big boy in trouble, and with no mother to comfort him.

All the maternal instincts of Janice Day's nature went out to the young fellow. "Nelson! Nelson!" she cried, under her breath. "You poor, poor boy! I'm so sorry for you."

"Janice—you——" He stammered, and could not finish the phrase.

She cried, emphatically: "Of course I believe in you, Nelson. We *all* do! You must not take it so to heart. You will not bear it all alone, Nelson. Every friend you have in Polktown will help you."

She had come close to him, her hands fluttering upon his breast and her eyes, sparkling with teardrops, raised to his face.

"Oh, Janice!" he groaned, and swept her into his arms.

CHAPTER X

HOW POLKTOWN TOOK IT

That was a very serious Saturday night at the old Day house, as well as at the Beaseley cottage. Aunt 'Mira had whispered to Janice before the girl had set forth with her uncle in the afternoon:

"Bring him home to supper with ye, child—the poor young man! We got to cheer him up, betwixt us. I'm goin' to have raised biscuits and honey. He does dote on light bread."

But Nelson would not come. Janice had succeeded in encouraging him to a degree; but the young schoolmaster was too seriously wounded, both in his self-respect and at heart, to wish to mingle on this evening with any of his fellow-townsmen—even those who were his declared friends and supporters.

"Don't look for me at church to-morrow, either, Janice," the young man said. "It may seem cowardly; but I cannot face all these people and ignore this disgrace."

"It is *not* disgrace, Nelson!" Janice cried hotly.

"It is, my dear girl. One does not have to be guilty to be disgraced by such an accusation. I may be a coward; I don't know. At least, I feel it too keenly to march into church to-morrow and know that everybody is whispering about me. Why, Janice, I might break down and make a complete fool of myself."

"Oh, no, Nelson!"

"I might. Even the children will know all about it and will stare at me. I have to face them on Monday morning, and by that time I may have recovered sufficient self-possession to ignore their glances and whispers."

And with that decision Janice was obliged to leave him.

"The poor, foolish boy!" Aunt 'Mira said. "Don't he know we all air sufferin' with him?"

But Uncle Jason seemed better to appreciate the schoolmaster's attitude.

"I don't blame him none. He's jest like a dog with a hurt paw—wants ter crawl inter his kennel and lick his wounds. It's a tough propersition, for a fac'."

"He needn't be afraid that the fellers will guy him," growled Marty. "If they do, I'll lick 'em!"

"Oh, Marty! All of them?" cried Janice, laughing at his vehemence, yet tearful, too.

"Well—all I *can*," declared her cousin. "And there ain't many I can't, you bet."

"If you was as fond of work as ye be of fightin', Marty," returned Mr. Day, drily, "you sartin sure'd be a wonderful feller."

"Ya-as," drawled his son but in a very low tone, "maw says I'm growin' more'n more like you, every day."

"Marty," Janice put in quickly, before the bickering could go any further, "did you see little Lottie? It was so late when I came out of Mrs. Beaseley's, I ran right home."

"I seed her," her cousin said gloomily.

"How air her poor eyes?" asked Aunt 'Mira.

"They're not poor eyes. They're as good as anybody's eyes," Marty cried, with exasperation.

"Wal—they say she's goin' blind again," said tactless Aunt 'Mira.

"I say she ain't! She ain't!" ejaculated Marty. "All foolishness. I don't believe a thing them doctors say. She's got just as nice eyes as anybody'd want."

"That is true, Marty," Janice said soothingly; but she sighed.

The door was open, for the evening was mild. On the damp Spring breeze the sound of a husky voice was wafted up the street and into the old Day house.

"Hello!" grunted Uncle Jason, "who's this singin' bird a-comin' up the hill? Tain't never Walky a-singin' like that, is it?"

"It's Walky; but it ain't him singin'," chuckled Marty.

"Huh?" queried Uncle Jason.

"It's Lem Parraday's whiskey that's doin' the singin'," explained the boy. "Hi tunket! Listen to that ditty, will ye?"

"I wish't I was a rock
A-settin' on a hill,
A-doin' nothin' all day long
But jest a-settin' still,"

roared Walky, who was letting the patient Josephus take his own gait up Hillside Avenue.

"For the Good Land o' Goshen!" cried Aunt 'Mira. "What's the matter o' that feller? Has he taken leave of his senses, a-makin' of the night higeous in that-a-way? Who ever told Walky Dexter 't he could sing?"

"It's what he's been drinking that's doing the singing, I tell ye," said her son.

"Poor Walky!" sighed Janice.

The expressman's complaint of his hard lot continued to rise in song:

"I wouldn't eat, I wouldn't sleep,
I wouldn't even wash;
I'd jest set still a thousand years,
And rest myself, b'gosh!"

"Whoa, Josephus!"

He had pulled the willing Josephus (willing at all times to stop) into the open gateway of the old Day place. Marty went out on the porch to hail him.

"I wish I was a bump
A-settin' on a log,
Baitin' m' hook with a flannel shirt
For to ketch a frog!

"And when I'd ketched m' frog,
I'd rescue of m' bait—
An' what a mess of frog's hind laigs
I *wouldn't* have ter ate!"

"Come on in, Walky, and rest your voice."

"You be gittin' to be a smart young chap, Marty," proclaimed Walky, coming slowly up the steps with a package for Mrs. Day and his book to be signed.

The odor of spirits was wafted before him. Walky's face was as round and red as an August full moon.

"How-do, Janice," he said. "What d'yeou think of them fule committeemen startin' this yarn about Nelson Haley?"

"What do folks say about it, Walky?" cut in Mr. Day, to save his niece the trouble of answering.

"Jest erbeout what you'd think they would," the philosophical expressman said, shaking his head. "Them that's got venom under their tongues, must spit it aout if they open their lips at all. Polktown's jest erbeout divided—the gossips in one camp and the kindly talkin' people in t'other. One crowd says Mr. Haley would steal candy from a blind baby, an' t'other says his overcoat fits him so tight across't the shoulders 'cause his wings is sproutin'. Haw! haw! haw!"

"And what d' ye say, Mr. Dexter?" asked Aunt 'Mira, bluntly.

The expressman puckered his lips into a curious expression. "I tell ye what," he said. "Knowin' Mr. Haley as I do, I'm right sure he's innercent as the babe unborn. But, jefers-pelters! who *could* ha' done it?"

"Why, Walky!" gasped Janice.

"I know. It sounds awful, don't it?" said the expressman. "I don't whisper a word of this to other folks. But considerin' that the schoolhouse doors was locked and Mr. Haley had the only other key besides the janitor, who air Massey and them others goin' to blame for the robbery?"

"They air detarmined to save their own hides if possible," Uncle Jason grumbled.

"Natcherly—natcherly," returned Walky. "We know well enough none o' them four men of the School Committee took the coins, nor Benny Thread, neither. They kin all swear alibi for each other and sartain sure they didn't all conspire ter steal the money and split it up 'twixt 'em. Haw! haw! haw! 'Twouldn't hardly been wuth dividin' into five parts," he added, his red face all of a grin.

"That sounds horrid, Mr. Dexter," said Aunt 'Mira.

"Wal, it's practical sense," the expressman said, wagging his head. "It's a problem for one o' them smart detecatifs ye read about in the magazines—one o' them like they have in stories. I read about one of 'em in a story. Yeou leave him smell the puffumery on a gal's handkerchief and he'll tell right away whether she was a blonde or a brunette, an' what size glove she wore! Haw! haw! haw!"

"This ain't no laughing matter, Walky," Mr. Day said, with a side glance at Janice.

"Better laff than cry," declared Walky. "Howsomever, folks seed Mr. Haley go into the schoolhouse and come out ag'in——"

"He told the committee he had been there," Janice interrupted.

"That's right, too. Mebbe not so many folks would ha' knowed they'd seen him there if he hadn't up and said so. Proberbly there was ha'f a dozen other folks hangin' about the schoolhouse, too, at jest the time the coin collection was stole; but they ain't remembered 'cause they didn't up and tell on themselves."

"Oh, Walky!" gasped the girl, startled by the suggestion.

"Wal," drawled the expressman, in continuation, "that ain't no good to us, for nobody had a key to the door but him and Benny Thread."

"I wonder——" murmured Janice; but said no more.

"It's a scanderlous thing," Walky pursued, receiving his book back and preparing to join Josephus at the gate. "Goin' ter split things wide open in Polktown, I reckon. 'Twill be wuss'n a church row 'fore it finishes. Already there's them that says we'd oughter have another teacher in Mr. Haley's place."

"Oh, my!" cried Aunt 'Mira.

"Ain't willin' ter give the young feller a chance't at all, heh?" said Mr. Day, puffing hard at his pipe. "Wall! we'll see about *that*."

"We'd never have a better teacher, I tell 'em," Walky flung back over his shoulder. "But Mr. Haley's drawin' a good salary and there's them that think it oughter go ter somebody that belongs here in Polktown, not to an outsider like him."

"Hi tunket!" cried Marty, after Walky had gone. "There ye have it. Miss Pearly Breeze, that used ter substi-*toot* for 'Rill Scattergood, has wanted the school ever since Mr. Haley come. She'd do fine tryin' to be principal of a graded school—I don't think!"

"Oh, don't talk so, I beg of you," Janice said. "Of course Nelson won't lose his school. If he did, under these circumstances, he could never go to Millhampton College to teach. Why! perhaps his career as a teacher would be irrevocably ruined."

"Now, don't ye take on so, Janice," cried Aunt 'Mira, with her arm about the girl. "It won't be like that. It *can't* be so bad—can it, Jason?"

"We mustn't let it go that fur," declared her spouse, fully aroused now. "Consarn Walky Dexter, anyway! I guess, as Marty says, what he puts in his mouth talks as well as sings for him."

"I snum!" added the farmer, shaking his head. "I dunno which is the biggest nuisance, an ill-natered gossip or a good-natered one. Walky claims ter feel friendly to Mr. Haley, and then comes here with all the unfriendly gossip he kin fetch. Huh! I ain't got a mite o' use fer sech folks."

Uncle Jason was up, pacing the kitchen back and forth in his stocking feet. He was much stirred over Janice's grief. Aunt 'Mira was in tears, too. Marty went out on the porch, ostensibly for a pail of fresh

water, but really to cover his emotion.

None of them could comfortably bear the sight of Janice's tears. As Marty started the pump a boy ran into the yard and up the steps.

"Hullo, Jimmy Gallagher, what you want?" demanded Marty.

"I'm after Janice Day. Got a note for her," said the urchin.

"Hey, Janice!" called her cousin; but the young girl was already out on the porch.

"What is it, Jimmy? Has Nelson——"

"Here's a note from Miz' Drugg. Said for me to give it to ye," said the boy, as he clattered down the steps again.

CHAPTER XI

"MEN MUST WORK WHILE WOMEN MUST WEEP"

Janice brought the letter indoors to read by the light of the kitchen lamp. Her heart fluttered, for she feared that it was something about Nelson. The Drugg domicile was almost across the street from the Beaseley cottage and the girl did not know but that 'Rill had been delegated to tell her something of moment about the young schoolmaster.

Marty, too, was eagerly curious. "Hey, Janice! what's the matter?" he whispered, at her shoulder.

"Mr. Drugg has to be away this evening and she is afraid to stay in the house and store alone. She wants me to come over and spend the night with her. May I, Auntie?"

"Of course, child—go if you like," Aunt 'Mira said briskly. "You've been before."

Twice Mr. Drugg had been away buying goods and Janice had spent the night with 'Rill and little Lottie.

"Though what protection I could be to them if a burglar broke in, I'm sure I don't know," Janice had said, laughingly, on a former occasion.

She went upstairs to pack her handbag rather gravely. She was glad to go to the Drugg place to remain through the night. She would be near Nelson Haley! Somehow, she felt that being across the street from the schoolmaster would be a comfort.

When she came downstairs Marty had his hat and coat on. "I'll go across town with ye—and carry the bag," he proposed. "Going to the reading room, anyway."

"That's nice of you, Marty," she said, trying to speak in her usual cheery manner.

Janice was rather glad it was a moonless evening as she walked side by side with her cousin down Hillside Avenue. It was one of the first warm evenings of the Spring and the neighbors were on their porches, or gossiping at the gates and boundary fences.

What about? Ah! too well did Janice Day know the general subject of conversation this night in Polktown.

"Come on, Janice," grumbled Marty. "Don't let any of those old cats stop you. They've all got their claws sharpened up."

"Hush, Marty!" she begged, yet feeling a warm thrill at her heart because of the boy's loyalty.

"There's that old Benny Thread!" exploded Marty, as they came out on the High Street. "Oh! he's as important now as a Billy-goat on an ash-heap. You'd think, to hear him, that he'd stole the coins himself—only he didn't have no chance't. He and Jack Besmith wouldn't ha' done a thing to that bunch of money—no, indeed!—if they'd got hold of it."

"Why, Marty!" put in Janice; "you shouldn't say that." Then, with sudden curiosity, she added: "What

has that drug clerk got to do with the janitor of the school building?"

"He's Benny's brother-in-law. But Jack's left town, I hear."

"He's gone with Trimmings and Narnay into the woods," Janice said thoughtfully.

"So *he's* out of it," grumbled Marty. "Jack went up to Massey's the other night to try to get his old job back, and Massey turned him out of the store. Told him his breath smothered the smell of iodoform in the back shop," and Marty giggled. "That's how Jack come to get a pint and wander up into our sheep fold to sleep it off."

"Oh, dear, Marty," sighed Janice, "this drinking in Polktown is getting to be a dreadful thing. See how Walky Dexter was to-night."

"Yep."

"Everything that's gone wrong lately is the fault of Lem Parraday's bar."

"Huh! I wonder?" questioned Marty. "Guess Nelse Haley won't lay *his* trouble to liquor drinking."

"No? I wonder——"

"Here's the library building, Janice," interrupted the boy. "Want me to go any further with you?"

"No, dear," she said, taking the bag from him. "Tell Aunt 'Mira I'll be home in the morning in time enough to dress for church."

"Aw-right."

"And, Marty!"

"Yep?" returned he, turning back.

"I see there's a light in the basement of the library building. What's going on?"

"We fellers are holding a meeting," said Marty, importantly. "I called it this afternoon. I don't mind telling you, Janice, that we're going to pass resolutions backing up Mr. Haley—pass him a vote of confidence. That's what they do in lodges and other societies. And if any of the fellers renege tonight on this, I'll—I'll—Well, I'll show 'em somethin'!" finished Marty, very red in the face and threatening as he dived down the basement steps.

"Oh, well," thought Janice, encouraged after all. "Nelson has some loyal friends."

She came to the store on the side street without further incident. She looked across timidly at Nelson's windows. A lamp burned dimly there, so she knew he was at home.

Indeed, where would he go—to whom turn in his trouble? Aside from an old maiden aunt who had lent him enough of her savings to enable him to finish his college course, Nelson had no relatives alive. He had no close friend, either young or old, but herself, Janice knew.

"Oh, if daddy were only home from Mexico!" was her unspoken thought, as she lifted the latch of the store door.

There were no customers at this hour; but it was Hopewell Drugg's custom to keep the store open until nine o'clock every evening, and Saturday night until a much later hour. Every neighborhood store must do this to keep trade.

"I'm so glad to see you, Janice," 'Rill proclaimed, without coming from behind the counter. "You'll stay?"

"Surely. Don't you see my bag?" returned Janice gaily. "Is Mr. Drugg going to be away all night?"

"He—he could not be sure. It's another dance," 'Rill said, rather apologetically. "He feels he must play when he can. Every five dollars counts, you know, and Hopewell is sure that Lottie will have to go back to the school."

"Where is the dance?" asked Janice gravely. "Down at the Inn?"

"Yes," replied the wife, quite as seriously, and dropping her gaze.

"Oh! I hear my Janice! I hear my Janice Day!" cried Lottie's sweet, shrill voice from the rear

apartment and she came running out into the store to meet the visitor.

"Have a care! have a care, dear!" warned 'Rill. "Look where you run."

Janice, seeing more clearly from where she stood in front of the counter, was aware that the child ran toward her with her hands outstretched, and with her eyes tightly closed—just as she used to do before her eyes were treated and she had been to the famous Boston physician.

"Oh, Lottie dear!" she exclaimed, taking the little one into her arms. "You will run into something. You will hurt yourself. Why don't you look where you are going?"

"I *do* look," Lottie responded pouting. Then she wriggled all her ten fingers before Janice's face. "Don't you see my lookers? I can see—oh! so nicely!—with my fingers. You know I always could, Janice Day."

'Rill shook her head and sighed. It was plain the bride was a very lenient stepmother indeed—perhaps too lenient. She loved Hopewell Drugg's child so dearly that she could not bear to correct her. Lottie had always had her own way with her father; and matters had not changed, Janice could see.

"Mamma 'Rill," Lottie coaxed, patting her step-mother's pink cheek, "you'll let me sit up longer, 'cause Janice is here—won't you?"

Of course 'Rill could not refuse her. So the child sat there, blinking at the store lights like a little owl, until finally she sank down in the old cushioned armchair behind the stove and fell fast asleep. Occasionally customers came in; but between whiles Janice and the storekeeper's wife could talk.

The racking "clump, clump, clump," of a big-footed farm horse sounded without and a woman's nasal voice called a sharp:

"Whoa! Whoa, there! Now, Emmy, you git aout and hitch him to that there post. Ain't no ring to it? Wal! I don't see what Hope Drugg's thinkin' of—havin' no rings to his hitchin' posts. He ain't had none to that one long's I kin remember."

"Here comes Mrs. Si Leggett," said 'Rill to Janice. "She's a particular woman and I am sorry Hopewell isn't here himself. Usually she comes in the afternoon. She is late with her Saturday's shopping this time."

"Take this basket of eggs—easy, now, Emmy!" shrilled the woman's voice. "Handle 'em careful—handle 'em like they *was* eggs!"

A heavy step, and a lighter step, on the porch, and then the store door opened. The woman was tall and raw-boned. She wore a sunbonnet of fine green and white stripes. Emmy was a lanky child of fourteen or so, with slack, flaxen hair and a perfectly colorless face.

"Haow-do, Miz' Drugg," said the newcomer, putting a large basket of eggs carefully on the counter. "What's Hopewell givin' for eggs to-day?"

"Just what everybody else is, Mrs. Leggett. Twenty-two cents. That's the market price."

"Wal—seems ter me I was hearin' that Mr. Sprague daowntown was a-givin' twenty-three," said the customer slowly.

"Perhaps he is, Mrs. Leggett. But Mr. Drugg cannot afford to give even a penny above the market price. Of course, either cash or trade—just as you please."

"Wal, I want some things an' I wasn't kalkerlatin' to go 'way daowntown ter-night—it's so late," said Mrs. Leggett.

'Rill smiled and waited.

"Twenty-two's the best you kin do?" queried the lanky woman querulously.

"That is the market price."

"Wal! lemme see some cheap gingham. It don't matter about the pattern. It's only for Emmy here, and it don't matter what 'tis that covers her bones' long's it does cover 'em. Will this fade?"

"I don't think so," Mrs. Drugg said, opening the bolt of goods so that the customer could get at it better.

Janice watched, much amused. The woman pulled at the piece one way, and then another, wetting it

meantime and rubbing it with her fingers to ascertain if the colors were fast. She was apparently unable to satisfy herself regarding it.

Finally she produced a small pair of scissors and snipped off a tiny piece and handed it to Emmy. "Here, Emmy," she said, "you spit aout that there gum an' chew on this here awhile ter see if it fades any."

Janice dodged behind the post to hide the expression of amusement that she could not control. She wondered how 'Rill could remain so placid and unruffled.

Emmy took the piece of goods, clapped it into her mouth with the most serious expression imaginable, and went to work. Her mother said:

"Ye might's well count the eggs, Miz' Drugg. I make 'em eight dozen and ten. I waited late for the rest of the critters ter lay; but they done fooled me ter-day—for a fac'!"

Emmy having chewed on the gingham to her mother's complete satisfaction, Mrs. Leggett finished making her purchases and they departed. Then 'Rill and her guest could talk again. Naturally the conversation almost at the beginning turned upon Nelson Haley's trouble.

"It is terrible!" 'Rill said. "Mr. Moore and those others never could have thought what they were doing when they accused Mr. Haley of stealing."

"They were afraid that they would have to make good for the coins, and felt that they must blame somebody," Janice replied with a sigh.

"Of course, Hopewell went right over to tell the schoolmaster what he thought about it as soon as the story reached us. Hopewell thinks highly of the young man, you know."

"Until this thing happened, I thought almost everybody thought highly of him," said Janice, with a sob.

"Oh, my dear!" cried 'Rill, tearful herself, "there is such gossip in Polktown. So many people are ready to make ill-natured and untruthful remarks about one——"

Janice knew to what secret trouble the storekeeper's wife referred. "I know!" she exclaimed, wiping away her own tears. "They have talked horridly about Mr. Drugg."

"It is untruthful! It is unfair!" exclaimed Hopewell Drugg's wife, her cheeks and eyes suddenly ablaze with indignation. To tell the truth, she was like an angry kitten, and had the matter not been so serious, Janice must have laughed at her.

"They have told all over town that Hopewell came home intoxicated from that last dance," continued the wife. "But it is a story—a wicked, wicked story!"

Janice was silent. She remembered what she and Marty and Mrs. Scattergood had seen on the evening in question—how Hopewell Drugg had looked as he staggered past the street lamp on the corner on his way home with the fiddle under his arm.

She looked away from 'Rill and waited. Janice feared that the poor little bride would discover the expression of her doubt in her eyes.

CHAPTER XII

AN UNEXPECTED EMERGENCY

'Rill seemed to understand what was in Janice's mind and heart. She kept on with strained vehemence:

"I know what they all say! And my mother is as bad as any of them. They say Hopewell was intoxicated. He was sick, and the bartender mixed him something to settle his stomach. I think maybe he put some liquor in it unbeknown to Hopewell. Or something!

"The poor, dear man was ill all night, Janice, and he never did remember how he got home from the

dance. Whatever he drank seemed to befuddle his brain just as soon as he came out into the night air. That should prove that he's not a drinking man."

"I—I am sorry for you, dear," Janice said softly. "And I am sorry anybody saw Mr. Drugg that evening on his way home."

"Oh, I know you saw him, Janice—and Marty Day and my mother. Mother can be as mean as mean can be! She has never liked Hopewell, as you know."

"Yes, I know," admitted Janice.

"She keeps throwing such things up to me. And her tongue is never still. It is true Hopewell's father was a drinking man."

"Indeed?" said Janice, curiously.

"Yes," sighed 'Rill Drugg. "He was rather shiftless. Perhaps it is the nature of artists so to be," she added reflectively. "For he was really a fine musician. Had Hopewell had a chance he might have been his equal. I often think so," said the storekeeper's bride proudly.

"I know that the elder Mr. Drugg taught the violin."

"Yes. And he used to travel about over the country, giving lessons and playing in orchestras. That used to make Mrs. Drugg awfully angry. She wanted him to be a storekeeper. She made Hopewell be one. How she ever came to marry such a man as Hopewell's father, I do not see."

"She must have loved him," said Janice wistfully.

"Of course!" cried the bride, quite as innocently. "She couldn't have married him otherwise."

"And was Hopewell their only child?"

"Yes. He seldom saw his father, but he fairly worshiped him. His father was a handsome man—and he used to play his violin for Hopewell. It was this very instrument my husband prizes so greatly now. When Mr. Drugg died the violin was hid away for years in the garret.

"You've heard how Hopewell found it, and strung it himself, and used to play on it slyly, and so taught himself to be a fiddler, before his mother had any idea he knew one note from another. She was extremely deaf at the last and could not hear him playing at odd times, up in the attic."

"My!" said Janice, "he must have really loved music."

"It was his only comfort," said the wife softly. "When he was twenty-one what little property his father had left came to him. But his mother did not put the violin into the inventory; so Hopewell said: 'Give me the fiddle and you can have the rest.'"

"He loved it so!" murmured Janice appreciatively:

"Yes. I guess that was almost the only time in his life that Hopewell really asserted himself. With his mother, at least. She was a very stubborn woman, and very stern; more so than my own mother. But Mrs. Drugg had to give in to him about the violin, for she needed Hopewell to run the store for her. They had little other means.

"But she made him marry 'Cinda Stone," added 'Rill. "Poor 'Cinda! she was never happy. Not that Hopewell did not treat her well. You know, Janice, he is the sweetest-tempered man that ever lived.

"And that is what hurts me more than anything else," sobbed the bride, dabbling her eyes with her handkerchief. "When they say Hopewell gets intoxicated, and is cruel to me and to Lottie, it seems as though—as though I could scratch their eyes out!"

For a moment Hopewell's wife looked so spiteful, and her eyes snapped so, that Janice wanted to laugh. Of course, she did not do so. But to see the mild and sweet-tempered 'Rill display such venom was amusing.

The store door opened with a bang. The girl and the woman both started up, Lottie remaining asleep.

"Hush! Never mind!" whispered Janice to 'Rill. "I'll wait on the customer."

When she went out into the front of the store, she saw that the figure which had entered was in a glistening slicker. It had begun to rain.

"Why, Frank Bowman! Is it you?" she asked, in surprise.

"Oh! how-do, Janice! I didn't expect to find you here."

"Nor I you. What are you doing away up here on the hill?" Janice asked.

Frank Bowman did not look himself. The girl could not make out what the trouble with him was, and she was puzzled.

"I guess you forgot I told you I was moving," he said hesitatingly.

"Oh, I remember! And you've moved up into this neighborhood?"

"Not exactly. I am going to lodge with the Threads, but I shall continue to eat Marm Parraday's cooking."

"The Threads?" murmured Janice.

"You know. The little, crooked-backed man. He's janitor of the school. His wife has two rooms I can have. Her brother has been staying with them; but he's lost his job and has gone up into the woods. It's a quiet place—and that's what I want. I can't stand the racket at the hotel any longer," concluded the civil engineer.

But Janice thought he still looked strange and spoke differently from usual. His glance wandered about the store as he talked.

"What did you want to buy, Frank?" she asked. "I'm keeping store to-night." She knew that 'Rill would not want the young man to see her tears.

"Oh—ah—yes," Bowman stammered. "What did I want?"

At that Janice laughed outright. She thought highly of the young civil engineer, and she considered herself a close enough friend to ask, bluntly:

"What ever is the matter with you, Frank Bowman? You're acting ridiculously."

He came nearer to her and whispered: "Where's Mrs. Drugg?"

Janice motioned behind her, and her face paled. What had happened?

"I—I declare I don't know how to tell her," murmured the young man, his hand actually trembling.

"Tell her what?" gasped Janice.

"Or even that I ought to tell her," added Frank Bowman, shaking his head.

Janice seized him by the lapel of his coat and tried to shake him.

"What do you mean? What are you talking about?" she demanded.

"What is the matter, Janice?" called 'Rill's low voice from the back.

"Never mind! I can attend to *this* customer," Janice answered gaily.
"It's Frank Bowman."

Then she turned swiftly to the civil engineer again and whispered:
"What is it about? Hopewell?"

"Yes," he returned in the same low tone.

"What is the matter with him?" demanded the girl greatly worried.

"He's down at the Inn——"

"I know. He went there to play at a dance tonight. That's why I am here—to keep his wife company," explained Janice.

"Well," said Bowman. "I went down to get some of my books I'd left there. They're having a high old time in that big back room, downstairs. You know?"

"Where they are going to have the Assembly Ball?"

"Yes," he agreed.

"But it's nothing more than a dance, is it?" whispered Janice.
"Hopewell was hired to play——"

"I know. But such playing you never heard in all your life," said Bowman, with disgust. "And the racket! I wonder somebody doesn't complain to Judge Little or to the Town Council."

"Not with Mr. Cross Moore holding a mortgage on the hotel," said Janice, with more bitterness than she usually displayed.

"You're right there," Bowman agreed gloomily.

"But what about Hopewell?"

"I believe they have given him something to drink. That Joe Bodley, the barkeeper, is up to any trick. If Hopewell keeps on he will utterly disgrace himself, and——"

Janice clung to his arm tightly, interrupting his words with a little cry of pity. "And it will fairly break his wife's heart!" she said.

CHAPTER XIII

INTO THE LION'S DEN

Janice Day was growing up.

What really ages one in this life? Emotions. Fear—sorrow—love—hate—sympathy—jealousy—all the primal passions wear one out and make one old. This young girl of late had suffered from too much emotion.

Nelson Haley's trouble; her father's possible peril in Mexico; the many in whom she was interested being so affected by the sale of liquor in Polktown—all these things combined to make Janice feel a burden of responsibility that should not have rested upon the shoulders of so young a girl.

"Frank," she whispered to Bowman, there in the front of the dusky store, "Frank, what shall we do?"

"What can we do?" he asked quite blankly.

"He—he should be brought home."

"My goodness!" Bowman stammered. "Do you suppose Mrs. Drugg would go down there after him?"

"She mustn't," Janice hastened to reply, with decision; "but I will."

"Not you, Janice!" Bowman exclaimed, recoiling at the thought.

"Do you suppose I'd let you tell Mrs. Drugg?" demanded the girl, fiercely, yet under her breath.

"He's her husband."

"And I'm her friend."

Bowman looked admiringly at the flushed face of the girl. "You are fine, Janice," he said. "But you're too fine to go into that place down there and get Drugg out of it. If you think it is your duty to go for the man, I'll go with you. And I'll go in after him."

"Oh, Mr. Bowman! If you would!"

"Oh, I will. I only wish we had your car. He may be unable to walk and then the neighbors will talk."

"It's got beyond worrying about what the neighbors say," said Janice wearily. "Now, wait. I must go and excuse myself to Mrs. Drugg. She must not suspect. Maybe it isn't as bad as you think and we'll get Hopewell home all right."

The storekeeper's wife had carried Lottie back to the sitting room. The child was still asleep and 'Rill was undressing her.

"What is the matter, Janice?" she asked curiously. "Has Mr. Bowman gone? What did he want?"

"He didn't want to buy anything. He wanted to see me. I—I am going out with him a little while, Miss 'Rill."

The latter nodded her head knowingly. "I know," she said. "You are going across the street. I am glad Mr. Bowman feels an interest in Mr. Haley's affairs."

"Yes!" gasped Janice, feeling that she was perilously near an untruth, for she was allowing 'Rill to deceive herself.

"Will you put the window lamps out before you go, dear?" the storekeeper's wife said.

"Certainly," Janice answered, and proceeded to do so before putting on her coat and hat.

"Don't be long," 'Rill observed softly. "It's after eleven now."

Janice came and kissed her—oh, so tenderly! They stood above the sleeping child. 'Rill had eyes only for the half naked, plump limbs and body of the little girl, or she might have seen something in Janice's tearful glance to make her suspicious.

Janice thought of a certain famous picture of the "Madonna and Child" as she tiptoed softly from the room, looking back as she went 'Rill yearned over the little one as only a childless and loving woman does. Perhaps 'Rill had married Hopewell Drugg as much for the sake of being able to mother little Lottie as for any other reason.

Yet, what a shock that tender, loving heart was about to receive—what a blow! Janice shrank from the thought of being one of those to bring this hovering trouble home to the trusting wife.

Could she not escape it? There was her handbag on the end of the counter. She was tempted to seize it, run out of the store, and make her way homeward as fast as possible.

She could leave Frank Bowman to settle the matter with his own conscience. He had brought the knowledge of this trouble to the little store on the side street. Let him solve the problem as best he might.

Then Janice gave the civil engineer a swift glance, and her heart failed her. She could not leave that unhappy looking specimen of helplessness to his own devices.

Frank's pompadour was ruffled, his eyes were staring, and his whole countenance was a troubled mask. In that moment Janice Day realized for the first time the main duty of the female in this world. That is, she is here to pull the incompetent male out of his difficulties!

She thought of Nelson, thoughtful and sensible as he was, actually appalled by his situation in the community. And here was Frank Bowman, a very efficient engineer, unable to engineer this small matter of getting Hopewell Drugg home from the dance, without her assistance.

"Oh, dear me! what would the world be without us women?" thought Janice—and gave up all idea of running away and leaving Frank to bungle the situation.

The two went out of the store together and closed the door softly behind them. Janice could not help glancing across at the lighted front windows of Mrs. Beaseley's cottage.

"There's trouble over yonder," said young Bowman gently. "I went in to see him after supper. He said you'd been there to help him buck up, Janice. Really, you're a wonderful girl."

"I'm sorry," sighed Janice.

"What?" cried Frank.

"Yes. I am sorry if I am wonderful. If I were not considered so, then not so many unpleasant duties would fall my way."

Frank laughed at that. "I guess you're right," he said. "Those that seem to be able to bear the burdens of life certainly have them to bear. But poor Nelson needs somebody to hold up his hands, as it were. He's up against it for fair, Janice."

"Oh! I can't believe that the committee will continue this persecution, when they come to think it over," the girl cried.

"It doesn't matter whether they do or not, I fear," Bowman said, with conviction. "The harm is done."

He's been accused."

"Oh, dear me! I know it," groaned Janice.

"And unless he is proved innocent, Nelson Haley is bound to have trouble here in Polktown."

"Do you believe so, Frank?"

"I hate to say it. But we—his friends—might as well face the fact first as last," said the civil engineer, sheltering Janice beneath the umbrella he carried. It was misting heavily and she was glad of this shelter.

"Oh, I hope they will find the real thief very quickly!"

"So do I. But I see nothing being done toward that. The committee seems satisfied to accuse Nelson—and let it go at that."

"It is too, too bad!"

"They are following the line of least resistance. The real thief is, of course, well away—out of Polktown, and probably in some big city where the coins can be disposed of to the best advantage."

"Do you really believe so?" cried the girl.

"I do. The thief was some tramp or traveling character who got into the schoolhouse by stealth. That is the only sensible explanation of the mystery."

"Do you really believe so?" repeated Janice.

"Yes. Think of it yourself. The committee and Benny Thread are not guilty. Nelson is not guilty. Only two keys to the building and those both accounted for.

"Some time—perhaps on Friday afternoon or early evening—this tramp I speak of crept into the cellar when the basement door of the schoolhouse was open, with the intention of sleeping beside the furnace. In the morning he slips upstairs and hides from the janitor and keeps in hiding when the four committeemen appear.

"He sees the trays of coins," continued Frank Bowman, waxing enthusiastic with his own story, "and while the committeemen are downstairs, and before Nelson comes in, he takes the coins."

"Why *before* Nelson entered?" asked Janice sharply.

"Because Nelson tells me that he did not see the trays on the table in the committee room when he looked in there. The thief had removed them, and then put the trays back. Had Nelson seen them he would have stopped to examine the coins, at least. You see, they were brought over from Middletown and delivered to Massey, who kept them in his safe all night. Nelson never laid eyes on them."

"I see! I see!" murmured Janice.

"So this fellow stole the coins and slipped out of the building with them. They may even be melted down and sold for old gold by this time; although that would scarcely be possible. At any rate, the committee will have to satisfy the owner of the collection. That is sure."

"And that is going to make them all just as mad as they can be," declared the girl. "They want to blame somebody—"

"And they have blamed Nelson. It remains that he must prove himself innocent—before public opinion, not before a court. There they have to prove guilt. He is guilty already in the eyes of half of Polktown. No chance of waiting to be proved guilty before he is considered so."

Janice flushed and her answer came sharply: "And how about the other half of Polktown?"

"We may be evenly divided—fifty-fifty," and Bowman laughed grimly. "But the ones who believe—or say that they believe—Nelson Haley guilty, will talk much louder than those who deny."

"Oh, Frank Bowman! you take all my hope away."

"I don't mean to. I want to point out to you—and myself, as well—that to sit idle and wait for the matter to settle itself, is not enough for us who believe Haley is guiltless. We've got to set about disproving the accusation."

"I—I can see you are right," admitted the girl faintly.

"Yes; I am right. But being right doesn't end the matter. The question is: How are we going about it to save Nelson?"

Janice was rather shocked by this conclusion. Frank had seemed so clear up to this point. And then he slumped right down and practically asked her: "What are *you* going to do about it?"

"Oh, dear me!" cried Janice Day, faintly, "I don't know. I can't think. We must find some way of tracing the real thief. Oh! how can I think of that, when here poor 'Rill and Hopewell are in trouble?"

"Never mind! Never mind, Janice!" said Frank Bowman. "We'll soon get Hopewell home. And I hope, too, that his wife will know enough to keep him away from the hotel hereafter."

"But, suppose she can't," whispered Janice. "You know, his father was given to drinking."

"No! Is that so?"

"Yes. Maybe it is hereditary——"

"Queer it didn't show itself before," said Bowman sensibly. "I am more inclined to believe that Joe Bodley is playing tricks. Why! he's kept bar in the city and I know he was telling some of the scatter-brained young fools who hang around the Inn, that he's often seen 'peter' used in men's drink to knock them out. 'Peter,' you know, is 'knock-out drops!'"

"No, I don't know," said Janice, with disgust. "Or, I didn't till you told me."

"Forgive me, Janice," the civil engineer said humbly. "I was only explaining."

"Oh, I'm not blaming you at all," she said. "But I am angry to think that my own mind—as well as everybody's mind in Polktown—is being contaminated from this barroom. We are all learning saloon phrases. I never heard so much slang from Marty and the other boys, as I have caught the last few weeks. Having liquor sold in Polktown is giving us a new language."

"Well," said Bowman, as the lights of the Inn came in sight, "I hadn't thought of it that way. But I guess you are right. Now, now, Janice, what had we better do? Hear the noise?"

"What kind of dance is it?" asked Janice, in disgust. "I should think that it was a sailor's dance hall, or a lumber camp dance. I have heard of such things."

"It's going a little too strong for Lem Parraday himself to-night, I guess. Marm shuts herself in their room upstairs, I understand, and reads her Bible and prays."

"Poor woman!"

"She's of the salt of the earth," said Bowman warmly. "But she can't help herself. Lem would do it. The Inn did not pay. And it is paying now. At least, he says it is."

"It won't pay them in the end if this keeps up," said Janice, listening to the stamping and the laughter and the harsh sounds of violins and piano. "Surely Hopewell isn't making *all* that—that music?"

"I'll go in and see. I shouldn't wonder if he was not playing at all now. Maybe one of the boys has got his fiddle."

"Oh, no! He'd never let that precious violin out of his own hands, would he?" queried Janice. "Why! do you know, Frank, I believe that is quite a valuable instrument."

"I don't know. But when I started uptown one of the visitors was teasing to get hold of the violin. I don't know the man. He is a stranger—a black-haired, foxy-looking chap. Although, by good rights, I suppose a 'foxy-looking' person should be red-haired, eh?"

Janice, however, was not splitting hairs. She said quickly: "Do go in; Frank, and see what Hopewell is about."

"How'll I get him out?"

"Tell him I want to see him. He'll think something has happened to 'Rill or Lottie. I don't care if he is scared. It may do him good."

"I'll go around by the barroom door," said the young engineer, for they had come to the front entrance of the hotel.

Lights were blazing all over the lower floor of the sprawling building; but from the left of the front door came the sound of dancing. Some of the windows were open and the shades were up. Janice, standing in the darkness of the porch, could see the dancers passing back and forth before the windows.

By the appearance of those she saw, she judged that the girls and women were mostly of the mill-hand class, and were from Middletown and Millhampton. She knew the men of the party were of the same class. The tavern yard was full of all manner of vehicles, including huge party wagons which carried two dozen passengers or more. There was a big crowd.

Janice felt, after all, as though she had urged Frank Bowman into the lion's den! The dancers were a rough set. She left the front porch after a while and stole around to the barroom door.

The door was wide open, but there was a half-screen swinging in the opening which hid all but the legs and feet of the men standing at the bar. Here the voices were much plainer. There were a few boys hanging about the doorway, late as the hour was. Janice was smitten with the thought that Marty's boys' club, the foundation society of the Public Library and Reading Room, would better be after these youngsters.

"Why, Simeon Howell!" she exclaimed suddenly. "You ought not to be here. I don't believe your mother knows where you are."

The other boys, who were ragamuffins, giggled at this, and one said to young Howell:

"Aw, Sim! Yer mother don't know yer out, does she? Better run home, Simmy, or she'll spank ye."

Simeon muttered something not very complimentary to Janice, and moved away. The Howells lived on Hillside Avenue and he was afraid Janice would tell his mother of this escapade.

Suddenly a burst of voices proclaimed trouble in the barroom. She heard Frank Bowman's voice, high-pitched and angry:

"Then give him his violin! You've no right to it. I'll take him away all right; but the violin goes, too!"

"No, we want the fiddle. He was to play for us," said a harsh voice. "There is another feller here can play instead. But we want both violins."

"None of that!" snapped the engineer. "Give me that!"

There was a momentary struggle near the flapping screen. Suddenly Hopewell Drugg, very much disheveled, half reeled through the door; but somebody pulled him back.

"Aw, don't go so early, Hopewell. You're your own man, ain't ye? Don't let this white-haired kid boss you."

"Let him alone, Joe Bodley!" commanded Bowman again, and Janice, shaking on the porch, knew that it must be the barkeeper who had interfered with Hopewell Drugg's escape.

The girl was terror-stricken; but she was indignant, too. She shrank from facing the half-intoxicated crowd in the room just as she would have trembled at the thought of entering a cage of lions.

Nevertheless, she put her hand against the swinging screen, pushed it open, and stepped inside the tavern door.

CHAPTER XIV

A DECLARATION OF WAR

The room was a large apartment with smoke-cured and age-blackened beams in the ceiling. This was the ancient tap-room of the tavern, which had been built at that pre-Revolutionary time when the stuffed catamount, with its fangs and claws bared to the York State officers, crouched on top of the staff at Bennington—for Polktown was one of the oldest settlements in these "Hampshire Grants."

No noisier or more ill-favored crew, Janice Day thought, could ever have been gathered under the roof of the Inn, than she now saw as she pushed open the screen. Tobacco smoke poisoned the air, floating in clouds on a level with the men's heads, and blurring the lamplight.

There was a crowd of men and boys at the door of the dance hall. At the bar was another noisy line. It was evident that Joe Bodley had merely run from behind the bar for a moment to stop, if he could, Hopewell Drugg's departure. Hopewell was flushed, hatless, and trembling. Whether he was intoxicated or ill, the fact remained that he was not himself.

The storekeeper clung with both hands to the neck of his violin. A greasy-looking, black-haired fellow held on to the other end of the instrument, and was laughing in the face of the expostulating Frank Bowman, displaying a wealth of white teeth, and the whites of his eyes, as well. He was a foreigner of some kind. Janice had never seen him before, and she believed he must be the "foxy-looking" man Frank had previously mentioned.

It was, however, Joe Bodley, whom the indignant young girl confronted when she came so suddenly into the room. Most of the men present paid no attention to the quarreling group at the entrance.

"Come now, Hopewell, be a sport," the young barkeeper was saying. "It's early yet, and we want to hear more of your fiddling. Give us that 'Darling, I Am Growing Old' stuff, with all the variations. Sentiment! Sentiment! Oh, hullo! Evening, Miss! What can I do for you?"

He said this last impudently enough, facing Janice. He was a fat-faced, smoothly-shaven young man—little older than Frank Bowman, but with pouches under his eyes and the score of dissipation marked plainly in his countenance. He had unmeasured impudence and bravado in his eyes and in his smile.

"I have come to speak to Mr. Drugg," Janice said, and she was glad she could say it unshakenly, despite her secret emotions. She would not give this low fellow the satisfaction of knowing how frightened she really was.

Frank Bowman's back was to the door. Perhaps this was well, for he would have hesitated to do just what was necessary had he known Janice was in the room. The young engineer had not been bossing a construction gang of lusty, "two-fisted" fellows for six months without many rude experiences.

"So, you won't let go, eh?" he gritted between his teeth to the smiling foreigner.

With his left hand in his collar, Frank jerked the man toward him, thrust his own leg forward, and then pitched the fellow backward over his knee. This act broke the man's hold upon Drugg's violin and he crashed to the floor, striking the back of his head soundly.

"All right, Mr. Drugg," panted Frank. "Get out."

But it was Janice, still confronting Bodley, that actually freed the storekeeper from his enemies. Her eyes blazed with indignation into the bartender's own. His fat, white hand dropped from Hopewell's arm.

"Oh, if the young lady's really come to take you home to the missus, I s'pose we'll have to let you go," he said, with a nasty laugh. "But no play, no pay, you understand."

Janice drew the bewildered Hopewell out of the door, and Frank quickly followed. Few in the room had noted the incident at all.

The three stood a minute on the porch, the mist drifting in from the lake and wetting them. The engineer finally took the umbrella from Janice and raised it to shelter her.

"They—they broke two of the strings," muttered Hopewell, with thought for nothing but his precious violin.

"You'd better cover it up, or it will be wet; and that won't do any fiddle any good," growled Frank, rather disgusted with the storekeeper.

But there was something queer about Hopewell's condition that both puzzled Janice and made her pity him.

"He is not intoxicated—not as other men are," she whispered to the engineer.

"I don't know that he is," said Frank. "But he's made us trouble enough. Come on; let's get him home."

Drugg was trying to shelter the precious violin under his coat.

"He has no hat and the fiddle bag is gone," said Janice.

"I'm not going back in there," said the civil engineer decidedly. And then he chuckled, adding:

"That fellow I tipped over will be just about ready to fight by now. I reckon he thinks differently now about the 'white-headed kid,' as he called me. You see," Frank went on modestly, "I was something of a boxer at the Tech school, and I've had to keep my wits about me with those 'muckers' of the railroad construction gang."

"Oh, dear, me! I think there must be something very tigerish in all of us," sighed Janice. "I was glad when I saw that black-haired man go down. What did he want Hopewell's violin for?"

"Don't know. Just meanness, perhaps. They doctored Hopewell's drink somehow, and he was acting like a fool and playing ridiculously."

They could talk plainly before the storekeeper, for he really did not know what was going on. His face was blank and his eyes staring, but he had buttoned the violin beneath the breast of his coat.

"Come on, old fellow," Frank said, putting a heavy hand on Drugg's shoulder. "Let's be going. It's too wet to stand here."

The storekeeper made no objection. Indeed, as they walked along, Hopewell between Frank and Janice, who carried the umbrella, Drugg seemed to be moving in a daze. His head hung on his breast; he said no word; and his feet stumbled as though they were leaden and he had no feeling in them.

"Mr. Bowman!" exclaimed Janice, at last, and under her breath, "he is ill!"

"I am beginning to believe so myself," the civil engineer returned. "I've seen enough drunken fellows before this to know that Hopewell doesn't show many of the usual symptoms."

Janice halted suddenly. "There's a light in Mr. Massey's back room," she said.

"Eh? Back of the drugstore? Yes, I see it," Bowman said, puzzled.

"Why not take Mr. Drugg there and see if Massey can give him something? I hate to take him home to 'Rill in this condition."

"Something to straighten him up—eh?" cried the engineer. "Good idea. If he's there and will let us in," he added, referring to the druggist, for the front store was entirely dark, it being now long past the usual closing hour of all stores in Polktown.

Janice and Frank led Hopewell Drugg to the side door of the shop, he making no objection to the change in route. It was doubtful if he even knew where they were taking him. He seemed in a state of partial syncope.

Frank had to knock the second time before there was any answer. They heard voices—Massey's and another. Then the druggist came to the entrance, unbolted it and stuck his head out—his gray hair all ruffled up in a tuft which made him, with his big beak and red-rimmed eyes, look like a startled cockatoo.

"Who's this, now? Jack Besmith again? What did I tell you?" he snapped. Then he seemed to see that he was wrong, and the next moment exclaimed: "Wal! I am jiggered!" for, educated man though he was, Mr. Massey had lived in the hamlet of his birth all of his life and spoke the dialect of the community. "Wal! I am jiggered!" he repeated. "What ye got there?"

"I guess you see whom we have, Mr. Massey," said Frank Bowman pushing in and leading the storekeeper.

"Oh, Mr. Massey! It's Hopewell Drugg," Janice said pleadingly. "Can't you help him?"

"Janice Day! I declare to sun-up!" ejaculated the druggist. "What you beaung about that half-baked critter for? And he's drunk?"

"He is *not!*" cried the girl, with indignation. "At least, he is like no other drunken person I have seen. He is ill. They gave him something to drink down at the Inn—at that dance where he was playing his violin—and it has made him ill. Don't you *see?*" and she stamped her foot impatiently.

"Hoity-toity, young lady!" chuckled Massey.

They were all inside now and the druggist locked the door again. Behind the stove, in the corner, sat

Mr. Cross Moore, and he did not say a word.

"You can see yourself, Mr. Massey," urged Frank Bowman, helping Drugg into a chair, "that this is no ordinary drunk."

"No," Massey said reflectively, and now looked with some pity at the helpless man. "Alcohol never did exhilarate Hopewell. It just dopes him. It does some folks. And it doesn't take much to do it."

"Then Hopewell Drugg has been in the habit of drinking?" asked Bowman, in surprise. "You have seen him this way before?"

"No, he hasn't. Never mind what these chattering old women in town say about him now. I never saw him this way but once before. That was when he had been given some brandy. 'Member that time, Cross, when we all went fishin' down to Pine Cove? Gosh! Must have been all of twenty years ago."

All that Mr. Cross Moore emitted was a grunt, but he nodded.

"Hopewell cut himself—'bad—on a rusty bailer. He fell on it and liked ter bled to death. You know, Cross, we gave him brandy and he was dead to the world for hours."

"Yes," said Mr. Moore. "What did he want to drink now for?"

"I do not believe he knowingly took anything intoxicating," Janice said earnestly. "They have been playing tricks down there at the tavern on him."

"Tricks?" repeated Mr. Moore curiously.

"Yes, sir," said Janice. "Men mean enough to sell liquor are mean enough to do anything. And not only those who actually sell the stuff are to blame in a case like this, but those who encourage the sale of it."

Mr. Cross Moore uncrossed his long legs and crossed them slowly the other way. He always had a humorous twinkle in his shrewd gray eye. He had it now.

"Meaning me?" he drawled, eyeing the indignant young girl just as he would look at an angry kitten.

"Yes, Mr. Moore," said Janice, with dignity. "A word from you, and Lem Parraday would stop selling liquor. He would have to. And without your encouragement he would never have entered into the nefarious traffic. Polktown is being injured daily by that bar at the Inn, and you more than any other one person are guilty of this crime against the community!"

Mr. Cross Moore did not change his attitude. Janice was panting and half crying now. The selectman said, slowly:

"I might say that you are an impudent girl."

"I guess I am," Janice admitted tearfully. "But I mean every word I have said, and I won't take it back."

"You and I have been good friends, Janice Day," continued Mr. Moore in his drawling way. "I never like to quarrel with my friends."

"You can be no friend of mine, Mr. Moore, till the sale of liquor stops in this town, and you are converted," declared Janice, wiping her eyes, but speaking quite as bravely as before.

"Then it is war between us?" he asked, yet not lightly.

"Yes, sir," sobbed Janice. "I always have liked you, Mr. Cross Moore. But now I can't bear even to look at you! I don't approve of you at all—not one little bit!"

CHAPTER XV

AND NOW IT IS DISTANT TROUBLE

Mr. Massey had been attending to the overcome Hopewell Drugg. He mixed him something and forced it down his throat. Then he whispered to Frank Bowman:

"It was brandy. I can smell it on his breath. Pshaw! Hopewell's a harmless critter. Why couldn't they let him alone?"

Frank had taken up the violin. The moisture had got to it a little on the back and the young man thoughtlessly held it near the fire to dry. Hopewell's eyes opened and almost immediately he staggered to his feet, reaching for the instrument.

"Wrong! wrong!" he muttered. "Never do that. Crack the varnish. Spoil the tone."

"Hullo, old fellow!" said Mr. Massey, patting Hopewell on the shoulder. "Guess you feel better—heh?"

"Ye—yes. Why! that you, Massey?" ejaculated the storekeeper, in surprise.

"'Twas me when I got up this mornin'," grunted the druggist.

"Why—why—I don't remember coming here to your store, Massey," said the mystified Hopewell Drugg. "I—I guess I didn't feel well."

"I guess you didn't," said the druggist, drily, eyeing him curiously.

"Was I sick? Lost consciousness? This is odd—very odd," said Hopewell. "I believe it must have been that lemonade."

Mr. Cross Moore snorted. "Lemonade!" he ejaculated. "Suthin' b'sides tartaric acid to aid the lemons in that lemonade, Hopewell. You was drunk!"

Drugg blinked at him. "That—that's a hard sayin', Cross Moore," he observed gently.

"What lemonade was this, Hopewell?" demanded the druggist.

"I had some. Two glasses. The other musicians took beer. I always take lemonade."

"That's what did it," Frank Bowman said, aside to Janice. "Joe Bodley doped it."

"You had brandy, Hopewell. I could smell it on your breath," said Massey. "And I know how that affects you. Remember?"

"Oh, no, Massey! You know I do not drink intoxicants," said Hopewell confidently.

"I know you are a dern fool, Hopewell—and mebbe I'm one!" declared Mr. Cross Moore, suddenly rising. Then he bolted for the door and went out without bidding anybody good night.

Massey looked after his brother committeeman with surprise. "Now!" he muttered, "what's got into him, I'd like for to be told?"

Meanwhile Hopewell was saying to Janice: "Miss Janice, how do you come here? I know Amarilla expected you. Isn't it late?"

"Mr. Drugg," said the girl steadily, "we brought you here to be treated by Mr. Massey—Mr. Bowman and I. I do not suppose you remember our getting you out of the Lake View Inn?"

"Getting me out of the Inn?" he gasped flushing.

"Yes. You did not know what you were doing. They did not want you to leave the dance, but Mr. Bowman made them let you come away with us."

"You don't mean that, Miss Janice?" said the storekeeper horrified. "Are—are you sure? I had not been drinking intoxicants."

"Brandy, I tell ye, Hopewell!" exclaimed the druggist exasperated. "You keep away from the Inn. They're playing tricks on you down there, them fellers are. You ain't fit to run alone, anyway—and never was," he added, too low for Hopewell to hear.

"And look out for that violin, Mr. Drugg, if you prize it at all," added Frank Bowman.

"Why do you say that?" asked Hopewell puzzled.

"I believe there was a fellow down there trying to steal it," the engineer said. "He had got it away from you and was looking inside of it. Is the name of the maker inside the violin? Is it a valuable

instrument, Mr. Drugg?"

"I—I don't know," the other said slowly. "Only for its associations, I presume. It was my father's instrument and he played on it a great many years. I—I think," said Hopewell diffidently, "that it has a wonderfully mellow tone."

"Well," said Frank, "that black-haired fellow had it. And he looks like a fellow that's not to be trusted. There's more than Joe Bodley around that hotel who will bear watching, I guess."

"I will not go down to Lem Parraday's again," sighed Hopewell. "I—I felt that I should earn all the extra money possible. You see, my little girl may have to return to Boston for treatment."

"It's a mean shame!" muttered the civil engineer.

"Oh! I hope you are wrong about Lottie," Janice said quickly. "The dear little thing! She seemed very bright to-night," she added, with more cheerfulness in her tone than she really felt.

"Say, you don't want that violin stole, Hopewell," said Mr. Massey reflectively. "Enough's been stole in Polktown to-day, I should say, to last us one spell."

"Never mind," put in Frank Bowman, scornfully, looking full at the druggist. "You won't have to pay for Mr. Drugg's violin if it is stolen."

"Hum! Don't I know that?" snarled Massey. "We committeemen have our hands full with that missin' collection. Wish't we'd never voted to have the coins brought over here. Them lectures are mighty foolish things, anyway. That is scored up against young Haley, too. He wanted the lecture to come here."

"And you are foolish enough to accuse Nelson of stealing the coins," said Bowman, in a low voice. "I should think you'd have more sense."

"Hey!" exclaimed the druggist. "Who would *you* accuse?"

"Not Haley, that's sure."

"Nobody but the committee, the janitor, and Haley knew anything about the coins," the druggist said earnestly. "They were delivered to me last night right here in the store by Mr. Hobart, the lecturer. He came through from Middletown a-purpose. He took the boat this morning for the Landing. Now, nobody else knew about the coins being in town——"

"Who was here with you, Mr. Massey, when the coins were delivered to your keeping?" Janice Day interposed, for she had been listening.

"Warn't nobody here," said Mr. Massey promptly.

"You were alone in the store?"

"Yes, I was," quite as positively.

"What did you do with the trays?"

"Locked 'em in my safe."

"At once?" again asked Janice.

"Say! what you tryin' to get at, young lady?" snorted the druggist. "Don't you s'pose I knew what I was about last night? I hadn't been down to Lem Parraday's."

"Some of you didn't know what you were about this morning, or the coins never would have been lost," said Frank Bowman significantly.

"That's easy enough to say," complained the committeeman. "It's easy enough to blame us——"

"And it seems to be easy for you men to blame Mr. Haley," Janice interrupted indignantly.

"Well!"

"I'd like to know," continued the girl, "if there was not somebody around here who saw Mr. Hobart bring the coins in here and leave them with you."

"What if there was?" demanded Mr. Massey with sudden asperity. "The coins were not stolen from

this shop—make up your mind on that score, Miss Janice."

"But if some evilly disposed person had seen them in your possession, he might have planned to do exactly what was afterward done."

"What's that?" demanded the druggist.

"Planned to get into the schoolhouse, wait till you brought the coins there, and then steal them."

"Aw, young lady!" grunted the druggist. "That's too far-fetched. I don't want to hurt your feelin's; but young Haley was tempted, and young Haley fell. That's all there is to it."

Janice was not silenced. She said reflectively:

"We may all be mistaken. I really wish you would put your mind to it, Mr. Massey, and try to remember who was here in the evening, about the time that Mr. Hobart brought you the coin collection."

She was not looking at the druggist as she spoke; but she was looking into the mirror over the prescription desk. And she could see Massey's face reflected in that glass. She saw his countenance suddenly change. It flushed, and then paled, and he showed great confusion. But he did not say a word. She was puzzled, but said no more to him. It did not seem as though there was anything more to say regarding the robbery and Nelson Haley's connection with it.

Besides, Hopewell Drugg was gently reminding her that they must start for home.

"I'm afraid Amarilla will be anxious. It—it is dreadfully late," he suggested.

"We'll leave Mr. Massey to think it over," said Frank Bowman. "Maybe he'll come to a better conclusion regarding Nelson Haley."

"I don't care who stole the coins. We want 'em back," growled the druggist, preparing to lock them all out.

The trio separated on the corner. Hopewell was greatly depressed as he walked on with Janice Day.

"I—I hope that Amarilla will not hear of this evening's performance. I declare! I had no idea that that Bodley young man would play me such a trick. I shall have to refuse to play for any more of the dances," he said, in his hesitating, stammering way.

"You may be sure I shall not tell her," Janice said firmly.

They went into the dark store together as though they had just met on the porch. "I'm awfully glad you've both come," said 'Rill Drugg. "I was getting real scared and lonesome. Mr. Bowman gone home, Janice?"

The girl nodded. She had not much to say. The last hour had been so full of incident that she wanted to be alone and think it over. So she hurried to bid the storekeeper and his wife good night and went into the bedroom she was to share with little Lottie.

Janice lay long awake. That was to be expected. Her mind was overwrought and her young heart burdened with a multitude of troubles.

Her night spent with 'Rill had not turned out just as she expected, that was sure. From her window she could watch the front of Mrs. Beaseley's cottage and she saw that Nelson's lamp burned all night. He was wakeful, too. It made another bond between them; but it was not a bond that made Janice any more cheerful.

She returned to the Day house early on Sunday morning, and her unobservant aunt did not notice the marks the young girl's sleepless night had left upon her countenance. Aunt 'Mira was too greatly distracted just then about a new gown she, with the help of Mrs. John-Ed. Hutchins, had made and was to wear for the first time on this occasion.

"That is, if I kin ever git the pesky thing ter set straight over my hips. Do come here an' see what's the matter with it, Janice," Aunt 'Mira begged, in a great to-do over the frock. "What do you make of it?"

"It doesn't fit very smoothly—that is true," Janice said gently. "I—I am afraid, Aunt 'Mira, that it draws so because you are not drawn in just the same as you were when the dress was fitted by Mrs. John-Ed."

"My soul and body!" gasped the heavy lady, in desperation. "I knowed it! I felt it in my bones that she'd got me pulled in too tight."

Janice finally got the good woman into proper shape to fit the new frock, rather than the new frock to fitting her, and started off with Aunt 'Mira to church, leaving Mr. Day and Marty to follow.

Janice looked hopefully for Nelson. She really believed that he would change his determination at the last moment and appear at church. But he did not. Nor did anybody see him outside the Beaseley cottage all day. It was a very unhappy Sunday for Janice.

The whole town was abuzz with excitement. There were two usually inoffensive persons "on the dissecting table," as Walky Dexter called it—Nelson and Hopewell Drugg. Much had already been said about the missing coin collection and Nelson Haley's connection with it; so the second topic of conversation rather overshadowed the schoolmaster's trouble. It was being repeated all about town that Hopewell Drugg had been taken home from the dance at the Lake View Inn "roaring drunk."

Monday morning saw Nelson put to the test. Some of the boys gathered on the corner of High Street near the teacher's lodging, whispering together and waiting for his appearance. It was said by some that Mr. Haley would not appear; that he "didn't dare show his head outside the door."

About quarter past eight that morning there were many more people on the main street of the lakeside village than were usually visible at such an hour. Especially was there a large number of women, and it was notorious that on that particular Monday more housewives were late with their weekly wash than ever before in the annals of Polktown.

"Jefers-pelters!" muttered Walky Dexter, as he urged Josephus into High Street on his first trip downtown. "What's got ev'rybody? Circus in town? If so, it must ha' slipped my mind."

"Yep," said Massey, the druggist, at his front door, and whom the expressman had hailed. "And here comes the procession."

From up the hill came a troop of boys—most of them belonging in the upper class of the school. Marty was one of them, and in their midst walked the young schoolmaster!

"I snum!" ejaculated Walky. "I guess that feller ain't got no friends—oh, no!" and he chuckled.

The druggist scowled. "Boy foolishness. That don't mean nothing."

"He, he, he! It don't, hey?" drawled Walky, chirping to Josephus to start him. "Wal—mebbe not. But if I was you, and had plate glass winders like you've got, an' no insurance on 'em, I wouldn't let that crowd of young rapsCALLIONS hear my opinion of Mr. Haley."

Indeed, Marty and his friends had gone much further than passing resolutions. Nelson was their friend and chum as well as their teacher. He coached their baseball and football teams, and was the only instructor in gymnastics they had. The streak of loyalty in the average boy is the biggest and best thing about him.

Nelson often joined the crowd on the way to the only level lot in town where games could be played; and this seemed like one of those Saturday occasions, only the boys carried their books instead of masks and bats.

Their chorus of "Hullo, Mr. Haley!" "Morning, Mr. Haley!" and the like, as he reached the corner, almost broke down the determination the young man had gathered to show a calm exterior to the Polktown inhabitants. More than a few other well-wishers took pains to bow to the schoolmaster or to speak to him. And then, there was Janice, flying by in her car on her way to Middletown to school, passing him with a cheery wave of her gloved hand and he realized that she had driven this way in the car on purpose to meet him.

Indeed, the young man came near to being quite as overwhelmed by this reception as he might have been had he met frowning or suspicious faces. But he got to the school, and the School Committee remained under cover—for the time being.

Janice, coming back from Middletown in the afternoon, stopped at the post-office and got the mail. In it was a letter which she knew must be from her father, although the outer envelope was addressed in the same precise, clerky hand which she associated with the mysterious Juan Dicampa.

No introductory missive from the flowery Juan was inside, however; and her father's letter began as follows:

"Dear daughter:—

"I am under the necessity of putting on your young shoulders more responsibility than I think you should bear. But I find that of a sudden I am confined to an output of one letter a month, and that one to you. As I write in English, and these about me read (if they are able to read at all) nothing but Spanish, I have some chance of getting information and instructions to my partners in Ohio, by this means, and by this means only.

"First of all, I will assure you, dear child, that my health is quite, quite good. There is nothing the matter with me save that I am a 'guest of the State,' as they pompously call it, and I cannot safely work the mining property. I am not going to dig ore for the benefit of either the Federal forces or the Constitutionals.

"I shall stay to watch the property, however, and meanwhile the Zapatist chief in power here watches me. He takes pleasure in nagging and interfering with me in every possible way; so issues this last decree limiting the number of letters to one a month.

"He would do more, but he dare not. I happen to be on friendly terms with a chief who is this fellow's superior. If the chief in charge here should harm me and my friend should feel so inclined, he might ride up here, and stand my enemy up against an adobe wall. The fellow knows it—and is aware of my friend's rather uncertain temper. That temper, my dear Janice, known to all who have ever heard of Juan Dicampa, and his abundant health, is the wall between me and a possibly sudden and very unpleasant end."

There was a great deal more to the letter, but at first Janice could not go on with it for surprise. The clerkly writer with the abundance of flowery phrases, Juan Dicampa was, then, a Mexican chieftain—perhaps a half-breed Yaqui murderer! The thought rather startled Janice. Yet she was thankful to remember how warmly the man had written of her father.

Much of what followed in her father's letter she had to transmit to the bank officials and others of his business associates in her old home town. But the important thing, it seemed all the time to Janice, was Juan Dicampa.

She thought about him a great deal during the next few days. Mostly she thought about his health, and the chances of his being shot in some battle down there in Mexico.

She began to read even more than heretofore of the Mexican situation in the daily papers. She began to look for mention of Dicampa, and tried to learn what manner of leader he was among his people.

If Juan Dicampa should be removed what, then, would happen to Broxton Day?

CHAPTER XVI

ONE MATTER COMES TO A HEAD

That was a black week for Janice as well as for the young schoolmaster. She could barely keep her mind upon her studies at the seminary. Nelson Haley's salvation was the attention he was forced to give to his classes in the Polktown school.

One or another of the four committeemen who had constituted themselves his enemies, were hovering about Nelson all the time. He felt himself to be continually watched and suspected.

Mr. Middler, who had been away on an exchange over Sunday, returned to find his parish split all but in two by the accusation against Nelson Haley. Mr. Middler was the fifth member of the School Committee, and both sides in the controversy clamored for him to take a hand in the case.

"Gentlemen," he said to his four brother committeemen in Massey's back room, "I have not a doubt in my mind that you are all honestly convinced that Mr. Haley has stolen the coins. Otherwise you would not have made a matter public that was quite sure to ruin the young man's reputation."

The four committeemen writhed under this thrust, and the minister went on:

"On the other hand, I have no doubt in my mind that Mr. Haley is just as innocent as I am of the robbery."

"Ye say that 'cause you air a clergyman," said Cross Moore bluntly. "It's your business to be allus seeing the good side of folks, whether they've got a good side, or not."

The minister flushed. "I thank God I can see the good side of my fellow men," he said quickly. "I can even see your good side, Mr. Moore, when you are willing to uncover it. You do not show it now, when you persecute this young man——"

"'Persecute'? We oughter prosecute," flashed forth Cross Moore. "The fellow's as guilty as can be. Nobody else could have done it."

"I wonder?" returned the minister, and walked out before there could be further friction between them; for he liked the hard-headed, shrewd, and none-too-honest politician, as he liked few men in Polktown.

If the minister did not distinctly array himself with the partisans of Nelson Haley, he expressed his full belief in his honesty in a public manner. And at Thursday night prayer meeting he incorporated in his petition a request that his parishioners be not given to judging those under suspicion, and that a spirit of charity be spread abroad in the community at just this time.

The next day, Walky Dexter said, that charitable spirit the minister had prayed for "got awfully swatted." News spread that on the previous Saturday, only a few hours after the coin collection was missed, Nelson Haley had sent away a post-office money order for two hundred dollars.

"That's where a part of the missing money went," was the consensus of public opinion. How this news leaked out from the post-office was a mystery. But when taxed with the accusation Nelson's pride made him acknowledge the fact without hesitation.

"Yes; I sent away two hundred dollars. It went to my aunt in Sheffield. I owed it to her. She helped me through college."

"Where did I get the money? I saved it from my salary."

Categorically, these were his answers.

"If that young feller only could be tongue-tied for a few weeks, he might git out o' this mess in some way," Walky Dexter said. "He talks more useless than th' city feller that was a-sparkin' one of our country gals. He talked mighty high-falutin'—lots dif'rent from what the boys she'd been bringed up with talked.

"Sez he: 'See haow b-e-a-u-tiful th' stars shine ter-night. An' if th' moon would shed—would shed——' 'Never mind the woodshed,' sez the gal. 'Go on with yer purty talk.' Haw! haw! haw!"

"Now, this here Nelson Haley ain't got no more control of his tongue than that feller had. Jefers-pelters! what ye goin' ter do with a feller that tells ev'rything he knows jest because he's axed?"

"He's perfectly honest," Janice cried. "That shows it."

"If he's puffec' at all," grunted Walky, "he's a puffec' fule! That's what he is!"

And Nelson Haley's frankness really did spell disaster. Taking courage from the discovery of the young schoolmaster's use of money, the committee swore a warrant out for him before Judge Little. It was done very quietly; but Nelson's friends, who were on the watch for just such a move, were informed almost as soon as the dreadful deed was done.

News of it came to the Day house on Saturday afternoon, just before supper-time. On this occasion Uncle Jason waited for no meal to be eaten. Marty ran and got out Janice's car. His cousin and Mr. Day joined him while Aunt 'Mira came to the kitchen door with the inevitable slice of pork dangling from her fork.

"I'd run him right out o' the county, that's what I'd do, Janice, an' let Cross Moore and Massey whistle for him!" cried the angry lady. "Leastwise, don't ye let that drab old crab, Poley Cantor, take him to jail."

"We'll see about *that*," said Uncle Jason grimly. "Let her go, Marty—an' see if ye can git us down the hill without runnin' over nobody's pup."

Perhaps Judge Little had purposely delayed giving the warrant to Constable Cantor to serve. The Days found Nelson at home and ran him down to the justice's office before the constable had started to hunt for his prey.

The "drab" old constable met them in front of the justice's office and marched back into the room with Janice and Nelson and Marty and his father. Judge Little looked surprised when they entered.

"What's this? what's this?" he demanded, smiling at Janice. "Another case of speeding, Janice Day?"

"Somebody's been speeding, I reckon, Jedge," drawled Mr. Day. "And their wheels have skidded, too. I understand that you've issued a warrant for Mr. Haley?"

"Had to do it, Jason—positively *had* to," said the justice. "Better serve it right here, quietly, Constable. This is a serious matter, Mr. Haley. I'm sorry."

"Wal," drawled Uncle Jason, "it ain't so serious; I s'pose, but what you kin take bail for him? I'm here to offer what leetle tad of property I own. An' if ye want more'n I got, I guess I kin find all ye want purty quick."

"That'll be all right, Jason," Judge Little said quickly. "I'll put him under nominal bail, only. We'll have a hearing Monday evening, if that's agreeable to——"

"Nossir!" exclaimed Uncle Jason promptly. "This business ain't goin' ter be hurried. We gotter git a lawyer—and a good one. I dunno but Mr. Haley will refuse to plead and the case will hatter be taken to a higher court. Why, Jedge Little! this here means life an' repertation to this young man, and his friends aren't goin' ter see no chance throwed away ter clear him and make them school committeemen tuck their tails atween their laigs, an' skedaddle!"

"Oh, very well, Jason. We'll set the examination for next Saturday, then?"

"That'll be about right," said Uncle Jason. "Give us a week to turn around in. What d'ye say, Mr. Haley?"

"I'd like to have it over as quickly as possible," sighed the young man. "But I think you know best, Mr. Day."

He could not honestly feel grateful. As they got into the car again to whirl up the hill to the Day house for supper, Nelson felt a little doubtful, after all, of Mr. Day's wisdom in putting off the trial.

"I might just as well be tried, convicted, and sentenced right now, as to have it put off a week," he said, after they reached the Day place. "They've got me, and they mean to put me through. A demand has been made upon the committee through the State Board by the owner of the collection of coins. The value of the collection is placed by the owner at sixteen hundred and fifty dollars, their face value—although some of the pieces were rare, and worth more. There is not a man of the quartette that would not sell his soul for four hundred and twelve dollars and fifty cents!"

"*Now* you've said a mouthful!" grunted Marty, in agreement.

"That's a hard sayin'," Mr. Day observed judiciously. "They're all—th' hull quadruped (Yes, Marty, that's what I meant, 'quartette,') of 'em—purty poor pertaters, I 'low. But four hundred dollars is a lot of money for any man ter lose."

Nelson was very serious, however. He said to Janice:

"You see now, can't you, why I can not teach any longer? I should not have done it this past week. I shall ask for my release. It is neither wise, nor right for a person accused of robbery to teach school in the community."

"Oh, Nelson!" gasped the girl despairing.

"Hi tunket! I won't go to school—*a-tall*, if they don't let you teach, Mr. Haley," cried Marty.

"Of course you will, Marty," said the schoolmaster. "I shall need you boys right there to stand up for me."

"Well!" gasped the very red lad, "you kin bet if they put Miss Pearly Breeze inter your place, I won't go. I've vowed I won't never go to school to no old maid again!"

"Wal, now you've said it," sniffed his father, "and hev relieved your mind, s'pose ye bring in some wood for the settin' room stove. We need a spark o' fire to take the chill off."

Meanwhile Nelson was saying: "I will resign; I will not wait for them to request me to get out. If you will lend me ink and paper, Janice, I'll write my resignation here and hand it to Massey as I go home."

"But, Mr. Middler——" began Janice.

"Mr. Middler is only one of five. He has no power now in the committee, for the other four are against him. Cross Moore and Massey and Crawford and Joe Pellet mean to put it on me if they can. I think they have already had legal advice. I think they will attempt to escape responsibility for the loss of the coin collection by prosecuting and convicting me of having stolen the money. They were not under bond, you know."

"It's a mess! it's a mess!" groaned Uncle Jason, "whichever way ye look at it. What ye goin' ter do, Mr. Haley, if ye don't teach?"

"I'd go plumb away from here an' never come back to Polktown no more!" declared the heated Marty, coming in with an armful of wood.

"I feel as though I might as well do that, Marty, when I hear you speak," said Nelson, shaking his head. "What good does it do you to go to school? I have failed somewhere when you use such poor grammar as——"

"Huh! what's good grammar?" demanded the boy, so earnest that he interrupted the teacher. "That won't make ye a civil engineer—and that's what I'm goin' ter be."

"A proper use of English will help even in that calling in life," said the schoolmaster. "But seriously, I have no intention of running away."

"Ye don't wanter be idle," Mr. Day said.

"I'll find something to do, I fancy. But whether or no, it shall not be said of me that I was afraid to face this business. I won't run away from it."

Janice squeezed his hand privately in approval. She had been afraid that he might wish to flee. And who could blame him? During this week of trial, however, Nelson Haley had recovered his self-control, and had deliberately made up his mind to the manly course.

Nevertheless, he did not appear in his accustomed place in church on the morrow. It was not possible for him to walk boldly up the church aisle among the people who doubted his honesty, or would sneer at him, either openly or behind his back. And it was known all over the town by church time that Sunday that he had been arrested, bailed, and had asked the school committee for a vacation of indefinite length and without pay, and that this had been granted.

Miss Pearly Breeze and her contingent of trends were not happy for long. The School Committee knew that a return to old methods in school matters would never satisfy Polktown again.

They telegraphed the State Superintendent of Schools and a proper and capable substitute for Mr. Haley was expected to arrive on Monday.

It was on Monday morning, too, that Nelson's partisans and the enemy came to open warfare. That is, the junior portion of the community began belligerent action.

Janice was rather belated that morning in starting for Middletown in the Kremlin car. Marty jumped on the running board with his school books in a strap, to ride down the hill to the corner of School Street.

Just as they came in sight of Polktown's handsome brick schoolhouse, there was Nelson Haley briskly approaching.

He had given up his key to the committee on Saturday night; but there were books and private papers in his desk that he desired to remove before his successor arrived. The front door was locked and he had to wait for Benny Thread to hobble up from the basement to open it.

This delay brought every woman on the block to her front windows. Some peeped from behind the blinds; some boldly came out on their "stoops" to eye the unfortunate schoolmaster askance. A group of boys were gathered on the corner within plain earshot of the schoolmaster. As Janice turned the car carefully into School Street Sim Howell, one of these young loungers, uttered a loud bray.

"What d'ye s'pose he's after now?" he then demanded of nobody in particular, but loud enough for all the neighbors to hear. "S'pose he thinks there's any more money in there ter steal?"

"Stop, Janice!" yelled Marty. "I knew I'd got ter do it. That feller's been spoilin' for it for a week! Lemme down, I say!"

He did not wait for his cousin to obey his command. Before she could stop the car he took a flying leap from the running-board of the automobile. His books flew one way, his cap another; and with a wild shout of rage, Marty fell upon Sim Howell!

CHAPTER XVII

THE OPENING OF THE CAMPAIGN

Janice ran the car on for half a block before she stopped. She looked back. She had never approved of fisticuffs—and Marty was prone to such disgraceful activities. Nevertheless, when she saw Sim Howell's blood-besmeared countenance, his wide-open mouth, his clumsy fists pawing the air almost blindly, something primal—instinctive—made her heart leap in her bosom.

She delighted in Marty's clean blows, in his quick "duck" and "side-step;" and when her cousin's freckled fist impinged upon the fatuous countenance of Sim Howell, Janice Day uttered an unholy gasp of delight.

She saw Nelson striding to separate the combatants. She hoped he would not be harsh with Marty.

Then, seeing the neighbors gathering, she pressed the starter button and the Kremlin glided on again. The tall young schoolmaster was between the two boys, holding each off at arm's length, when Janice wheeled around the far corner and gave a last glance at the field of combat.

"I am getting to be a wicked, wicked girl!" she accused herself, when she was well out of town and wheeling cheerfully over the Lower Road toward Middletown. "I have just longed to see that Simeon Howell properly punished ever since I caught him that day mocking Jim Narnay. And *that* arises from the influence of Lem Parraday's bar. Oh, dear me! *I* am affected by the general epidemic, I believe.

"If the Inn did not sell liquor, in all human probability, Narnay would not have been drunk that day; at least, not where I could see him. And so Sim and those other young rascals would not have chased and mocked him. I would not have felt so angry with Sim—Dear me! everything dovetails together, Nelson's trouble and all. I wonder if, after all, the selling of liquor at the Inn isn't at the bottom of Nelson's trouble.

"It sounds foolish—or at least, far-fetched. But it may be so. Perhaps the person who stole those coins was inspired to do the wicked deed because he was under the influence of liquor. And, of course, the Lake View Inn was the nearest place where liquor was to be bought.

"Dear me! Am I foolish? Who knows?" Janice concluded, with a sigh.

The thought of Sim Howell mocking Jim Narnay reminded her of the latter's unfortunate family. She had been only once to the little cottage near Pine Cove since Narnay had gone into the woods with Trimmings and Jack Besmith.

Nor had she been able to see Dr. Poole, amid her multitudinous duties, and ask him how the nameless little baby was getting on; although she had at once left a note at the doctor's office asking him to call and see the child at her expense.

The peril threatening her father and the peril threatening Nelson Haley filled Janice Day's mind and heart so full that other interests had been rather lost sight of during the past eventful week.

She had not seen Frank Bowman since the time they had separated on the street corner by the drug store, late Saturday night, when she had taken Hopewell Drugg home.

Bowman was with his railroad construction gang not far off the Lower Middletown Road. But Janice had been going to and from school by the Upper Road, past Elder Concannon's place, because it was dryer.

This morning, however, Frank heard her car coming, and he appeared, plunging through the jungle,

shouting to her to stop. He could scarcely make a mistake in hailing the car, for Janice's automobile was almost the only one that ran on this road. By summer time, however, the boarding house people and Lem Parraday hoped that automobiles in Polktown would be, in the words of Walky Dexter, "as thick as fleas on a yaller hound."

Janice saw Frank Bowman coming, if she did not hear him call, and slowed down. He strode crashingly down the hillside in his high boots, corduroys, and canvas jacket, his face flushed with exercise and, of course, broadly smiling. Janice liked the civil engineer immensely. He lacked Nelson Haley's solid character and thoughtfulness; but he always had a fund of enthusiasm on tap.

"How goes the battle, Janice?" was his cheery call, as he leaped down into the roadway and thrust out a gloved hand to grasp hers.

"I guess, by now, Simmy Howell has learned a thing or two," she declared, her mind on the scrimmage she had just seen.

"What?" demanded Bowman, wonderingly.

At that Janice burst into a laugh. "Oh! I am a perfect heathen. I suppose you did not mean Marty's battle with his schoolmate. But that was in my mind."

"What's Marty fighting about now?" asked the civil engineer, with a puzzled smile. "And are you interested in such sparring encounters?"

"I was in this one," confessed Janice. Then she told him of the occurrence—and its cause, of course.

"Well, I declare!" said Frank Bowman, happily. "For once I fully approve of Marty."

"Do you? Well, to tell the truth, so do I!" gasped Janice, laughing again. "But I know it is wicked."

"Guess the whole Day family feels friendly toward Nelson," declared the engineer. "I hear Mr. Day went on Nelson's bond Saturday night."

"Yes, indeed. Dear Uncle Jason! He's slow, but he's dependable."

"Well, I am glad Nelson Haley has some friends," Bowman said quickly. "But I didn't stop you to say just this."

"No?"

"No," said the civil engineer. "When I asked you, 'How goes the battle?' I was thinking of something you said the other night when we were rounding up that disgraceful old reprobate, Hopewell Drugg," and he laughed.

"Oh, poor Hopewell! Isn't it a shame the way they talk about him?"

"It certainly is," agreed Frank Bowman. "But whether Hopewell Drugg is finally injured in character by Lem Parraday's bar or not, enough other people are being injured. You said you'd do anything to see it closed."

"I would," cried Janice. "At least, anything I could do."

"By jove! so would I!" exclaimed Frank Bowman, vigorously. "It was pay night for my men last Saturday night. One third of them have not shown up this morning, and half of those that have are not fit for work. I've got a reputation to make here. If this drunkenness goes on I'll have a fat chance of making good with the Board of Directors of the railroad."

"How about making good with that pretty daughter of Vice President Harrison's?" asked Janice, slyly.

Bowman blushed and laughed. "Oh! she's kind. She'll understand. But I can't take the same excuses for failure to a Board of Directors."

"Of course not," laughed Janice. "A mere Board of Directors hasn't half the sense of a lovely girl—nor half the judgment."

"You're right!" cried Bowman, seriously. "However, to get back to my men. They've got to put the brake on this drinking stuff, or I'll never get the job done. As long as the drink is right here handy in Polktown, I'm afraid many of the poor fellows will go on a spree every pay day."

"It is too bad," ventured Janice, warmly.

"I guess it is! For them and me, too!" said Bowman, shaking his head. "Do you know, these fellows don't want to drink? And they wouldn't drink if there was anything else for them to do when they have money in their pockets. Let me tell you, Janice," he added earnestly, "I believe that if these fellows had it to vote on right now, they'd vote 'no license' for Polktown—yes, ma'am!"

"Oh! I wish we could *all* vote on it," cried Janice. "I am sure more people in Polktown would like to see the bar done away with, than desire to have it continued."

"I guess you're right!" agreed Bowman.

"But, of course, we 'female women,' as Walky calls us, can't vote."

"There are enough men to put it down," said Bowman, quickly. "And it can come to a vote in Town Meeting next September, if it's worked up right."

"Oh, Frank! Can we do that?"

"Now you've said it!" crowed the engineer. "That's what I meant when I wondered if you had begun your campaign."

"*My* campaign?" repeated Janice, much flurried.

"Why, yes. You intimated the other night that you wanted the bar closed, and Walky has told all over town that you're 'due to stir things up,' as he expresses it, about this dram selling."

"Oh, dear!" groaned Janice, in no mock alarm. "My fatal reputation! If my friends really loved me they would not talk about me so."

"I'm afraid there is some consternation under Walky's talk," said Bowman, seriously. "He likes a dram himself and would be sorry to see the bar chased out of Polktown. I hope you can do it, Janice."

"Me—*me*, Frank Bowman! You are just as bad as any of them. Putting it all on my shoulders."

"The time is ripe," went on the engineer, seriously. "You won't be alone in this. Lots of people in the town see the evil flowing from the bar. Mrs. Thread tells me her brother would never have lost his job with Massey if it hadn't been for Lem Parraday's rum selling."

"Do you mean Jack Besmith?" cried Janice, startled.

"That's the chap. Mrs. Thread is a decent little woman, and poor Benny is harmless enough. But she is worried to death about her brother."

Janice, remembering the condition of the ex-drug clerk when he left Polktown for the woods, said heartily: "I should think she would be worried."

"She tells me he tried to get back his job with Massey on Friday night—the evening before he went off with Trimmings and Narnay. But I expect he'd got Mr. Massey pretty well disgusted. At any rate, the druggist turned him down, and turned him down hard."

"Poor fellow!" sighed Janice.

"I don't know. Oh, I suppose he's to be pitied," said Frank Bowman, with some disgust. "Anyhow, Besmith got thoroughly desperate, went down to the Inn after his interview with his former employer, and spent all the money he had over Lem's bar. He didn't come home at all that night——"

"Oh!" exclaimed Janice, remembering suddenly where Jack Besmith had probably slept off his debauch, for she had seen him asleep in her uncle's sheepfold on that particular Saturday morning.

"He's a pretty poor specimen, I suppose," said the engineer, eyeing Janice rather curiously. "He's one of the weak ones. But there are others!"

Janice was silent for a moment. Indeed, she was not following closely Bowman's remarks. She was thinking of Jack Besmith. Mr. Massey had evidently been much annoyed by his discharged clerk.

When she and Frank Bowman, with Hopewell Drugg, had gone to the druggist's back door that eventful Saturday night, Massey had thought it was Jack Besmith summoning him to the door. Massey had spoken Besmith's name when he first opened the door and peered out into the mist.

"Now, Janice," she suddenly heard Frank Bowman say, "what shall we do?"

She awoke to the subject under discussion with a start. "Goodness! do you really expect me to tell

you?"

"Why—why, you see, Janice, you've got ideas. You always do have," said the civil engineer, humbly. "I've talked to such of my men as have come back to work this morning. Of course, they have been off before, on pay day; but this is the worst. They had a big time down there at the Inn Saturday night and Sunday morning."

"Poor Mrs. Parraday!" sighed Janice.

"You're right. I'm sorry for Marm Parraday. She's the salt of the earth. But there are more than Marm Parraday suffering through Lem's selling whiskey. But about my boys," added the engineer. "They tell me if the stuff wasn't so handy they would finish the job without going on these sprees. And I believe they would."

"Well! I'll think about it," Janice rejoined, preparing to start her car. "I suppose if I don't go ahead in the matter, the railroad will never get its branch road built into Polktown?" and she laughed.

"That's about the size of it!" cried Bowman, as the wheels began to roll.

But it was of Jack Besmith, the ex-drug clerk, that Janice Day thought as she sped on toward the seminary and not of the opening of the campaign against the liquor traffic in Polktown, which she felt had really been organized on this morning.

In some way the ne'er-do-well was connected in her mind with another train of thought that, until now, had had "the right of way" in her inner consciousness. What had Jack Besmith to do with Nelson Haley's troubles?

Janice Day was puzzled.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOPEWELL SELLS HIS VIOLIN

Janice Day had no intention of avoiding what seemed, finally, to be a duty laid upon her. If everybody else in Polktown opposed to the sale of liquor, merely complained about it—and in a hopeless, helpless way—it was not in her disposition to do so. She was Broxton Day's own daughter and she absolutely had to *do something!* She was imbued with her father's spirit of helpfulness, and she believed thoroughly in his axiom: If a thing is wrong, go at it and make it right.

Of course, Janice knew very well that a young girl like herself could do little in reality about this awful thing that had stalked into Polktown. She could do nothing of her own strength to put down the liquor traffic. But she believed she might set forces in motion which, in the end, would bring about the much-desired reformation.

She had done it before. Her inspiration had touched all of Polktown and had awakened and rejuvenated the old place. She had learned that all that the majority of people needed to rank them on the active side of right, was to be made to think. She determined that Polktown should be made to think upon this subject of liquor selling.

After school she drove around by the Upper Road and branched off into a woods path that she had not dared venture into the week before. The Spring winds had done much to dry this woodroad and there were not many mud-holes to drive around before she came in sight of the squatters' cabin occupied by the family of Mr. Trimmins.

This transplanted family of Georgia "crackers" had been a good deal of a misfit in the Vermont community until Janice had found and interested herself in them. Virginia, a black-haired sprite of eleven or twelve, was the leader of the family in all things, although there were several older children. But "Jinny" was born to be a commander.

Having made a friend of the little witch of a girl, and of Buddy, who had been the baby the year before, but whose place had been usurped because of the advent of another tow-head into the family, the others of "them Trimminses," as they were spoken of in Polktown, had become Janice Day's staunch friends. Virginia and two of her sisters came regularly to the meetings of the Girls' Guild which Janice

had founded; but it was a long walk to the Union Church and Janice really wondered how they ever got over the road in stormy weather.

It always puzzled Janice where so many children managed to sleep when bedtime came, unless they followed the sea law of "watch and watch." Now all the children who were at home poured out of the cabin to greet the driver of the Kremlin car. The whole family, as now arrayed before her, she had not seen since Christmas.

She had not forgotten to bring a great bag of "store cakes," of which these poor little Trimminses were inordinately fond; so most of them soon drifted away, each with a share of the goodies, leaving Janice to talk with Mrs. Trimmins and Jinny and play with Buddy and the baby.

"It's a right pretty evening, Miss Janice," said Mrs. Trimmins. "I shell be glad enough when the settled weather comes to stay. I kin git some o' these young'uns out from under foot all day long, then.

"Trimmins has got a gang wo'kin' for him over th' mountain a piece——"

"Here comes dad now," said the sharp-eyed Virginia. "And the elder's with him."

"Why—ya-as," drawled her mother, "so 'tis. It's one of Concannon's timber lots Trimmins is a-wo'kin' at."

The elder, vigorous and bewhiskered, came tramping into the clearing like a much younger man. Trimmins slouched along by his side, chewing a twig of black birch.

"No, Trimmins," the elder was saying decisively. "We'll stick to the letter of the contract. I furnish the team and feed them. I went a step further and furnished supplies for three men instead of two. But not one penny do you nor they handle till the job is finished."

"That's all right, Elder," drawled the Georgian. "That's 'cordin' to contrac', I know. I don't keer for myself. But Narnay and that other feller are mighty hongree for a li'le change."

"Powerful thirsty, ye mean!" snorted the elder.

"Wa-al—mebbe so! mebbe so!" agreed Trimmins, with a weak grin.

"They knew the agreement before they started in with you on the job, didn't they?"

"Oh, ya-as. They knowed about the contrac'."

"Nuff said, then," grunted the elder. "Oh! is that you, Janice Day? I'll ride back with you," added the elder, who had quite overcome his dislike for what he had formerly termed "devil wagons," since one very dramatic occasion when he himself had discovered the necessity for traveling much "faster than the law allowed."

"You are very welcome, Elder Concannon," Janice said, smiling at him.

She kissed the two babies and Virginia, shook hands with Mrs. Trimmins, and then waved a gloved hand to the rest of the family as she settled herself behind the steering wheel. The elder got into the seat beside her.

"I declare for't, Janice!" the elder said, as the started, the words being fairly jerked out of his mouth, "I dunno but I'd like to own one of these contraptions myself. You can git around lively in 'em—and that's a fac'."

"They are a whole lot better than 'shanks' mare,' Elder," said the young girl, laughing.

"I—should—say! And handy, too, when the teams are all busy. Now I had to walk clean over the mountain to-day to that piece where Trimmins and them men are working. Warn't a hoss fit to use."

"Has Mr. Trimmins a big gang at work?"

The elder chuckled. "He calls it a gang—him, and Jim Narnay, and a boy. They've all got a sleight with the axe, I do allow; and the boy handles the team right well."

"Is he Jack Besmith?" questioned Janice.

"That's his name, I believe," said the elder. "Likely boy, I guess. But if I let 'em have any money before the job is done—as Trimmins wants me to—none of 'em would do much till the money was spent—boy and all."

"It is too bad about young Besmith," Janice said, shaking her head. "He is only a boy."

"Yep. But a month or so in the woods without drink will do him a heap of good."

That very evening, however, Janice saw Jack Besmith in town. From Marty she learned that he did not stay long.

"He came in for booze—that's what he come for," said her cousin, in disgust. "He started right back for the woods with a two-gallon demi-john."

"And I thought they had no money up there," Janice reflected. "Can it be that Lem Parraday or his barkeeper would trust them for drink?"

Marty was nursing a lump on his jaw and a cut lip. The morning's battle, had not gone all his way, although he said to Janice with his usual impish grin when she commented upon his battered appearance: "You'd orter see the other feller! If Nelson Haley hadn't got in betwixt us I'd ha' whopped Sim Howell good and proper. I was some excited, I allow. If I hadn't been I needn't never run ag'inst Sim's fist a-*tall*. He's a clumsy kid, if ever there was one—and I reckon he's got enough of me for a spell. Anyway, he won't get fresh with Mr. Haley again—nor none of the rest of 'em."

"Dear me, Marty! it seems too bad that any of the boys should feel so unkindly toward Mr. Haley, after all he's done for them."

"They're a poor lot—fellers like Sim Howell. Hang around the tavern hoss sheds all the time. Can't git 'em to come up to the Readin' Room with the decent fellers," Marty said belligerently.

Marty had forgotten that—not so long before—he had been a frequenter of the tavern "hoss sheds" himself. That was before Janice had started the Public Library Association and the boys' club.

Janice did not see Nelson that evening, and she wondered what he was doing with his idle time. So the following afternoon she came home by the Lower Road, meaning to call on the schoolmaster. She stopped her car before Hopewell Drugg's store and ran in there first.

'Rill was behind the counter; but from the back room the wail of the violin announced Hopewell's presence. The lively tunes which the storekeeper had played so much through the Winter just past—such as "Jingle Bells" and "Aunt Dinah's Quilting Party"—seemed now forgotten. Nor was Hopewell in a sentimental mood and his old favorite, "Silver Threads Among the Gold," could not express his feelings.

"Old Hundred" was the strain he played, and he drew it lingeringly out of the strings until it fairly rasped the nerves. No son of Israel, weeping against the wall in old Jerusalem, ever expressed sorrow more deeply than did Hopewell's fiddle at the present juncture.

"Oh, dear, Janice! that's the way he is all day long," whispered the bride, the tears sparkling in her eyes. "He says Lottie *must* go to Boston, and I guess he's right. The poor little thing doesn't see anywhere near as good as she did."

"Oh, my dear!" cried Janice, under her breath. "I wish I could help pay for her trip."

"No. You've done your part, Janice. You paid for the treatment before——"

"I only helped," interrupted Janice.

"It was a great, big help. Hopewell can never repay you," said the wife. "And he can accept no more from you, dear."

"But I haven't got it to offer!" almost wailed Janice. "Daddy's mine is shut down again. I—I could almost wish to sell my car—only it was a particular present from daddy——"

"No, indeed! There is going to be something else sold, I expect," 'Rill said gravely. "Here! let us go back. I don't like even to see this fellow come in here. Hopewell must wait on him."

Janice turned to see Joe Bodley, the fat, smirking bartender from the Lake View Inn, now entering the store.

"Afternoon, Mrs. Drugg!" he called after the storekeeper's retreating wife. "I won't bite ye."

"Mr. Drugg will be right in," said 'Rill, beckoning Janice away.

Hopewell entered, violin in hand. He greeted Janice in his quiet way and then spoke to Bodley.

"You wanted to see me, Mr. Bodley?"

"Now, how about that fiddle, Hopewell? D'ye really want to sell it?" asked the bartender, lightly.

"I—I must sell it, Mr. Bodley. I feel that I *must*," said Hopewell, in his gentle way.

"It's as good as sold, then, old feller," said the barkeeper. "I've got a customer for it."

"Ah! but I must have my price. Otherwise it will do me no good to sell the violin which I prize so highly—and which my father played before me."

"That's Yankee talk," laughed Bodley. "How much?"

"I believe it is a valuable instrument—a very valuable instrument," said poor Hopewell, evidently in fear of not making the sale, yet determined to obtain what he considered a fair price for it. "At least, I know 't is an *old* violin."

"One of the 'old masters,' eh?" chuckled Bodley.

"Perhaps. I do not think you will care to pay my price, sir," said the storekeeper, with dignity.

"I've got a customer for it. He seen it down to the dance—and he wants it. What's your price?" repeated Bodley.

"I thought some of sending it to New York to be valued," Hopewell said slowly.

"My man will buy it—sight unseen, as ye might say—on my recommend. He only saw it for a moment," said Bodley.

"What will he give for it?" asked Hopewell.

"How much do you want?"

"One hundred dollars, Mr. Bodley," said the storekeeper, this time with more firmness.

"*What?* One hundred of your grandmother's grunts! Why, Hopewell, there *ain't* so much money—not in Polktown, at least—'nless it's hid away in a broken teapot on the top shelf of a cupboard in Elder Concannon's house. They say he's got the first dollar he ever earned, and most all that he's gathered since that time."

Janice heard all this as she stood in the back room with 'Rill. Then, having excused herself to the storekeeper's wife, she ran out of the side door to go across the street to Mrs. Beaseley's.

In fact, she could not bear to stay there and hear Hopewell bargain for the sale of his precious violin. It seemed too, too, bad! It had been his comfort—his only consolation, indeed—for the many years that circumstances had kept him and 'Rill Scattergood apart. And after all, to be obliged to dispose of it—

Janice remembered how she had brought little Lottie home to the storekeeper the very day she first met him, and how he had played "Silver Threads Among the Gold" for her in the dark, musty back room of the old store. Why! Hopewell Drugg would be utterly lost without the old fiddle.

She was glad Mrs. Beaseley was rather an unobservant person, for Janice's eyes were tear-filled when she looked into the cottage kitchen. Nelson, however, was not at home. He had gone for a long tramp through the fields and had not yet returned. So, leaving word for him to come over to the Day house that evening, Janice went slowly back to her car.

Before she could start it 'Rill came outside. Bodley had gone, and the storekeeper's wife was frankly weeping.

"Poor Hopewell! he's sold the fiddle," sobbed 'Rill.

"To that awful bartender?" demanded Janice.

"Just as good as. The fellow's paid a deposit on it. If he comes back with the rest of the hundred dollars in a month, the fiddle is his. Otherwise, Hopewell declares he will send it to New York and take what he can get for it."

"Oh, dear me!" murmured Janice, almost in tears, too.

"It—it is all Hopewell can do," pursued 'Rill. "He has nothing else on which he can raise the necessary money. Lottie must have her chance."

CHAPTER XIX

THE GOLD COIN

The campaign against liquor selling in Polktown really had been opened on that Monday morning when Janice and Frank Bowman conferred together near the scene of the young engineer's activities for the railroad.

The determination of two wide-awake young people to *do something* was the beginning of activities.

Not only was the time ripe, but popular feeling was already stirred in the matter. The thoughtful people of Polktown were becoming dissatisfied with the experiment. Those who had considered it of small moment in the beginning were learning differently. If Polktown was to be "boomed" through such disgraceful means as the sale of intoxicants at the only hotel, these people with suddenly awakened consciences would rather see the town lie fallow for a while longer.

The gossip regarding Hopewell Drugg's supposed fall from sobriety was both untrue and unkind. That the open bar at Lem Parraday's was a real and imminent peril to Polktown, however, was a fact now undisputed by the better citizens.

Janice had sounded Elder Concannon on that very Monday when she had brought him home from the Trimmings place. The old gentleman, although conservative to a fault where money was concerned—his money, or anybody's—agreed that one or two men should not be allowed to benefit at the moral expense of their fellow townsmen.

That the liquor selling was causing a festering sore in the community of Polktown could not be gainsaid. Sim Howell and two other boys in their early teens had somehow obtained liquor, and had been picked up in a frightful condition on the public street by Constable Poley Cantor.

The boys were made very ill by the quantity of liquor they had drunk, and although they denied that they had bought the stuff at the hotel, it was soon learned that the supply of spirits the boys had got hold of, came from Lem Parraday's bar.

One of the town toppers had purchased the half-gallon bottle and had hid it in a barn, fearing to take it home. The boys had found it and dared each other to taste the stuff.

"It's purty bad stuff 'at Lem sells, I allow," observed Walky Dexter. "No wonder it settled them boys. It's got a 'kick' to it wuss'n Josephus had that time the swarm of bees lit on him."

The town was ablaze with the story of the boys' escapade on Wednesday afternoon when Janice came back from Middletown. She stopped at Hopewell Drugg's store, which was a rendezvous for the male gossips of the town, and Walky was holding forth upon the subject uppermost in the public mind:

"Them consarned liddle skeezicks—I'd ha' trounced the hull on 'em if they'd been mine."

"How would you have felt, Mr. Dexter, if they really were yours?" asked Janice, who had been talking to 'Rill and Nelson Haley. "Suppose Sim Howell were your boy? How would you feel to know that, at his age, he had been intoxicated?"

"Jefers-pelters!" grunted Walky. "I reckon I wouldn't git pigeon-breasted with pride over it—nossir!"

"Then don't make fun," admonished the girl, severely. "It is an awful, *awful* thing that the boys of Polktown can even get hold of such stuff to make them so ill."

"That is right, Miss Janice," Hopewell said, busy with a customer. "What else, Mrs. Massey?"

"That's all to-day, Hopewell. I hate to give you so big a bill, but that's all I've got," said the druggist's wife, as she handed the store-keeper a twenty-dollar gold certificate.

"He, he!" chuckled Walky, "Guess Massey wants all the change in town in his own till, heh?"

"That is all right, Mrs. Massey," said Hopewell, in his gentle way. "I can change it. Have to give you a gold piece—there."

"What's going to be done about this liquor selling, anyway?" demanded Nelson Haley, in a much more

serious mood, it would seem, than usual. "I think Janice has the right of it—although I did not think so at first. 'Live and let live,' is a good motto; but it is foolish to let a mad dog live in a community. Lem Parraday's bar is certainly doing a lot of harm to innocent people."

Janice clapped her hands softly, and her eyes shone. The school teacher went on with increased warmth:

"Polktown is really being vastly injured by the liquor selling. To think of those boys becoming intoxicated—one of them of my school, too——"

The young man halted suddenly in this speech. In his earnestness he had forgotten that it was his school no longer.

"It is a disgraceful state of affairs," Rill hastened to say, kindly covering Nelson's momentary confusion.

But Janice beamed at the young man. "Oh, Nelson! I am delighted to hear you speak so. We are going to hold a temperance meeting—Mr. Middler and I have talked it over. And I have obtained Elder Concannon's promise to be one of those on the platform. Polktown must be waked up——"

"What! *Again*? Haw! haw! haw!" burst out Walky. "Jefers-pelters, Janice Day! You've about give Polktown insomnia already! I sh'd say our eyes was purty well opened——"

"*Yours* are not, old fellow," said Nelson, good-naturedly, but with marked earnestness, too. "You're patronizing the barroom side of the hotel altogether more than is good for you, and if you don't know it yourself, Walky, I feel myself enough your friend to tell you so."

"Nonsense! nonsense!" returned the expressman, reddening a little, yet man enough to accept personal criticism when he was so prone to criticizing other people. "What leetle I drink ain't never goin' ter hurt me."

"Nor anybody else?" asked Janice, softly, for she liked Walky and was sorry to see him go wrong. "How about your example, Walky?"

"Shucks! Don't talk ter me about 'example.' That's allus the excuse of the weak-headed. If my example was goin' ter hurt the boys, ev'ry one o' them would wanter be th' town expressman! Haw! haw! haw! I ain't never seen none o' them tumblin' over each other fer th' chance't ter cut me out on my job. An' 'cause I chaw terbaccer, is ev'ry white-headed kid in town goin' ter take up chawin' as a habit?"

"Jefers-pelters! I 'low if I had a boy o' m' own mebbe I'd be a lettle keerful how I used either licker, or terbaccer. But I hain't. I got only one child, an' she's a female. I reckon I ain't gotter worry about little Matildy bein' infloenced either by her daddy's chawin', or his takin' a snifter of licker on a cold day—I snum!"

"Unanswerable logic, Walky," said Nelson, with some scorn. "I've used the same myself. And it serves all right if one is utterly selfish. I thought *that* out after Janice, here, opened my eyes."

"You show me how my takin' a drink 'asionally hurts anybody or anything else, an', jefers-pelters! I'll stop it mighty quick!" exclaimed the expressman, with some heat.

"I shall hold you to that, Walky," said Janice, quickly, interfering before there should be any further sharp discussion.

"And," muttered Nelson, "she's as good as got you, Walky—she has that!"

At the moment the door opened with a bang, and Mr. Massey plunged in. He was without a hat and wore the linen apron he always put on when he was compounding prescriptions in the back room of his shop. In his excitement his gray hair was ruffled up more like a cockatoo's topknot than usual, and his eyes seemed fairly to spark.

"Hopewell Drugg!" he exclaimed, spying the storekeeper. "Was my wife just in here?"

"Hul-*lo*!" ejaculated Walky Dexter. "Hopewell hasn't been sellin' her Paris green for buckwheat flour, has he? That would kinder be in your line, wouldn't it, Massey?"

But the druggist paid the town humorist no attention. He hurried to the counter and leaned across it, asking his question for a second time.

"Why, yes, she was here, Mr. Massey," said Hopewell, puzzled.

"She changed a bill with you, didn't she?"

"Jefers-pelters! was it counterfeit?" put in Walky, drawing nearer.

"A twenty dollar bill—yes, sir," said the storekeeper.

"Did you give her a gold piece—a ten dollar gold piece—in the change?" shot in Massey, his voice shaking.

"Why—yes."

"Is this it?" and the druggist slapped a gold coin down on the counter between them.

Hopewell picked up the coin, turned it over in his hand, holding it close to his near-sighted eyes. Nothing could ever hurry Hopewell Drugg in speech.

"Why—yes," he said again. "I guess so."

"But look at the date, man!" shouted Massey. "Don't you see the date on it?"

Amazed, Drugg repeated the date aloud, reading it carefully from the coin. "Why, yes, that's the date, sir," said the storekeeper.

"Don't ye know that's one of the rarest issues of ten dollar coins in existence? Somethin' happened to the die: they only issued a few," Massey stammered. "Where'd you git it, Hopewell?"

"Why—why—Is it valuable?" asked Hopewell. "A rare coin, you say?"

"Rare!" shouted Massey. "Yes, I tell ye! It's rare. There ain't but a few in existence. Mr. Hobart told me when he brought them coins over here that night. And he pointed one of them out to me in that collection. Where did you get this one, Hopewell—where'd you get it, I say?"

And on completing the demand he turned sharply and stared with his blinking, red eyes directly at Nelson Haley.

CHAPTER XX

SUSPICIONS

"Why—why—why——" stammered Hopewell Drugg, and could say no more.

The others had noted Massey's accusing glance at the schoolmaster; but not even Walky Dexter commented upon it at the moment.

"Come, Hopewell!" exclaimed the druggist; "where did you get it?"

"Where—where did I get the gold piece?" repeated the storekeeper, weakly.

"Yes. Who paid it in to you? Hi, man! surely you don't think for a moment I accuse you of having stolen the coin collection—or having guilty knowledge of the theft?"

"Oh, Mr. Massey! what are you saying?" cried the storekeeper's wife.

"The coins?" whispered Hopewell. "Is that one of them?"

"Jefers-pelters!" ejaculated Walky, "Here's a purty mess."

"Who gave it to you?" again demanded Mr. Massey.

"Why, it would be hard to say offhand," the storekeeper had sufficient wit to reply.

"Oh, but Hopewell!" implored the druggist. "Don't ye see what I am after? Stir yourself, man! Perhaps we are right on the trail of the thief—this is maybe a clue," and he cast another glance at Nelson as though he feared the schoolmaster might try to slip out of the store if he did not watch him.

Nelson came forward to the counter. At first he had grown very red; now he was quite pale and the

look of scorn and indignation he cast upon the druggist might have withered that person at a time of less excitement.

"I ran 'way up here the minute my wife gave me that gold piece, Hopewell," Massey continued. "Don't you remember how you came by it?"

"He means, Mr. Drugg," broke in Nelson, "that he suspects you got it from me. Now tell him, if you please: Have I passed a gold piece over your counter since the robbery—that piece, or any other?"

"Not—not to my knowledge, Mr. Haley," the storekeeper said, shaking his head slowly.

"Oh, Nelson!" gasped Janice, coming nearer and touching his arm lightly.

The young man's hands were clenched. He had a temper and it nearly mastered him now. But he had learned to control himself. Otherwise he could never have been as successful as he was in handling his pupils. His eyes darted lightning at the druggist; but the latter was too excited to realize Nelson Haley's mood.

"This fellow has been to the postmaster to try to discover if I bought my money-order the other day with gold coin; but the postmaster obeyed the rules of the Department and refused to answer. He and the other committeemen are doing every underhanded thing possible to injure me. Cross Moore even tried to get into my rooms to search my trunk—but Mrs. Beaseley threatened him with a broom.

"It doesn't surprise me that Mr. Massey should attempt in this way to find what he calls 'a clue.' The only clue he and his friends are looking for is something with which to connect me with the robbery."

Janice's light touch on his arm again, stayed his wrathful words; but the druggist's freckled face glowed—red under the young man's gaze.

"Wal!" he grunted, shortly, "we're bound to look after our own skins—not after yours, Mr. Haley."

"I believe you!" exclaimed the schoolmaster in scorn, and turned away.

"But, say, Hopewell, ye ain't answered me yet," went on Massey, again addressing the storekeeper.

"Well—I couldn't say offhand——"

"Great goodness, Hopewell!" cried Massey, pounding his fist upon the counter for emphasis, "you're the most exasperating critter. If this—this—— If Mr. Haley didn't give you the coin, *who did?*"

"Why—I—I——"

Drugg was slow enough at best. Now he was indeed very irritating. He was not the man to allow anything he said to injure another, if he could help it.

"Le's see," he continued; "I've had that gold piece sev'ral days. I am sure, of course, that Mr. Haley did not give it to me. No. Come to think of it——"

"Well?" gasped Mr. Massey.

"I *do* remember the transaction, now. It—it was give me as an option on my violin," said Hopewell Drugg, with growing confidence. "Yes. I remember now all about it."

"What's that? Yer fiddle, Hopewell?" put in Dexter. "Ye ain't goin' ter sell yer fiddle?"

"I must," Hopewell said simply. "I accepted that ten dollar gold piece and two five dollar bills, as a payment upon it."

"Who from?" demanded Massey, sticking to his text, and that only.

"Young Joe Bodley, of the Lake View Inn."

"Joe Bodley! Why, he was abed when them coins was stolen—I know that," blurted out the druggist, very much disappointed. "Lem Parraday 'tends bar himself forenoons, for Joe's allus up till past midnight. You know that, Walky."

"Ya-as—f'r sure," agreed the expressman. "But one o' these here magazine deteckatiffs might be able ter hook up Joe with them missin' coins, jes' the same. Mebbe he's a sernamb'list," suggested, Walky, with a sly grin.

"A *what?*" demanded Massey, with a startled look. "He's an Odd Feller, an' a Son o' Jethro. I don't

know what other lodges he b'longs to."

"Jefers-pelters!" ejaculated Walky, "who's talkin' about lodges? I mean mebbe Joe walks in his sleep. He might ha' stole them coins when he was sernamb'latin' about——"

The druggist snorted. "That's some o' your funny business, I s'pose, Walky Dexter. If you stood ter lose four hundred dollars you wouldn't chuckle none about it, I'm bound."

"Mebbe that's so," admitted Walky. "But I dunno's I'd go around suspectin' everybody there was of stealin' that money. Caesar's wife—er was it his darter?—wouldn't 'scape suspicion in your mind, Mr. Massey."

"By hickory!" exclaimed the exasperated druggist, "I'd suspect my own grandmother!"

"Sure ye would—ef ye thought by so doin' ye'd escape payin' out four hundred dollars! Hay! haw! haw!" laughed the expressman. "Ye ac' right fullish, Massey. All sorts of money is passed over that bar. I seen a feller count out forty pennies there t'other day for a flask of whiskey: an' I bet he'd either robbed his baby's bank, or the missionary-fund box. Haw! haw! haw!"

"You can laugh," began the druggist, looking sour enough, when Walky broke in again:

"Sure I can. It's lucky I can, too. If I couldn't laff at most of the folks that live in this town, I'd be tempted ter commit soocide—that's right! And you air one of the most amusin' of the lot, Massey. Them other committeemen run ye a clost second."

"Oh! I can't stop here and fool with you all day, Walky Dexter," snapped the druggist, pretty well worked up by now. "I tell ye this gold piece is a clue——"

"Mebbe," said Walky. "Mebbe 'tis a clue. But I reckon it's what them magazine deteckatifs call a blind clue. Haw! haw! haw! An' afore ye git anywhere with it, it'll proberbly go on crutches an' be deaf an' dumb inter the bargain!"

Massey did not look as though he enjoyed these gibes much. "I'll go down an' see Joe," he grunted. "Mebbe he'll know something about it."

"I hope you do not expect to find that I spent that ten dollar gold piece at the Inn bar," said Nelson, bitterly.

"Well! I'll find out how it got into Joe's hands," growled Massey.

"If Joe tells you," chuckled Walky. "An' do stop for yer hat, Massey. You'll ketch yer death o' dampness."

The druggist had opened a fruitful subject for speculation. Those he left behind in the store were eagerly interested. Indeed, Janice and Nelson could not fail to be excited by the occurrence, and the latter rode home with Janice in the car to talk the matter over with Uncle Jason.

"Of course," the schoolmaster said, when the family was assembled in the sitting room of the old Day house, "*that* gold piece may not be one of those stolen at all. There are plenty of ten dollar gold pieces in circulation."

"Not in Polktown!" exclaimed Uncle Jason.

"And if we are to believe Mr. Massey," added Janice, "there are not many ten dollar gold pieces of that particular date in existence."

"We don't really know. Perhaps Massey is mistaken. We know he was excited," said Nelson.

"Hold hard, now," advised Uncle Jason, "It's a breach in their walls, nevertheless."

"How is that, Mr. Day?" asked the schoolmaster.

"Why, don't you see?" said Uncle Jason, puffing on his pipe in some excitement. "They have opened th' way for Doubt ter stalk in," and he chuckled. "Them committeemen have been toller'ble sure—er they've *said* they was—it was you stole the money, Mr. Haley. If they can't connect this coin with you at all, they'll sartain sure be up a stump. And they air a-breakin' down their own case against ye. I guess I'm lawyer enough ter see that."

"Oh, goodness, Uncle Jason! So they will!" cried Janice.

"But it does not seem reasonable that the person stealing the coins would spend one of them in

Polktown," Nelson said slowly.

"I dunno," reflected Mr. Day. "I never did think that a thief had any medals fer good sense—nossir! He most allus leaves some openin' so's ter git caught."

"And if he spent the money at the tavern—and for liquor—of course he *couldn't* have good sense."

"I take off my hat to you on that point, Janice," laughed Nelson. "I believe you are right."

"Ya-as, ain't she?" Aunt Almira said proudly. "An' our Janice has done suthin' this time that'll make Polktown put her on a ped-ped-es-tri-an—"

"'Pedestal,' Maw!" giggled Marty.

"Wal, never mind," said the somewhat flurried Mrs. Day. "Mr. Middler said it. Mr. Haley, ye'd oughter hear all 't Mr. Middler said about her this arternoon at the meetin' of the Ladies' Aid."

"Oh, Auntie!" murmured Janice, turning very red.

"Go on, Maw, and tell us," said Marty. "What did he say?" and he grinned delightedly at his cousin's rosy face.

"Sing her praises, Mrs. Day—do," urged Nelson. "We know she deserves to have them sung."

"Wal! I should say she did," agreed Aunt 'Mira, proudly. "It's her, the parson says, that's re'lly at the back of this temp'rance movement that's goin' ter be inaugurated right here in Polktown. Nex' Sunday he's goin' to give a sermon on temperance. He said 'at he was ashamed to feel that he—like the rest of us—was content ter drift along and *do nothin'* 'cept ter talk against rum selling, until Janice began ter *do somethin'*."

"Now, Auntie!" complained the girl again.

"Wal! You started it—ye know ye did, Janice. They was talkin' about holdin' meetings, an' pledge-signin', and stirrin' up the men folks ter vote nex' Fall ter make Polktown so everlastin'ly dry that all the old toppers, like Jim Narnay, an' Bruton Willis, an'—an' the rest of 'em, will jest natcherly wither up an' blow away! I tell ye, the Ladies' Aid is all worked up."

"I wonder, now," said Uncle Jason, reflectively.

"Ye wonder what, Jase Day?" demanded his spouse, with some warmth.

"I wonder if it can be *did*?" returned Uncle Jason. "Lemme tell ye, rum sellin' an' rum drinkin' is purty well rooted in Polktown. If Janice is a-goin' ter stop th' sale of licker here, she's tackled purty consider'ble of a job, lemme tell ye."

CHAPTER XXI

WHAT WAS IN THE PAPER

As the days passed it certainly looked as though Mr. Day was correct in his surmise about the difficulties of "Janice's job," as he called it. The girl was earnestly talking to everybody whom she knew, especially to the influential men of Polktown, regarding the disgraceful things that had happened in the lakeside hamlet since the bar had been opened at the Inn. And it was among these influential men that she found the most opposition to making Polktown "dry" instead of "wet."

She had thrown down her gauntlet at Mr. Cross Moore's feet, so she troubled no more about him. Janice realized that nobody was more politically powerful in Polktown than Mr. Moore. But she believed she could not possibly obtain him on the side of prohibition, so she did not waste her strength or time in trying.

Not that Mr. Cross Moore was a drinking man himself. He was never known to touch either liquor or tobacco. He was just a hard-fisted, hard-hearted, shrewd and successful country politician; and there appeared to be no soft side to his character. Unless that side was exposed to his invalid wife. And nobody outside ever caught Mr. Moore displaying tenderness in particular to her, although he was

known to spend much time with her.

He had fought his way up in politics and in wealth, from very poor and small beginnings. From his birth in an ancient log cabin, with parents who were as poor and miserable as the Trimmises or the Narnays to being president of the Town Council and chairman of the School Committee, was a long stride for Mr. Cross Moore—and nobody appreciated the fact more clearly than himself.

Money had been the best friend he had ever had. Without Elder Concannon's streak of acquisitiveness in his character that made the good old man almost miserly, Mr. Cross Moore possessed the money-getting ability, and a faith in the creed that "Wealth is Power" that nothing had yet shaken in his long experience.

For a number of years Polktown had been free of any public dram-selling, although the voters had not put themselves on record as desiring prohibition. Occasionally a more or less secret place for the selling of liquor had risen and was quickly put down. There had, in the opinion of the majority of the citizens, been no call for a drinking place, and there would probably have been no such local demand had Lem Parraday—backed by Mr. Moore, who held the mortgage on the Inn—not desired to increase the profits of that hostelery. The license was taken out that visitors to Polktown might be satisfied.

There had been no local demand for the sale of liquor, as has been said. Those who made a practise of using it could obtain all they wished at Middletown, or other places near by. But once having allowed the traffic a foothold in the hamlet, it would be hard to dislodge it.

John Barleycorn is fighting for his life. He has few real friends, indeed, among his consumers. No man knows better the danger of alcohol than the man who is addicted to its use—until he gets to that besotted stage where his brain is so befuddled that his opinion would scarcely be taken in a court of law on any subject.

Janice Day was determined not to listen to these temporizers in Polktown who professed themselves satisfied if the license was taken away from the Lake View Inn. Something more drastic was needed than that.

"The business must be voted out of town. We all must take a stand upon the question—on one side or the other," the girl had said earnestly, in discussing this point with Elder Concannon.

"If you only shut up this bar, another license, located at some other point, will be asked for. Each time the fight will have to be begun again. Vote the town *dry*—that is the only way."

"Well, I reckon that's true enough, my girl," said the cautious elder.
"But I doubt if we can do it. They're too strong for us."

"We can try," Janice urged. "You don't *know* that the wets will win, Elder."

"And if we try the question in town meeting and get beaten, we'll be worse off than we are now."

"Why shall we?" Janice demanded. "And, besides, I do not believe the wets can carry the day."

"I'm afraid the idea of making the town dry isn't popular enough," pursued the elder.

"Why not?"

"We are Vermonters," said Elder Concannon, as though that were conclusive. "We're sons of the Green Mountain Boys, and liberty is greater to us than to any other people in the world."

"Including the liberty to get drunk—and the children to follow the example of the grown men?" asked Janice, tartly. "Is *that* liberty so precious?"

"That's a harsh saying, Janice," said the old man, wagging his head.

"It's the truth, just the same," the girl declared, with doggedness.

"You can't make the voters do what you want—not always," said Elder Concannon. "I don't want to see liquor sold here; but I think we'll be more successful if we oppose each license as it comes up."

"What chance had you to oppose Lem Parraday's license?" demanded the girl, sharply.

"Well! I allow that was sprung on us sudden. But Cross Moore was interested in it, too."

"Somebody will always be particularly interested in the granting of the license. I believe with Uncle

Jason that it's foolish to give Old Nick a fair show. He does not deserve the honors of war."

More than Elder Concannon did not believe that Polktown could be carried for prohibition in Town Meeting. But election day was months ahead, and if "keeping everlastingly at it" would bring success, Janice was determined that her idea should be adopted.

Mr. Middler's first sermon on temperance was in no uncertain tone. Indeed, that good man's discourses nowadays were very different from those he had been wont to give the congregation of the Union Church when Janice had first come to Polktown. In the old-fashioned phrase, Mr. Middler had "found liberty."

There was nothing sensational about his sermons. He was a drab man, who still hesitated before uttering any very pronounced view upon any subject; but he thought deeply, and even that super-critic, Elder Concannon, had begun to praise the pastor of the Union Church.

To start the movement for prohibition in the largest church in the community was all very well; but Janice and the other earnest workers realized that the movement must be broader than that. A general meeting was arranged in the Town House, the biggest assembly room in town, and speakers were secured who were really worth hearing. All this went on quite satisfactorily. Indeed, the first temperance rally was a pronounced success, and white ribbons became common in Polktown, worn by both young and old.

But Janice's and Nelson Haley's private affairs remained in a most unsatisfactory state indeed.

First of all, there was a long month to wait before Janice could expect to see another letter from daddy. It puzzled her that he was forbidden to write but once in thirty days, by an under lieutenant of the Zapatist chief, Juan Dicampa, who was Mr. Day's friend—or supposed to be, and yet the letters came to her readdressed in Juan Dicampa's hand.

She watched the daily papers, too, for any word printed regarding the chieftain, and perhaps never was a brigand's well-being so heartily prayed for, as was Juan Dicampa's. Janice never forgot that her father said Dicampa stood between him and almost certain death.

Considering Nelson Haley's affairs, that young man was quite impatient because they had come to no head. Nor did it seem that they were likely to soon.

Nelson had secretly objected when Uncle Jason had asked Judge Little to put off for a full week the examination of Nelson in his court. The unfortunate schoolmaster felt that he wanted the thing over and the worst known immediately.

But it seemed that he was neither to be acquitted at once of the crime charged against him, nor was he to be found guilty and punished.

Uncle Jason was right about the turning up of the ten dollar gold piece being a blow to the accusation the School Committee had lodged against Nelson. They could not connect the young schoolmaster with the gold coin.

By Uncle Jason's advice, too, Nelson had put off engaging a lawyer in Middletown to come over to defend the young man in Judge Little's court.

"And well he did wait, too," declared Mr. Day, very much pleased with his own shrewdness. "*That* would have meant a twenty dollar note. Now it don't cost Mr. Haley a cent."

"What do you mean, Jase Day?" demanded Aunt Almira, for her husband announced the above at the supper table on Friday evening of that eventful week. "They ain't goin' ter send Mr. Haley to jail without a trial?"

"Hear the woman, will ye?" apostrophized Uncle Jason, with disgust. "Ain't thet jes' like ye, Almiry—goin' off at ha'f cock thet-a-way? Who said anythin' about Mr. Haley goin' ter jail?"

"Wal——"

"He ain't goin' yet awhile, I reckon," and Mr. Day chuckled. "I told ye them fule committeemen would overreach themselves. They've withdrawn the charge."

"*What?*" chorused the family, in joy and amazement.

"Yessir! that's what they've done. Jedge Little sent word to me an' give me back my bond. 'Course, we could ha' demanded a hearin' an' tried ter git a clear discharge. And then ag'in—Wal! I advised Mr.

Haley ter let well enough alone."

"Then they know who is the thief at last?" asked Janice, quaveringly.

"No."

"But they know Mr. Haley never stole them coins!" cried Aunt Almira.

"Wal—ef they do, they don't admit of it," drawled Uncle Jason.

"What in tarnation is it, then, Dad?" demanded Marty.

"Why, they've made sech a to-do over findin' that gold piece in Hope Drugg's possession, that they don't dare go on an' prosercute the schoolmaster—nossir!"

"Bully!" exclaimed the thoughtless Marty. "That's all right, then."

"But—but," objected Janice, with trembling lip, "that doesn't clear Nelson at all!"

"It answers the puppose," proclaimed Uncle Jason. "He ain't under arrest no more, and he don't hafter pay no lawyer's fee."

"Ye-es," admitted his niece, slowly. "But what is poor Nelson to do? He's still under a cloud, and he can't teach school."

"And believe me!" growled Marty, "that greeny they got to teach in his place don't scu'cely know beans when the bag's untied."

It was true that the four committeemen had considered it wise to withdraw their charge against Nelson Haley. Without any evidence but that of a purely presumptive character, their lawyer had advised this retreat.

Really, it was a sharp trick. It left Nelson worse off, as far as disproving their charge went, than he would have been had they taken the case into court. The charge still lay against the young man in the public mind. He had no opportunity of being legally cleared of suspicion.

The ancient legal supposition that a man is innocent until he is found guilty, is never honored in a New England village. He is guilty unless proved innocent. And how could Nelson prove his innocence? Only by discovering the real thief and proving *him* guilty.

The shrewd attorney hired by the four committeemen knew very well that he was not prejudicing his clients' case when he advised them to quash the warrant.

But as for the discovery of the rare coin in circulation—one known to belong to the collection stolen from the schoolhouse—that injured the committeemen's cause rather than helped it, it must be confessed.

Joe Bodley frankly admitted having paid over the gold piece to Hopewell Drugg, as a deposit on the fiddle. But he professed not to know how the coin had come into the till at the tavern.

Joe had full charge of the cash-drawer when Mr. Parraday was not present, and he had helped himself to such money as he thought he would need when he went up town to negotiate for the purchase of the fiddle. He denied emphatically that the man who had engaged him to purchase the fiddle had given him the ten dollar gold piece. Who the purchaser of the fiddle was, however, the barkeeper declined to say.

"That's my business," Joe had said, when questioned on this point. "Ya-as. I expect to take the fiddle. Hopewell's agreed to sell it to me, fair and square. If I can make a lettle spec on the side, who's business is it but my own?"

When Janice heard the report of this—through Walky Dexter, of course—she was reminded of the black-haired, foreign looking man, who had been so much interested in Hopewell's violin the night she and Frank Bowman had taken the storekeeper home from the dance.

"I wonder if he can be the customer that Joe Bodley speaks of? Oh, dear me!" sighed Janice. "I'm so sorry Hopewell has to sell his violin. And I'm sorry he is going to sell it this way. If that 'foxy looking foreigner,' as Mr. Bowman called him, is the purchaser of the instrument, perhaps it is worth much more than a hundred dollars.

"Lottie *must* go again and have her eyes examined. Hopewell will take her himself next month—the poor, dear little thing! Oh! if daddy's mine wasn't down there among those hateful Mexicans——"

"And I wonder," added the young girl, suddenly, "what one of those real old violins is worth."

She chanced to be reflecting on this subject on a Saturday afternoon near the end of the month Hopewell had allowed to Joe Bodley to find the rest of the purchase price for the violin. She had been up to the church vestry to attend a meeting of her Girls' Guild. As she passed the Public Library this thought came to her:

"I'll go in and look in the encyclopaedia. *That* ought to tell about old violins."

She looked up Cremona and read about its wonderful violins made in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries by the Amati family and by Antonio Stradivari and Josef Guarnerius. It did not seem possible that Hopewell's instrument could be one of these beautifully wrought violins of the masters; yet——

"Who knows?" sighed Janice. "You read about such instruments coming to light in such queer places. And Hopewell's fiddle *looks* awfully old. From all accounts his father must have been a musician of some importance, despite the fact that he was thought little of in Polktown by either his wife or other people. Mr. Drugg might have owned one of these famous violins—not one of the most ancient, perhaps—and told nobody here about it. Why! the ordinary Polktownite would think just as much of a two-dollar-and-a-half fiddle as of a real Stradivarius or an Amati."

While she was at the task, Janice took some notes of what she read. While she was about this, Walky Dexter, who brought the mail over from Middletown, daily, came in with the usual bundle of papers for the reading desk, and the girl in charge that afternoon hastened to put the papers in the files.

Major Price had presented the library with a year's subscription to a New York daily. Janice or Marty always found time to scan each page of that paper for Mexican news—especially for news of the brigand chief, Juan Dicampa.

She went to the reading desk after closing and returning the encyclopaedia to its proper shelf, and spread the New York paper before her. This day she had not to search for mention of her father's friend, the Zapatist chief. Right in front of her eyes, at the top of the very first column, were these headlines:

JUAN DICAMPA CAPTURED

THE ZAPATIST CHIEFTAIN CAPTURED BY FEDERALS WITH 500 OF HIS FORCE AND IMMEDIATELY SHOT. MASSACRE OF HIS FOLLOWERS.

CHAPTER XXII

DEEP WATERS

The dispatch in the New York paper was dated from a Texan city on the day before. It was brief, but seemed of enough importance to have the place of honor on the front page of the great daily.

There were all the details of a night advance, a bloody attack and a fearful repulse in which General Juan Dicampa's force had been nearly wiped out.

The half thousand captured with the famous guerrilla chief were reported to have been hacked to pieces when they cried for quarter, and Juan Dicampa himself was given the usual short shrift connected in most people's minds with Mexican justice. He had been shot three hours after his capture.

It was an awful thing—and awful to read about. The whole affair had happened a long way from that part of Chihuahua in which daddy's mine was situated; but Janice immediately realized that the "long arm" of Dicampa could no longer keep Mr. Broxton Day from disaster, or punish those who offended the American mining man.

The very worst that could possibly happen to her father, Janice thought, had perhaps already

happened.

That was a very sorrowful evening indeed at the old Day house on Hillside Avenue. Although Mr. Jason Day and Janice's father were half brothers only, the elder man had in his heart a deep and tender love for Broxton, or "Brocky," as he called him.

He remembered Brocky as a lad—always. He felt the superiority of his years—and presumably his wisdom—over the younger man. Despite the fact that Mr. Broxton Day had early gone away from Polktown, and had been deemed very successful in point of wealth in the Middle West, Uncle Jason considered him still a boy, and his ventures in business and in mining as a species of "wild oat sowing," of which he could scarcely approve.

"No," he sighed. "If Brocky had been more settled he'd ha' been better off—I snum he would! A piece o' land right here back o' Polktown—or a venture in a store, if so be he must trade—would ha' been safer for him than a slather o' mines down there among them Mexicaners."

"Don't talk so—don't talk so, Jason!" sniffed Aunt Almira.

"Wal—it's a fac'," her husband said vigorously. "There may be some danger attached ter store keepin' in Polktown; it's likely ter make a man a good deal of a hawg," added Uncle Jason. "But I guess the life insurance rates ain't so high as they be on a feller that's determined ter spend his time t'other side o' that Rio Grande River they tell about."

"I wonder," sighed Aunt Almira, quite unconscious that she spoke aloud, "if I kin turn that old black alpaca gown I got when Sister Susie died, Jason, an' fashion it after one o' the new models?"

"Heh?" grunted the startled Mr. Day, glaring at her.

"Of course, we'll hafter go inter black—it's only decent. But I did fancy a plum-colored dress this Spring, with r'yal purple trimmins. I seen a pattern in the fashion sheet of the Fireside Love Letter that was re'l sweet."

"What's eatin' on you, Maw?" demanded her son gruffly. "Whatcher wanter talk that way for right in front of Janice? I reckon we won't none of us put on crêpe for Uncle Brocky yet awhile," he added, stoutly.

On Monday arrived another letter from Mr. Broxton Day. Of course, it was dated before the dreadful night attack which had caused the death of General Juan Dicampa and the destruction of his forces; and it had passed through that chieftain's hands and had been remailed.

Janice put away the envelope, directed in the sloping, clerkly hand, and sighed. Daddy was in perfect health when he had written this last epistle and the situation had not changed.

"But no knowing what has happened to poor daddy since he wrote," thought Janice. "We can know nothing about it. And another whole month to wait to learn if he is alive."

The girl was quite well aware that she could expect no inquiry to be made at Washington regarding Mr. Broxton Day's fate. The administration had long since warned all American citizens to leave Mexico and to refrain from interference in Mexican affairs. Mr. Day had chosen to stay by his own, and his friends', property—and he had done this at his peril.

"Oh, I wish," thought the girl, "that somebody could go down there and capture daddy, and just make him come back over the border! As Uncle Jason says, what's money when his precious life is in danger?"

In almost the same breath, however, she wished that daddy could send her more money. For Lottie Drugg had gone to Boston. Her father had given over the violin to Joe Bodley, and that young speculator paid the storekeeper the remainder of the hundred dollars agreed upon. With this hundred dollars Hopewell started for Boston with Lottie, leaving his wife to take care of the store for the few days he expected to be absent. Janice went over to stay with Mrs. Drugg at night during Hopewell's absence.

Perhaps it was just as well that Janice was not at home during these few days, as it gave her somebody's troubles besides her own to think about. And the Day household really, if not visibly, was in mourning for Broxton Day. Uncle Jason's face was as "long as the moral law," and Aunt 'Mira, lachrymose at best, was now continuously and deeply gloomy. Marty was the only person in the Day household able to cheer Janice in the least.

'Rill and Hopewell were in deep waters, too. Had Lottie not been such an expense, the little store on

the side street would have made a very comfortable living for the three of them. They lived right up to their income, however; and so Hopewell was actually obliged to sell his violin to get Lottie to Boston.

Mrs. Scattergood was frequently in the store now that her son-in-law was away. She was, of course, ready with her criticisms as to the course of her daughter and her husband.

"Good Land o' Goshen!" chirped the little old woman to Janice, "didn't I allus say it was the fullishest thing ever heard of for them two to marry? Amarilly had allus airned good money teachin' and had spent it as she pleased. And Hope Drugg never did airn much more'n the salt in his johnny-cake in this store."

Meanwhile she was helping herself to sugar and tea and flour and butter and other little "notions" for her own comfort. Hopewell always said that "Mother Scattergood should have the run of the store, and take what she pleased," now that he had married 'Rill; and, although the woman was not above maligning her easy-going son-in-law, she did not refuse to avail herself of his generosity.

"An' there it is!" went on Mrs. Scattergood. "'Rill was fullish enough to put the money she'd saved inter a mortgage that pays her only five per cent. An' ter git th' int'rest is like pullin' eye-teeth, and I tell her she never will see the principal ag'in."

Mrs. Scattergood neglected to state that she had urged her daughter to put her money in this mortgage. It was on her son's farm, across the lake at "Skunk's Hollow," as the place was classically named; and the money would never have been tied up in this way had her mother not begged and pleaded and fairly "hounded" 'Rill into letting the shiftless brother have her savings on very uncertain security.

"Them two marryin'," went on Mrs. Scattergood, referring to 'Rill and Hopewell, "was for all the worl' like Famine weddin' with Poverty. And a very purty weddin' that allus is," she added with a sniff. "Neither of 'em ain't got nothin', nor never will have—'ceptin' that Hopewell's got an encumbrance in the shape of that ha'f silly child."

Janice was tempted to tell the venomous old woman that she thought Hopewell's only encumbrance was his mother-in-law.

"And him fiddlin' and drinkin' and otherwise wastin' his substance," croaked Mrs. Scattergood.

At this Janice did utter an objection:

"Now, that is not so, Mrs. Scattergood. You know very well that that story about Hopewell being a drinking man is not true."

"My! is that so? Didn't I see him myself? And you seen him, too, Janice Day, comin' home that night, a wee-wawin' like a boat in a heavy sea. I guess I see what I see. And as for his fiddlin'——"

"You need not be troubled on that score, at least," sighed Janice. "Poor Hopewell! He's sold his violin."

Walky Dexter came into the store that same evening, chuckling over the sale of the instrument.

"I wouldn't go for ter say Hopewell is a sharper," he grinned; "but mebbe he ain't so powerful innercent as he sometimes 'pears. If so, I'm sartainly glad of it."

"What do you mean, Mr. Dexter?" asked 'Rill, rather sharply.

"Guess Joe Bodley feels like he'd like ter know whether Hopewell done him or not. Joe's condition is suthin' like the snappin' turtle's when he cotched a-holt of Peleg Swift's red nose as he was stoopin' ter git a drink at the spring. He didn't durst ter let go while Peke was runnin' an' yellin' 'Murder!' but he was mighty sorry ter git so fur from home. Haw! haw! haw!"

"What is the matter with Joe Bodley now, Walky?" asked Nelson, who was present. "Didn't he make a good thing out of the violin transaction?"

"Why—haw! haw!—he dunno yit. But I b'lieve he's beginnin' ter have his doubts—like th' feller 't got holt of the black snake a-thinkin' it was a heifer's tail," chuckled Walky, whose face was very red and whose spicy breath—Joe Bodley always kept a saucer of cloves on the end of the bar—was patent to all in the store.

"Joe's a good sport; he ain't squealin' none," pursued Dexter; "but there is the fiddle a-hangin' behint th' bar an' Joe's beginnin' ter look mighty sour when ye mention it to him."

"Why, Mr. Dexter!" 'Rill said, in surprise, "hasn't he turned it over to the man he said he bought it for?"

"Wal—not so's ye'd notice it," Walky replied, grinning fatuously. "I dunno who the feller is, or how much money he gin Joe in the fust place to help pay for the fiddle—some, of course. But if Joe paid Hopewell a hundred dollars for the thing you kin jest bet he 'spected to git ha'f as much ag'in for it.

"But I reckon the feller's reneged or suthin'. Joe ain't happy about it—he! he! Mebbe on clost examination the fiddle don't 'pear ter be one o' them old masters they tell about! Haw! haw! haw!"

Janice started to say something. "Why don't they look inside——"

"Inside o' what?" demanded Walky, when the girl halted.

"I am positive that Hopewell would never have sold it for a hundred dollars if he hadn't felt he must," broke in the storekeeper's wife, and Janice did not complete her impulsive observation.

"Ye can't most allus sometimes tell!" drawled Walky. "Mebbe Hopewell had suthin' up his sleeve 'sides his wrist. Haw! haw! haw!"

"Shucks! talk about a fiddle bein' wuth a hunderd dollars! Jefers-pelters! I seen one a-hangin' in a shop winder at Bennington once 't looked every whit as good as Hopewell's, and as old, an' 'twas marked plain on a card, 'two dollars an' a ha'f.'"

"I guess there are fiddles and *fiddles*," said 'Rill, a little tartly for her.

"No," laughed Nelson. "There are fiddles and *violins*. Like the word 'vase.' If it's a cheap one, plain 'vase' is well enough to indicate it; but if it costs over twenty-five dollars they usually call it a 'vahze.' I have always believed Hopewell's instrument deserved the dignity of 'violin.'"

"Wal," declared Walky. "I guess ye kin have all the dignity, *and* the vi'lin, too, if you offer Joe what he paid for it. I don't b'lieve he'll hang off much for a profit—er—haw! haw! haw!"

"I wish I were wealthy enough to buy the violin back from that fellow," whispered Janice to the schoolmaster.

"Ah! I expect you do, Janice," he said softly, eyeing her with admiration. "And I wish I could give you the money to do so. It would give you more pleasure, I fancy, to hand Hopewell back his violin when he returns from Boston than almost anything we could name. Wouldn't it?"

"Oh, dear me! yes, Nelson," she sighed. "I just wish I were rich."

Just about this time there were a number of things Janice desired money for. She had a little left in the bank at Middletown; but she dared not use it for anything but actual necessities. No telling when daddy could send her any more for her own private use. Perhaps, never.

The papers gave little news of Mexican troubles just now. Of course, Juan Dicampa being dead, there was no use watching the news columns for *his* name.

And daddy was utterly buried from her! She had no means of informing herself whether he were alive or dead. She wrote to him faithfully at least once each week; but she did not know whether the letters reached him or not.

As previously advised, she addressed the outer envelope for her father's letters in care of Juan Dicampa. But that seemed a hollow mockery now. She was sending the letters to a dead man.

Was it possible that her father received the missives? Could Juan Dicampa's influence, now that he was dead, compass their safety? It seemed rather a ridiculous thing to do, yet Janice continued to send them in care of the guerrilla chieftain.

Indeed, Janice Day was wading in deep waters. It was very difficult for her to carry a cheerful face about during this time of severe trial.

But she threw herself, whole-heartedly, into the temperance campaign, and strove to keep her mind from dwelling upon her father's peril.

CHAPTER XXIII

JOSEPHUS COMES OUT FOR PROHIBITION

It was while Janice was staying with Mrs. Hopewell Drugg during the storekeeper's absence in Boston, that she met Sophie Narnay on the street.

The child looked somewhat better as to dress, for Janice had found her some frocks weeks before, and Mrs. Narnay had utilized the gifts to the very best advantage. But the poor little thing was quite as hungry looking as ever.

"Oh, Miss Janice!" she said, "I wish you'd come down to see our baby. She's ever so much worse'n she was. I guess 'twas a good thing 'at we never named her. 'Twould jest ha' been a name wasted."

"Oh, dear, Sophie! is she as bad as all that?" cried Janice.

"Yep," declared the child.

"Can't the doctor help her?"

"He's come a lot—an' he's been awful nice. Mom says she didn't know there was such good folks in the whole worl' as him an' you. But there's somethin' the matter with the baby that no doctor kin help, so he says. An' I guess he's got the rights of it," concluded Sophie, in her old-fashioned way.

"I will certainly come down and see the poor little thing," promised Janice. "And your mamma and Johnnie and Eddie. Is your father at home now?"

"Nop. He's up in Concannon's woods yet. They've took a new contrac'—him and Mr. Trimmins. An' mebbe it'll last all Summer. Dear me! I hope so. Then pop won't be home to drink up all the money mom earns."

"I will come down to-morrow," Janice promised, for she was busy just then and could not accompany Sophie to Pine Cove.

This was Saturday afternoon and Janice was on her way to the steamboat dock to see if certain freight had arrived by the *Constance Colfax* for Hopewell Drugg's store. She was doing all she could to help 'Rill conduct the business while the storekeeper was away.

During the week she had scarcely been home to the Day house at all. Marty had run the car over to the Drugg place in the morning in time for her to start for Middletown; and in the afternoon her cousin had come for the Kremlin and driven it across town to the garage again.

This Saturday she would not use the car, for she wished to help 'Rill, and Marty had taken a party of his boy friends out in the Kremlin. Marty had become a very efficient chauffeur now and could be trusted, so his father said, not to try to hurdle the stone walls along the way, or to make the automobile climb the telegraph poles.

"Marm" Parraday was sweeping the front porch and steps of the Lake View Inn. Although the Inn had become very well patronized now, the tavernkeeper's vigorous wife was not above doing much of her own work.

"Oh, Janice Day! how be ye?" she called to the girl. "I don't see ye often," and Mrs. Parraday smiled broadly upon her.

As Janice came nearer she saw that Marm Parraday did not look as she once did. Her hair had turned very gray, there were deeper lines in her weather-beaten face, and a trembling of her lips and hands made Janice's heart ache.

If the Inn was doing well and Lem Parraday was prospering, his wife seemed far from sharing in the good times that appeared to have come to the Lake View Inn.

The great, rambling house had been freshened with a coat of bright paint; the steps and porch and porch railings were mended; the sod was green; the flower gardens gay; the gravel of the walks and driveway freshly raked; while the round boulders flanking the paths were brilliant with whitewash.

"Why!" said Janice honestly, "the old place never looked so nice before, Mrs. Parraday. You have done wonders this Spring. I hope you will have a prosperous season."

Mrs. Parraday clutched the girl's arm tightly. Janice saw that her eyes seemed quite wild in their expression as she pointed a trembling finger at the gilt sign at the corner of the house, lettered with the single word: "Bar."

"With that sign a-swingin' there, Janice Day?" she whispered. "You air wishin' us prosperity whilst Lem sells pizen to his feller men?"

"Oh, Mrs. Parraday! I was not thinking of the liquor selling," said Janice sympathetically.

"Ye'd better think of it, then," pursued the tavernkeeper's wife. "Ye'd better think of it, day and night. That's what *I* do. I git on my knees and pray 't Lem won't prosper as long as that bar room's open. I do it 'fore Lem himself. He says I'm a-tryin' ter pray the bread-and-butter right aout'n aour mouths. He's so mad at me he won't sleep in the same room an' has gone off inter the west wing ter sleep by hisself. But I don't keer," cried Mrs. Parraday wildly. "Woe ter him that putteth the cup to his neighbor's lips! That's what *I* tell him. 'Wine is a mocker—strong drink is ragin'.' That's what the Bible says.

"An' Lem—a perfessin' member of Mr. Middler's church—an' me attendin' the same for goin' on thutty-seven years——"

"But surely, Mrs. Parraday, you are not to blame because your husband sells liquor," put in Janice, sorry for the poor woman and trying to comfort her.

"Why ain't I?" sharply demanded the tavern-keeper's wife. "I've been Lem's partner for endurin' all that time, too—thutty-seven years. I've been hopin' all the time we'd git ahead an' have suthin' beside a livin' here in Polktown. *I've been hungry for money!*

"Like enough if I hadn't been so sharp after it, an' complained so 'cause we didn't git ahead, Lem an' Cross Moore wouldn't never got their heads together an' 'greed ter try rum-selling to make the old Inn pay a profit.

"Oh, yes! I see my fault now. Oh, Lord! I see it," groaned Marm Parraday, clasping her trembling hands. "But, believe me, Janice Day, I never seen this that's come to us. We hev brought the curse of rum inter this taown after it had been free from it for years. An' we shell hafter suffer in the end—an' suffer more'n anybody else is sufferin' through our fault."

She broke off suddenly and, without looking again at Janice, mounted the steps with her broom and disappeared inside the house.

Janice, heartsick and almost in tears, was turning away when a figure appeared from around the corner of the tavern—from the direction of the bar-room, in fact. But Frank Bowman's smiling, ruddy face displayed no sign of *his* having sampled Lem Parraday's bar goods.

"Hullo, Janice," he said cheerfully. "I've just been having a set-to with Lem—and I don't know but he's got the best of me."

"In what way?" asked the girl, brushing her eyes quickly that the young man might not see her tears.

"Why, this is pay day again, you know. My men take most of the afternoon off on pay day. They are cleaning up now, in the camp house, and will be over by and by to sample some of Lem's goods," and the engineer sighed.

"No, I can't keep them away from the place. I've tried. Some of them won't come; but the majority will be in that pleasing condition known as 'howling drunk' before morning."

"Oh, Frank! I wish Lem would stop selling the stuff," cried Janice.'

"Well, he won't. I've just been at him. I told him if he didn't close his bar at twelve o'clock tonight, according to the law, I'd appear in court against him myself. I mean to stand outside here with Constable Cantor to-night and see that the barroom is dark at twelve o'clock, anyway."

"That will be a splendid move, Frank!" Janice said quickly, and with enthusiasm.

"Ye-es; as far as it goes. But Lem said to me: 'Don't forget this is a hotel, Mr. Bowman, and I can serve my guests in the dining room or in their own rooms, all night long, if I want to.' And that's true."

"Oh, dear me! So he can," murmured Janice.

"He's got me there," grumbled young Bowman. "I never thought Lem

Parraday any too sharp before; but he's learned a lot from Joe Bodley. That young fellow is about as shrewd and foxy as they make 'em."

"Yet they say he did not sell Hopewell's violin at a profit, as he expected to," Janice observed.

"That's right, too. And it's queer," the engineer said. "I've seen that black-haired, foxy-looking chap around town more than once since Joe bought the fiddle. Hullo! what's the matter with Dexter?"

The engineer had got into step at once with Janice, and they had by this time walked down High Street to the steamboat dock. The freight-house door was open and Walky Dexter had loaded his wagon and was ready to drive up town; but Josephus was headed down the dock.

The expressman was climbing unsteadily to his seat, and in reply to something said by the freight agent, he shouted:

"Thas all right! thas all right! I kin turn Josephus 'round on this dock. Jefers-pelters! he could *back* clean up town with *this* load, I sh'd hope!"

Janice had said nothing in reply to Frank Bowman's last query; but the latter added, under his breath: "Goodness! Walky is pretty well screwed-up, isn't he? I just saw him at the hotel taking what he calls a 'snifter.'"

"Poor Walky!" sighed Janice.

"Poor Josephus, *I* should say," rejoined Frank quickly.

The expressman was turning the old horse on the empty dock. There was plenty of room for this manoeuver; but Walky Dexter's eyesight was not what it should be. Or, perhaps he was less patient than usual with Josephus.

"Git around there, Josephus!" the expressman shouted. "Back! Back! I tell ye! Consarn yer hide!"

He yanked on the bit and Josephus' heavy hoofs clattered on the resounding planks. The wagon was heavily laden; and when it began to run backward, with Walky jerking on the reins, it could not easily be stopped.

A rotten length of "string-piece" had been removed from one edge of the dock, and a new timber had not yet replaced it. As bad fortune would have it, Walky backed his wagon directly into this opening.

"Hold on there! Where ye goin' to—ye crazy ol' critter?" bawled the freight agent.

"Hul-*lo!* Jefers-pelters!" gasped the suddenly awakened Walky, casting an affrighted glance over his shoulder. "I'm a-backin' over the dump, ain't I? Gid-*ap*, Josephus!"

But when once Josephus made up his slow mind to back, he did it thoroughly. He, too, expected to feel the rear wheels of the heavy farm wagon bump against the string-piece.

"Gid-*ap*, Josephus!" yelled Walky again, and rose up to smite the old horse with the ends of the reins. He had no whip—nor would one have helped matters, perhaps, at this juncture.

The rear wheels went over the edge of the dock. The lake was high, being swelled by the Spring floods. "Plump!" the back of the wagon plunged into the water, and, the bulk of the load being over the rear axle, the forward end shot up off the front truck.

Wagon body and freight sunk into the lake. Walky, as though shot from a catapult, described a parabola over his horse's head and landed with a crash on all fours directly under Josephus' nose.

Never was the old horse known to make an unnecessary motion. But the sudden flight and unexpected landing on the dock of his driver, quite excited Josephus.

With a snort he scrambled backward, the front wheels went over the edge of the dock and dragged Josephus with them. Harnessed as he was, and still attached to the shafts, the old horse went into the lake with a great splash.

"Hey! Whoa! Whoa, Josephus! Jefers-pelters! ain't this a purty to-do?" roared Walky, recovering his footing with more speed than grace.

"Naow see that ol' critter! What's he think he's doin'—takin' a swimmin' lesson?"

For Josephus, with one mighty plunge, broke free from the shafts. He struck out for the shore and reached shallow water almost immediately. Walky ran off the dock and along the rocky shore to head

the old horse off and catch him.

But Josephus had no intention of being so easily caught. Either he had lost confidence in his owner, or some escapade of his colthood had come to his memory. He splashed ashore, dodged the eager hand of Walky, and with tail up, nostrils expanded, mane ruffled, and dripping water as he ran, Josephus galloped up the hillside and into the open lots behind Polktown.

Walky Dexter, with very serious mien, came slowly back to the dock. Janice and Frank Bowman, as well as the freight agent, had been held spellbound by these exciting incidents. Frank and the agent were now convulsed with laughter; but Janice sympathized with the woeful expressman.

The latter halted on the edge of the dock, gazing from the shafts of his wagon sticking upright out of the lake to the snorting old horse up on the hill. Then he scratched his bare, bald crown, sighed, and muttered quite loud enough for Janice to hear:

"Jefers-pelters! I reckon old Josephus hez come out for prohibition, an' no mistake!"

CHAPTER XXIV

ANOTHER GOLD PIECE

Fortunately for Walky Dexter, the freight that he had backed into the lake was not perishable. It could not be greatly injured by water. With the help of neighbors and loiterers and a team of horses, the two sections of the unhung wagon and the crates of agricultural tools were hauled out of the lake.

"There, Walky," said the freight agent, wiping his perspiring brow when the work was completed—for this happened on a warm day in early June. "I hope ter goodness you look where you air backin' to, nex' time."

"Perhaps it will be just as well if he *backs* where he's *looking*," suggested the young engineer, having removed his coat and aided very practically in the straightening out of Walky's affairs. This greatly pleased Janice, who had remained to watch proceedings.

"Come, naow, tell the truth, Walky Dexter," drawled another of the expressman's helpers. "Was ye seein' double when ye did that trick?"

There was a general laugh at this question. Walky Dexter, for once, had no ready reply. Indeed, he had been particularly serious all through the work of re-establishing his wagon on the dock.

"Well, Walky, ye oughter stand treat on this, I vum!" said the freight agent. "Suthin' long, an' cool, would go mighty nice."

"Isuckles is aout o' season—he! he!" chuckled another, frankly doubtful of Walky's generosity.

"Lock up your freight house, Sam, and ye shall have it," declared Walky, with sudden briskness.

"That's the ticket!" exclaimed the Doubting Thomas, with a quick change of tone. "Spoke like a soldier, Walky. I hope Joe's jest tapped a fresh kaig."

Walky halted and scratched his head as he looked from one to another of the expectant group. "Why, ter tell the trewth," he jerked out, "I'm feelin' more like some o' thet thar acid phosphate Massey sells out'n his sody-fountain. Le's go up there."

"Jest as yeou say, Walky. You're the doctor," said the freight agent, though somewhat crestfallen, as were the others, at this suggestion.

"Don't count me in, Walky—though I'm obliged to you," laughed Bowman, who was getting into his coat.

"Jest the same we'll paternize the drug store for this once," said the expressman, stoutly, and with gravity he led the way up the hill.

Later Walky went across into the fields and tried to catch Josephus; but that wise old creature

seemed suddenly to have lost confidence in his master, and refused to be won by his tones, or even the shaking of an empty oat-measure. So Walky was obliged to go home and bring down Josephus' mate to draw the freight to its destination.

Janice parted from the young engineer and walked up Hillside Avenue, intending to take supper at home and afterward return to the Drugg place to spend another night or two with the storekeeper's lonely wife.

She was sitting with Aunt 'Mira on the side porch before supper, while the "short bread" was baking and Uncle Jason and Marty were at the chores, when Walky Dexter drew near with his now all but empty wagon, and stopped in the lane to bring in a new cultivator Uncle Jason had sent for.

"Evenin', Miz' Day," observed Walky, eyeing Aunt 'Mira and her niece askance. "Naow say it!"

"Say what, Mr. Dexter?" asked Mrs. Day puzzled.

"Why, I been gittin' of it all over taown," groaned the expressman. "Sarves me right, I s'pose. I see the reedic'lous side o' most things that happen ter other folks—an' they gotter right ter laff at me."

"Why, what's happened ye?" asked Aunt 'Mira.

"Jefers-pelters!" ejaculated Walky. "Ain't Janice tol' ye?"

"Nothin' about you," Mrs. Day assured him.

"She'd be a good 'un ter tell secrets to, wouldn't she?" the expressman said, with a queer twist of his face. "Ain't ye heard how I dumped m' load—an' Josephus—inter the lake?" and he proceeded to recount the accident with great relish and good humor.

Marty and his father, bringing in the milk, stopped to listen and laugh. At the conclusion of the story, as Marty was pumping a pail of water for the kitchen shelf, Walky said:

"Gimme a dipper o' that, boy. My mouth's so dry I can't speak the trewth. That's it—thanky!"

"Ye oughtn't to be dry, Walky—comin' right past Lem Parraday's *ho*-tel," remarked Mr. Day, with a chuckle.

"Wal, naow! that's what I was goin' ter speak about," said Walky, with sudden vigor. "Janice, here, an' me hev been havin' an argyment right along about that rum sellin' business——"

"About the *drinking*, at any rate, Walky," interposed Janice, gently.

"Wal—ahem!—ya-as. About the drinkin' of it, I s'pose. Yeou said, Janice, that my takin' a snifter now and then was an injury to other critters as well as to m'self."

"And I repeat it," said the girl confidently.

"D'ye know," jerked out Walky, with his head on one side and his eyes screwed up, "that I b'lieve Josephus agrees with ye?"

"Ho! ho!" laughed Marty. "Was you fresh from Lem Parraday's bar when you backed the old feller over the dock?"

"Wal, I'd had a snifter," drawled Walky, his eyes twinkling. "Anyhow, I'm free ter confess that I don't see how I could ha' done sech a fullish thing if I hadn't been drinkin'—it's a fac'! I never did b'lieve what little I took would ever hurt anybody. But poor ol' Josephus! He might ha' been drowned."

"Oh, Walky!" cried Janice. "Do you see that?"

"I see the light at last, Janice," solemnly said the expressman. "I guess I'd better let the stuff alone. I dunno when I'd git a hoss as good as Josephus——"

"No nearer'n the boneyard," put in Marty, *sotto voce*.

"Anyhow, I see my failin' sure enough. Never was so reckless b'fore in all my life," pursued Walky. "Mebbe, if I kep' on drinkin' that stuff they sell daown ter the *ho*-tel, I'd drown both m' hosses—havin' drowned m' own brains—like twin kittens, in ha'f an inch o' alcohol! Haw! haw! haw!"

But despite his laughter Janice saw that Walky Dexter was much in earnest. She said to Nelson that evening, in Hopewell Drugg's store:

"I consider Walky's conversion is the best thing that's happened yet in our campaign for prohibition."

"A greater conquest than *mine*?" laughed the schoolmaster.

"Why, Nelson," Janice said sweetly, "I know that you have only to think carefully on any subject to come to the right conclusion. But poor Walky isn't 'long' on thought, if he is on 'talk,'" and she laughed a little.

It was after Sunday School the following afternoon that Janice went again to Pine Cove to see the Narnay baby. She had conversed with busy Dr. Poole for a few moments and learned his opinion of the case. It was not favorable.

"Not much chance for the child," said the brusque doctor. "Never has been much chance for it. One of those children that have no right to be born."

"Oh, Doctor!" murmured Janice.

"A fact. It has never had enough nutrition and is going to die of plain starvation."

"Can nothing be done to save it? If it had plenty of nourishment *now*?"

"No use. Gone too far," growled the physician, shaking his grizzled head. "If I knew how to save it, I would; that's my job. But the best thing that can happen is its death. Ought to be a hangin' matter for poor folks to have so many children, anyway," he concluded grimly.

"That sounds *awful* to me, Dr. Poole," Janice said.

"There is something awful about Nature. Nature takes care of these things, if we doctors are not allowed to."

"Why! what do you mean?"

"The law of the survival of the fittest is what keeps this old world of ours from being overpopulated by weaklings."

Janice Day was deeply impressed by the doctor's words, and thought over them sadly as she walked down the hill toward Pine Cove. She went by the old path past Mr. Cross Moore's and saw him in his garden, wheeling his wife in her chair.

Mrs. Moore was a frail woman, and because of long years of invalidism, a most exacting person. She had great difficulty in keeping a maid because of her unfortunate temper; and sometimes Mr. Moore was left alone to keep house. Nobody could suit the invalid as successfully as her husband.

"Wheel me to the fence. I want to speak to that girl, Cross," commanded the wife sharply, and the town selectman did so.

"Janice Day!" called Mrs. Moore, "I wish to speak to you."

Janice, smiling, ran across the street and shook hands with the sick woman over the fence palings. But she barely nodded to Mr. Cross Moore.

"I understand you're one o' these folks that's talking so foolish about prohibition, and about shutting up the hotel. Is that so?" demanded Mrs. Moore, her sunken, black eyes snapping.

"I don't think it is foolish, Mrs. Moore," Janice said pleasantly.
"And we don't wish to close the Inn—only its bar."

"Same thing," decided Mrs. Moore snappishly. "Takin' the bread and butter out o' people's mouths! Ye better be in better business—all of ye. And a young girl like you! I'd like to have my stren'th and have the handling of you, Janice Day. I'd teach ye that children better be seen than heard. Where you going to, Cross Moore?" for her husband had turned the chair and was starting away from the fence.

"Well—now—Mother! You've told the girl yer mind, ain't ye?" suggested Mr. Moore. "That's what you wanted to do, wasn't it?"

"I wish she was my young one," said Mrs. Moore, between her teeth, "and I had the use o' my limbs. I'd make her behave herself!"

"I wish she *was* ours, Mother," Mr. Moore said kindly. "I guess we'd be mighty proud of her."

Janice did not hear his words. She had walked away from the fence with flaming cheeks and tears in

her eyes. She was sorry for Mrs. Moore's misfortunes and had always tried to be kind to her; but this seemed such an unprovoked attack.

Janice Day craved approbation as much as any girl living. She appreciated the smiles that met her as she walked the streets of Polktown. The scowls hurt her tender heart, and the harsh words of Mrs. Moore wounded her deeply.

"I suppose that is the way they both feel toward me," she thought, with a sigh.

The wreck of the old fishing dock—a favorite haunt of little Lottie Drugg—was at the foot of the hill, and Janice halted here a moment to look out across it, and over the quiet cove, to the pine-covered point that gave the shallow basin its name.

Lottie had believed that in the pines her echo lived, and Janice could almost hear now the childish wail of the little one as she shouted, "He-a! he-a! he-a!" to the mysterious sprite that dwelt in the pines and mocked her with its voice. Blind and very deaf, Lottie had been wont to run fearlessly out upon the broken dock and "play with her echo," as she called it. A wave of pity swept over Janice's mind and heart. Suppose Lottie should again completely lose the boon of sight. What would become of her as she grew into girlhood and womanhood?

"Poor little dear! I almost fear for Hopewell to come home and tell us what the doctors say," sighed Janice.

Then, even more tender memories associated with the old wharf filled Janice Day's thought. On it, in the afterglow of a certain sunset, Nelson Haley had told her how the college at Millhampton had invited him to join its faculty, and he had asked her if she approved of his course in Polktown.

It had been decided between them that Polktown was a better field for his efforts in his chosen profession for the present—as the college appointment would remain open to him—and Janice was proud to think that meanwhile he had built the Polktown school up, and had succeeded so well. This spot was the scene of their first really serious talk.

She wondered now if her advice had been wise, after all. Suppose Nelson had gone to Millhampton immediately when he was called there? He would have escaped this awful accusation that had been brought against him—that was sure.

His situation now was most unfortunate. Having requested a vacation from his school, he was receiving no pay all these weeks that he was idle. And Janice knew the young man could ill afford this. He had been of inestimable help to Mr. Middler and the other men who had charge of the campaign for prohibition that was moving on so grandly in Polktown. But that work could not be paid for.

Janice believed Nelson was now nearly penniless. His situation troubled her mind almost as much as that of her father in Mexico.

She went on along the shore to the northward, toward the little group of houses at the foot of the bluff, in one of which the Narnays lived.

There were the children grouped together at one end of the rickety front porch. Their mother sat on the stoop, rocking herself to and fro with the sickly baby across her lean knees, her face hopeless, her figure slouched forward and uncouth to look at.

A more miserable looking party Janice Day had never before seen. And the reason for it was quickly explained to her. At the far end of the porch lay Narnay, on his back in the sun, his mouth open, the flies buzzing around his red face, sleeping off—it was evident—the night's debauch.

"Oh, my dear!" moaned Janice, taking Mrs. Narnay's feebly offered hand in both her own, and squeezing it tightly. "I—I wish I might help you."

"Ye can't, Miss. There ain't nothin' can be done for us—'nless the good Lord would take us all," and there was utter hopelessness and desperation in her voice.

"Don't say that! It must be that there are better times in store for you all," said Janice.

"With *that*?" asked Mrs. Narnay, nodding her uncombed head toward the sleeping drunkard. "Not much. Only for baby, here. There's a better time comin' for her—thanks be!"

"Oh!"

"Doctor says she can't live out th' Summer. She's goin' ter miss growin' up ter be what *I* be—an' what Sophie'll properly be. It's a mercy. But it's hard ter part 'ith the little thing. When she is bright, she's that cunnin'!"

As Janice came up the steps to sit down beside the poor woman and play with the baby, that smiled at her so wanly, the sleeping man grunted, rolled over toward them, half opened his eyes, and then rolled back again.

Something rattled on the boards of the porch. Janice looked and saw several small coins that had rolled out of the man's trousers pocket. Mrs. Narnay saw them too.

"Git them, Sophie—quick!" she breathed peremptorily.

"Cheese it, Mom!" gasped Sophie, running on tiptoe toward her sleeping father. "He'll nigh erbout kill us when he wakes up."

"I don't keer," said the woman, grabbing the coins when Sophie had collected them. "He come out o' the woods last night and he had some money an' I hadn't a cent. I sent him to git things from the store and all he brought back—and that was at midnight when they turned him out o' the hotel—was a bag of crackers and a pound of oatmeal. And he's got money! He kin kill me if he wants. I'm goin' ter have some of it—Oh, look! what's this?"

Janice had almost cried out in amazement, too. One of the coins in the woman's toil-creased palm was a gold piece.

"Five dollars! Mebbe he had more," Mrs. Narnay said anxiously. "Mebbe Concannon's paid 'em all some more money, and Jim's startin' in to drink it up."

"Better put that money back, Mom, he'll be mad," said Sophie, evidently much alarmed.

"He won't be ugly when the drink wears off and he ain't got no money to git no more," her mother said. "Jim never is."

"But he'll find out youse got that gold coin. He's foxy," said the shrewd child.

Janice drew forth her purse. "Let me have that five dollar gold piece," she said to Mrs. Narnay. "I'll give you five one dollar bills for it. You won't have to show but one of the bills at a time, that is sure."

"That's a good idea, Miss," said the woman hopefully. "And mebbe I can make him start back for the woods again to-night. Oh, dear me! 'Tis an awful thing! I don't want him 'round—an' yet when he's sober he's the nicest man 'ith young'uns ye ever see. He jest dotes on this poor little thing," and she looked down again into the weazened face of the baby.

"It is too bad," murmured Janice; but she scarcely gave her entire mind to what the woman was saying.

Here was a second gold piece turned up in Polktown. And, as Uncle Jason had said, such coins were not often seen in the hamlet. Janice had more than one reason for securing the gold piece, and she determined to learn, if she could, if this one was from the collection that had been stolen from the school-house weeks before.

CHAPTER XXV

IN DOUBT

The first of all feminine prerogatives is the right to change one's mind. Janice Day changed hers a dozen times about that five dollar gold piece.

It was at last decided, however, by the young girl that she would not immediately take Nelson Haley into her confidence. Why excite hope in his mind only, perhaps, to have it crushed again? Better learn all she could about the gold coin that had rolled out of Jim Narnay's pocket, before telling the young schoolmaster.

In her heart Janice did not believe Narnay was the person who had stolen the coin collection from the

schoolhouse. He might have taken part in such a robbery, at night, and while under the influence of liquor; but he never would have had the courage to do such a thing by daylight and alone.

Narnay might be a companion of the real criminal; but more likely, Janice believed, he was merely an accessory after the fact.

This, of course, if the gold piece should prove to be one of those belonging to the collection which Mr. Haley was accused of stealing. The coin found in Hopewell Drugg's possession, and which had come to him through Joe Bodley, might easily have been put into circulation by the same person as this coin Narnay had dropped. The ten dollar coin had gone into the tavern till, and this five dollar coin would probably have gone there, too, had chance not put it in Janice Day's way.

"First of all, I must discover if there was a coin like this one in that collection," the girl told herself. And early on Monday morning, on her way to the seminary, she drove around through High Street and stopped before the drugstore.

Fortunately Mr. Massey was not busy and she could speak to him without delaying her trip to Middletown.

"What's that?" he asked her, rumpling his topknot in his usual fashion when he was puzzled or disturbed. "List of them coins? I should say I did have 'em. The printed list Mr. Hobart left with 'em wasn't taken by—by—well, by whoever took 'em. Here 'tis."

"You speak," said Janice quickly, "as though you still believed Mr. Haley to be the thief."

"Well!" and again the druggist's hands went through his hair. "I dunno what to think. If he done it, he's actin' mighty funny. There ain't no warrant out for him now. He can leave town—go clean off if he wants—and nobody will, or can, stop him. And ye'd think if he had all that money he *would* do so."

"Oh, Mr. Massey!"

"Well, I'm merely puttin' the case," said the druggist. "That would be sensible. He's got fifteen hundred dollars or more—if he took the coin collection. An' it ain't doin' him a 'tarnal bit of good, as I can see. I told Cross Moore last night that I believe we'd been barkin' up the wrong tree all this time."

"What did he say?" cried Janice eagerly.

"Well—he didn't *say*. Ye know how Cross is—as tight-mouthed as a clam with the lockjaw. But it is certain sure that we committeemen have our own troubles. Mr. Haley was a master good teacher. Ye got to hand it to him on *that*. And this feller the Board sent us ain't got no more idea of handling the school than I have of dancing the Spanish fandango.

"However, that ain't the p'int. What I was speakin' of is this: Nelse Haley is either a blamed fool, or else he never stole that money," and the druggist said it with desperation in his tone. "I hear he's took a job at sixteen a month and board with Elder Concannon—and farmin' for the elder ain't a job that no boy with money *and* right good sense would ever tackle."

"Oh, Mr. Massey! Has he?" for this was news indeed to Janice.

"Yep. That's what he's done. It looks like his runners was scrapin' on bare ground when he'd do that. Course, I need a feller right in this store—behind that sody-fountain. And a smart, nice appearin' one like Nelse Haley would be just the ticket—'nough sight better than Jack Besmith was. But I couldn't hire the schoolteacher, 'cause it would create so much talk. But goin' to work on a farm—and for a slave-driver like the elder—Well!"

Janice understood very well why Nelson had said nothing to her about this. He was very proud indeed and did not want the girl to suspect how poor he had really become. Nelson had said he would stay in Polktown until the mystery of the stolen coin collection was cleared up—or, at least, until it was proved that he had nothing to do with it.

"And the poor fellow has just about come to the end of his rope," thought Janice commiseratingly. "Oh, dear, me! Even if I had plenty of money, he wouldn't let me help him. Nelson wouldn't take money from a girl—not even borrow it!"

However, Janice stuck to her text with Massey and obtained the list of the lost collection to look at. "Dunno what you want it for," said the druggist. "You going sleuthing for the thief, Miss Janice?"

"Maybe," she returned, with a serious smile.

"I reckon that ten dollar gold piece that Joe Bodley took in at the hotel was a false alarm."

"If Joe Bodley had told you how he came by it, it would have helped some, would it not, Mr. Massey?"

"Sure—it might. But he couldn't remember who gave it to him," said the man, wagging his head forlornly.

"I wonder?" said Janice, using one of her uncle's favorite expressions, and so made her way out of the store and into her car again. When she had time that forenoon at the seminary she spread out the sheet on which the description of the coins was printed, and looked for the note relating to the five dollar gold piece in her possession.

It was there. It was not a particularly old or a very rare coin, however. There might be others of the same date and issue in circulation. So, after all, the fact that Narnay had it proved nothing—unless she could discover how he came by it—who had given it to him.

In the afternoon Janice drove home by the Upper Road and ran her car into Elder Concannon's yard. It was the busy season for the elder, for he conducted two big farms and had a number of men working for him besides his regular farm hands.

He was ever ready to talk with Janice Day, however, and he came out of the paddock now, in his old dust coat and broad-brimmed hat, smiling cordially at her.

"Come in and have a pot of tea with me," he said. "Ye know I'm partial to 'old maid's tippie' and Mrs. Grayson will have it ready about now, I s'pose. Stop! I'll tell her to bring it out on the side porch. It's shady there. You look like a cup would comfort you, Janice. What's the matter?"

"I've lots of troubles, Elder Concannon," she said, with a sigh. "But you have your share, too, so I'll keep most of mine to myself," and she hopped out from behind the wheel of the automobile.

They went to the porch and the elder halloaed in at the screen door. His housekeeper soon bustled out with the tray. She remained to take one cup of tea herself. Then, when she had gone about her duties, Janice opened the subject upon which she had come to confer.

"How are those men getting on in your wood lot, Elder?"

"What men—and what lot?" he asked smiling.

"I don't know what lot it is; but I mean Mr. Trimmings and those others."

"Oh! Trimmings and Jim Narnay and that Besmith boy?"

"Yes."

"Why, they are moving on slowly. This is their third job with me since Winter. Once or twice they've kicked over the traces and gone on a spree——"

"That was when you paid them?"

"That was when I *had* to pay them," said the elder. "They work pretty well when they haven't any money."

"Have you paid them lately, Sir?" asked Janice. "I am asking for a very good reason—not out of curiosity."

"I have not. It's a month and more since they saw the color of my money. Hold on! that's not quite true," he added suddenly. "I gave Jim Narnay a dollar Saturday afternoon."

"Oh!"

"He came by here on his way to town. Said he was going down to see his sick baby. She *is* sick, isn't she?"

"Oh, yes," murmured Janice. "Poor little thing!"

"Well, he begged for some money, and I let him have a dollar. He said he didn't want to go down home without a cent in his pocket. So I gave it to him."

"Only a dollar?" repeated the girl thoughtfully.

The old man's face flushed a little, and he said tartly: "I reckon *that* did him no good. By the looks of his face when he went through here Sunday night he'd proberbly spent it all in liquor, I sh'd say."

"Oh, no! I didn't mean to criticize your generosity," Janice said quickly. "I believe you gave him more than was good for him. I know that Mrs. Narnay and the children had little benefit of it."

"That's what I supposed," grunted the elder.

Janice sipped her tea and, looking over the edge of her cup at him, asked:

"Having much trouble, Elder, with your new man?"

"What new man?" snorted the old gentleman, his mouth screwed up very tightly.

"I hear you have the school teacher working for you," she said.

"Well! So I have," he admitted, his face suddenly broadening. "Trust you women folks for finding things out in a hurry. But he ain't teaching school up here—believe me!"

"No?"

"He's helping clean up my hog lot. I dunno but maybe he thinks it isn't any worse than managing Polktown boys," and the elder chuckled.

But Janice was serious and she bent forward and laid a hand upon the old man's arm. "Oh, Elder Concannon! don't be too hard on him, will you?" she begged.

He grinned at her. "I won't break him all up in business. We want to use him down town in these meetings we're going to hold for temperance. He's got a way of talking that convinces folks, Janice—I vow! Remember how he talked for the new schoolhouse? I haven't forgotten that, for he beat me that time.

"Now; we can't afford to hire many of these outside speakers for prohibition—it costs too much to get them here. But I have told Mr. Haley to brush up his ideas, and by and by we'll have him make a speech in Polktown. He can practise on the pigs for a while," added the elder laughing; "and maybe after all they won't be so dif'rent from some of them in town that I want should hear the young man when he does spout."

So Janice was comforted, and ran down town to the Drugg place in a much more cheerful frame of mind. Marty was waiting at the store for the car. There was a special reason for his being so prompt.

"Look-a-here!" he called. "What d'ye know about this?" and he waved something over his head.

"What is it, Marty Day?" Janice cried, looking at the small object in wonder.

"Another letter from Uncle Brockey! Hooray! he ain't dead yet!" shouted the boy.

His cousin seized the missive—fresh from the post-office—and gazed anxiously at the envelope. It was postmarked in one of the border towns many days after the report of Juan Dicampa's death; yet the writing on the envelope was the handwriting of the guerrilla chief.

"Goodness me!" gasped Janice, "what can this mean?"

She broke the seal. As usual the envelope inside was addressed to her by her father. And as she hastily scanned the letter she saw no mention made of Juan Dicampa's death. Indeed, Mr. Broxton Day wrote just as though his own situation, at least, had not changed. And he seemed to have received most of her letters.

What did it mean? If the guerrilla leader had been shot by the Federals, how was it possible for her father's letters to still come along, redirected in Juan Dicampa's hand?

Doubt assailed her mind—many doubts, indeed. Although Mr. Broxton Day seemed still in safety, the mystery surrounding his situation in Mexico grew mightily in Janice's mind.

That evening Hopewell Drugg returned from Boston and reported that Lottie would have to remain under the doctors' care for a time. They, too, were in doubt. Nobody could yet say whether the child would lose her sight or not.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE TIDE TURNS

These doubts, however, did not switch Janice Day's thought off the line of the stolen gold coins.

The five dollar gold piece found in the possession of Jim Narnay still raised in the girl's mind a number of queries. It was a mystery, she believed, that when solved might aid in clearing Nelson Haley of suspicion.

Of course, the coin she carried in her purse might not be one of those lost with the collection. That was impossible to decide at the moment. The case of the ten-dollar coin was different. That was an exceedingly rare one and in all probability nobody but a person ignorant of its value would have put it into circulation.

Nevertheless, how did Jim Narnay get hold of a five dollar gold piece?

Elder Concannon had not given it to him. Narnay had come to town on that Saturday evening with only a dollar of the elder's money in his pocket. Did he bring the coin with him, or did he obtain it after reaching town? And who had given the gold piece to the man, in either case?

Janice would have been glad to take somebody into her confidence in this matter; but who should it be? Not her uncle or her aunt. Neither Hopewell nor 'Rill was to be thought of. And the minister, or Elder Concannon, seemed too much apart from this business to be conferred with. And Nelson—

She did go to Mrs. Beaseley's one evening, hoping that she might find Nelson there, for she had not seen the young man or heard from him since he had gone out of town to work for Elder Concannon. He was not at the widow's, and she found that good but lachrymose woman in tears.

"I'm a poor lone woman—loner and lorn than I've felt since my poor, sainted Charles passed away. Oh, Janice! it seems a pitiful shame that such a one as Mr. Haley should have to go to work on a farm when he can do such a lot of other things—and better things."

"I don't know about there being anything much better than farming—if one has a taste for it," said Janice cheerfully.

"But an educated man—a teacher!" groaned Mrs. Beaseley. "An' I felt like he was my own son—specially since Cross Moore and them others been houndin' him about that money. Cross Moore come to me, an' says he: 'Miz Beaseley, 'tis your duty to let me look through that young man's things when he's out. We'll either clear him or clench it on him.'"

"An' says I: 'Cross Moore, if you put your fut across my threshold I'll sartain sure take the broom to you—an' ye'll find *that's* clenched, a'ready!'"

"Oh, Mrs. Beaseley!" gasped Janice, yet inclined to laugh, too.

"Oh, I'd ha' done it," threatened the widow, the tears still on her cheeks. "Think o' them, houndin' poor Mr. Haley so! Why! if my poor sainted Charles was alive, he'd run Cross Moore clean down to the lake—an' inter it, I expect, like Walky Dexter's boss."

"And if he warn't so proud——"

"*Who* is so proud, Mrs. Beaseley?" asked Janice, who had some difficulty at times in following the good woman's line of talk.

"Why—Mr. Nelson Haley. I did make him leave his books here, and ev'rything he warn't goin' ter use out there at the elder's. And I'm going to keep them two rooms jest as he had 'em, and he shell come back here whenever he likes. Money! What d' I keer whether he pays me money or not? My poor, sainted Charles left me enough to live on as long as a poor, lorn, lone creeter like me wants ter live. Nelson Haley is welcome ter stay here for the rest of his endurin' life, if he wants to, an' never pay me a cent!"

"I don't suppose he could take such great favors as you offer him, Mrs. Beaseley," said Janice, kissing her. "But you are a *dear*! And I know he must appreciate what you have already done for him."

"Wish't 'twas more! Wish't 'twas more!" sobbed Mrs. Beaseley. "But he'll come back ter me nex' Fall. I know! When he goes ter teachin' ag'in, he *must* come here to live."

"Oh, Mrs. Beaseley! do you think they will *let* Nelson teach again in the Polktown school?" cried the girl.

"My mercy me! D'yeou mean to tell me Cross Moore and Massey and them other men air perfect fules?" cried the widow. "Here 'tis 'most time for school to close, and they tell me the graduatin' class ain't nowhere near where they ought to be in their books. The supervisor come over himself, and he says he never seen sech ridiculous work as this Mr. Adams has done here. He—he's a *baby*! And he ought to be teachin' babies—not bein' principal of a graded school sech as Mr. Haley built up here."

There were plenty of other people in Polktown who spoke almost as emphatically against the present state of the school and in Nelson's favor. Three months or so of bad management had told greatly in the discipline and in the work of the pupils.

A few who would graduate from the upper grade were badly prepared, and would have to make up some of their missed studies during the Summer if they were to be accepted as pupils in their proper grade at the Middletown Academy.

Mr. Haley's record up to the very day he had withdrawn from his position of teacher was as good as any teacher in the State. Indeed, several teachers from surrounding districts had met with him in Polktown once a month and had taken work and instructions from him. The State Board of Education and the supervisors had appreciated Nelson's work. Mr. Adams had been the only substitute they could give Polktown at such short notice. He was supposed to have had the same training, as Mr. Haley; but—"different men, different minds."

"Ye'd oughter come over to our graduation exercises, Janice," said Marty, with a grin. "We're goin' to do ourselves proud. Hi tunket! that Adams is so green that I wonder Walky's old Josephus ain't bit him yet, thinkin' he was a wisp of grass."

"Now Marty!" said his mother, admonishingly.

"Fact," said her son. "Adams wants me to speak a piece on that great day. I told him I couldn't—m' lip's cracked!" and Marty giggled. "But Sally Prentiss is going to recite 'A Psalm of Life,' and Peke Ringgold is going to tell us all about 'Bozzar—Bozzar—is'—as though we hadn't been made acquainted with him ever since Hector was a pup. And Hector's a big dog now!"

"You're one smart young feller, now, ain't ye?" said his father, for this information was given out by Marty at the supper table one evening just before the "great day," as he called the last session of school for that year.

"I b'lieve I'm smart enough to know when to go in and keep dry," returned his son, flippantly. "But I've my doubts about Mr. Adams—for a fac'."

"Nev' mind," grunted his father. "There'll be a change before next Fall."

"There'd better be—or I don't go back for my last year at school. Now, you can bet on that!" cried Marty, belligerently. "Hi tunket! I'd jest as soon be taught by an old maid after all as Adams."

Differently expressed, the whole town seemed of a mind regarding the school and the failure of Mr. Adams. The committee got over that ignominious graduation day as well as possible. Mr. Middler did all he could to make it a success, and he made a very nice speech to the pupils and their parents.

The minister could not be held responsible in any particular for the failure of the school. Of all the committee, he had had nothing to do with Nelson Haley's resignation. As Walky Dexter said, Mr. Middler "flocked by himself." He had little to do with the other four members of the school committee.

"And when it comes 'lection," said Walky, dogmatically, "there's a hull lot on us will have jest about as much to do with Cross Moore and Massey and old Crawford and Joe Pellett, as Mr. Middler does. Jefers-pelters! If they don't put nobody else up for committeemen, I'll vote for the taown pump!"

"Ya-as, Walky," said Uncle Jason, silyly. "That'd be likely, I reckon. I hear ye air purty firmly seated on the water wagon."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE TEMPEST

Mr. Cross Moore was not a man who easily or frequently recanted before either public or private opinion. As political "boss" of the town he had often found himself opposed to many of his neighbors' wishes. Neither sharp tongue nor sharp look disturbed him—apparently, at least.

Besides, Mr. Moore loved a fight "for the fight's sake," as the expression is. He had backed Lem Parraday in applying for a liquor license, to benefit his own pocket. It had to be a good reason indeed, to change Mr. Moore's attitude on the liquor selling question.

The hotel barroom held great attractions for many of Cross Moore's supporters, although Mr. Moore himself seldom stepped into that part of the hotel. The politician did not trust Lem Parraday to represent him, for Lem was "no wiser than the law allows," to quote his neighbors. But Joe Bodley, the young barkeeper, imported from the city, was just the sort of fellow Cross Moore could use.

And about this time Joe Bodley was in a position where his fingers "itched for the feel of money." Not other people's money, but his own. He had scraped together all he had saved, and drawn ahead on his wages, to make up the hundred dollars paid Hopewell Drugg for the violin, and——

"Seems ter me that old fiddle is what they call a sticker, ain't it, 'stead of a Straddlevarious?" chuckled Walky Dexter, referring to the instrument hanging on the wall behind Joe's head.

"Oh, I'll get my money back on it," Bodley replied, with studied carelessness. "Maybe I'll raffle it off."

"Not here in Polktown ye won't," said the expressman. "Yeou might as well try ter raffle off a white elephant."

"Pshaw! of course not. But a fine fiddle like that—a real Cremona—will bring a pretty penny in the city. There, Walky, roll that barrel right into this corner behind the bar. I'll have to put a spigot in it soon. Might's well do it now. 'Tis the real Simon-pure article, Walky. Have a snifter?"

"On the haouse?" queried Walky, briskly.

"Sure. It's a tin roof," laughed Bodley.

"Much obleeged ter ye," said Walky. "As yer so pressin'—don't mind if I do. A glass of sars'p'rilla'll do me."

"What's the matter with you lately, Walky?" demanded the barkeeper, pouring the non-alcoholic drink with no very good grace. "Lost your taste for a man's drink?"

"Sort o'," replied Walky, calmly. "Here's your health, Joe. I thought you had that fiddle sold before you went to Hopewell arter it?"

"To tell ye the truth, Walky——"

"Don't do it if it hurts ye, Joe. Haw! haw!"

The barkeeper made a wry face and continued:

"That feller I got it for, only put up a part of the price. I thought he was a square sport; but he ain't. When he got a squint at the old fiddle while Hopewell was down here playing for the dance, he was just crazy to buy it. Any old price, he said! After I got it," proceeded Joe, ruefully, "he tries to tell me it ain't worth even what I paid for it."

"Wal—'tain't, is it?" said Walky, bluntly.

"If it's worth a hundred it's worth a hundred and fifty," said the barkeeper doggedly.

"Ya-as—*if*," murmured the expressman.

"However, nobody's going to get it for any less—believe me! Least of all that Fontaine. I hate these Kanucks, anyway. I know *him*. He's trying to jew me down," said Joe, angrily.

"Wal, you take it to the city," advised Walky. "You kin make yer spec on it there, ye say."

There was a storm cloud drifting across Old Ti as the expressman climbed to his wagon seat and

drove away from the Inn. It had been a very hot day and was now late afternoon—just the hour for a summer tempest.

The tiny waves lapped the loose shingle along the lake shore. There was the hot smell of over-cured grass on the uplands. The flower beds along the hilly street which Janice Day mounted after a visit to the Narnays, were quite scorched now.

This street brought Janice out by the Lake View Inn. She, too, saw the threatening cloud and hastened her steps. Sharp lightnings flickered along its lower edge, lacing it with pale blue and saffron. The mutter of the thunder in the distance was like a heavy cannonade.

"Maybe it sounded so years and years ago when the British and French fought over there," Janice thought. "How these hills must have echoed to the roll of the guns! And when Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys discharged the guns in a salvo of thanksgiving over Old Ti's capture—Oh! is that you, Nelson? How you startled me."

For the young schoolmaster had come up the hill behind her at a breathless gait. "We've got to hurry," he said. "That's going to be what Marty would call a 'humdinger' of a storm, Janice."

"Dear me! I didn't know you were in town," she said happily.

"We got the last of the hay in this morning," said the bronzed young fellow, smiling. "I helped mow away and the elder was kind enough to say that I had done well and could have the rest of the day to myself. I fancy the shrewd old fellow knew it was about to rain," and he laughed.

"And how came you down this way?" Janice asked.

"Followed your trail," laughed Nelson. "I went in to Mrs. Beaseley's of course. And then at Drugg's I learned you had gone down to see Jim Narnay's folks. But I didn't catch you there. Goodness, Janice, but they are a miserable lot! I shouldn't think you could bear to go there."

"Oh, Nelson, the poor little baby—it is so sick and it cheers Mrs. Narnay up a little if I call on her. Besides, Sophie and the little boys are just as cunning as they can be. I can't help sympathizing with them."

"Do save some of your sympathy for other folks, Janice," said Nelson, rather ruefully. "You ought to have seen the blisters I had on my hands the first week or two I was a farmer."

"Oh, Nelson! That's too bad," she cried, with solicitude.

"Too late!" he returned, laughing. "They are callouses now—marks of honest toil. Whew! see that dust-cloud!"

The wind had ruffled the lake in a wide strip, right across to the eastern shore. Whitecaps were dancing upon the surface and the waves ran a long way up the beach. The wind, rushing ahead of the rain-cloud, caught up the dust in the streets and advanced across the town.

Janice hid her face against the sleeve of her light frock. Nelson led her by the hand as the choking cloud passed over. Then the rain, in fitful gusts at first, pelted them so sharply that the girl cried out.

"Oh, Nelson, it's like hail!" she gasped.

A vivid flash of lightning cleaved the cloud; the thunder-peal drowned the schoolmaster's reply. But Janice felt herself fairly caught up in his arms and he mounted some steps quickly. A voice shouted:

"Bring her right this way, school teacher! Right in here!"

It was Lem Parraday's voice. They had mounted the side porch of the Inn and when Janice opened her eyes she was in the barroom. The proprietor of the Inn slammed to the door against the thunderous rush of the breaking storm. The rain dashed in torrents against the house. The blue flashes of electricity streaked the windows constantly, while the roll and roar of the thunder almost deafened those in the darkened barroom.

Joe Bodley was behind the bar briskly serving customers. He nodded familiarly to Janice, and said:

"Bad storm, Miss. Glad to see you. You ain't entirely a stranger here, eh?"

"Shut up, Joe!" commanded Mr. Parraday, as Janice flushed and the schoolmaster took a threatening step toward the bar.

"Oh, all right, Boss," giggled the barkeeper. "What's yours, Mister?" he asked Nelson Haley.

A remarkable clap of thunder drowned Nelson's reply. Perhaps it was as well. And as the heavy roll of the report died away, they heard a series of shrieks somewhere in the upper part of the house.

"What in good gracious is the matter now?" gasped Lem Parraday, hastening out of the barroom.

Again a blinding flash of light lit up the room for an instant. It played upon the fat features of Joe Bodley—pallidly upon the faces of his customers. Some of them had shrunk away from the bar; some were ashamed to be seen there by Janice and the schoolmaster.

The thunder discharged another rolling report, shaking the house in its wrath. The rain beat down in torrents. Janice and Nelson could not leave the place while the storm was at its height, and for the moment, neither thought of going into the dining room.

Again and again the lightning flashed and the thunder broke above the tavern. It was almost as though the fury of the tempest was centered at the Lake View Inn. Janice, frankly clinging to Nelson's hand, cowered when the tempest rose to these extreme heights.

Echoing another peal of thunder once again a scream from within the house startled the girl. "Oh, Nelson! what's that?"

"Gee! I believe Marm Parraday's on the rampage," exclaimed Joe Bodley, with a silly smile on his face.

The door from the hall flew open. In the dusky opening the woman's lean and masculine form looked wondrous tall; her hollow eyes burned with unnatural fire; her thin and trembling lips writhed pitifully.

With her coming another awful flash and crash illumined the room and shook the roof tree of the Inn.

"It's come! it's come!" she said, advancing into the room. Her face shone in the pallid, flickering light of the intermittent flashes, and the loafers at the bar shrank away from her advance.

"I told ye how 'twould be, Lem Parraday!" cried the tavern keeper's wife. "This is the end! This is the end!"

Another stroke of thunder rocked the house. Marm Parraday fell on her knees in the sawdust and raised her clasped hands wildly. The act loosened her stringy gray hair and it fell down upon her shoulders. A wilder looking creature Janice Day had never imagined.

"Almighty Father!" burst from the quivering lips of the poor woman.
"Almighty Father, help us!"

"She's prayin'!" gasped a trembling voice back in the shrinking crowd.

"Help us and save us!" groaned the woman, her face and clasped hands uplifted. "We hear Thy awful voice. We see the flash of Thy anger. Ah!"

The thunder rolled again—ominously, suddenly, while the casements rattled from its vibrations.

"*Forgive Lem and these other men for what they air doin', O Lord!*" was the next phrase the startled spectators heard. "*They don't deserve Thy forgiveness—but overlook 'em!*"

The Voice in the heavens answered again and drowned her supplication. One man screamed—a shrill, high neigh like that of a hurt horse. Janice caught a momentary glimpse of the pallid face of Joe Bodley shrinking below the edge of the counter. There was no leer upon his fat face now; it expressed nothing but terror.

Lem Parraday entered hastily. He caught his wife by her thin shoulders just as she pitched forward. "Now, now, Marm! This ain't no way to act," he said, soothingly.

The thunder muttered in the distance. Suddenly the flickering lightning seemed less threatening. As quickly as it had burst, the tempest passed away.

"My jimminy! She's fainted," Lem Parraday murmured, lifting the woman in his strong arms.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE ENEMY RETREATS

As the Summer advanced visitors flocked to Polktown. From the larger and better known tourist resorts on the New York side of the lake, small parties had ventured into Polktown during the two previous seasons. Now news of the out-of-the-way, old-fashioned hamlet had spread; and by the end of July the Lake View Inn was comfortably filled, and most people who were willing to take "city folks" to board had all the visitors they could take care of.

"But I dunno's we're goin' to make much by havin' sech a crowd," Lem Parraday complained. "With Marm sick nothin' seems ter go right. Sech waste in the kitchen I never did see! An' if I say a word, or look skew-jawed at them women, they threaten ter up an' leave me in a bunch."

For Marm Parraday, by Dr. Poole's orders, had been taken out into the country to her sister's, and told to stay there till cool weather came.

"If you are bound to run a rum-hole, Lem," said the plain-spoken doctor, "don't expect a woman in her condition to help you run it."

Lem thought it hard—and he looked for sympathy among his neighbors. He got what he was looking for, but of rather doubtful quality.

"I certainly do wish Marm'd git well—or sumpin'," he said one day in Walky Dexter's hearing. "I don't see how a man's expected to run a *ho*-tel without a woman to help him. It beats me!"

"It'll be *sumpin'* that happens ter ye, I reckon," observed Walky, drily. "Sure as yeou air a fut high, Lem. In the Fall. Beware the Ides o' September, as the feller says. Only mebbe I ain't got jest the month right. Haw! haw! haw!"

Town Meeting Day was in September. The call had already been issued, and included in it was the amendment calling for no license in Polktown—the new ordinance, if passed, to take immediate effect.

The campaign for prohibition was continued despite the influx of Summer visitors. Indeed, because of them the battle against liquor selling grew hotter. Not so many "city folks" as the hotel-keeper and his friends expected, desired to see a bar in the old-fashioned community. Especially after the first pay day of the gang working on the branch of the V. C. Road. When the night was made hideous and the main street of Polktown dangerous for quiet people, by drink-inflamed fellows from the railroad construction camp, a strong protest was addressed to the Town Selectmen.

There was a possibility of several well-to-do men building on the heights above the town, another season. Uncle Jason had a chance to sell his sheep-lot at such a price that his cupidity was fully aroused. But the buyer did not care to close the bargain if the town went "wet" in the Fall. Naturally Mr. Day's interest in prohibition increased mightily.

The visiting young people would have liked to hold dances in Lem Parraday's big room at the Inn. But gently bred girls did not care to go where liquor was sold; so the dancing parties of the better class were held in the Odd Fellows Hall.

The recurrent temperance meetings which had at first been held in the Town House had to seek other quarters early in the campaign. Mr. Cross Moore "lifted his finger" and the councilmen voted to allow the Town Hall to be used for no such purpose.

However, warm weather having come, in a week the Campaign Committee obtained a big tent, set it up on the old circus grounds behind Major Price's place, somewhat curtailing the boys' baseball field, and the temperance meetings were held not only once a week, but thrice weekly.

The tent meetings became vastly popular. When Nelson Haley, urged by the elder, made his first speech in the campaign, Polktown awoke as never before to the fact that their schoolmaster had a gift of oratory not previously suspected.

And, perhaps as much as anything, that speech raised public opinion to a height which could be no longer ignored by the School Committee. There was an unveiled demand in the Polktown column of the Middletown Courier that Nelson Haley should be appointed teacher of the graded school for the ensuing year.

Even Mr. Cross Moore saw that the time had come for him and his comrades on the committee to back down completely from their position. It was the only thing that would save them from being voted out of office at the coming election—and perhaps that would happen anyway!

Before the Summer was over the request, signed by the five committeemen, came to Nelson that he take up his duties from which he had asked to be relieved in the Spring.

"It's a victory!" cried Janice, happily. "Oh, Nelson! I'm *so* glad."

But there was an exceedingly bitter taste on Nelson Haley's lips. He shook his head and could not smile. The accusation against his character still stood. He had been accused of stealing the collection of coins, and he had never been able to disprove the charge.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE TRUTH AT LAST

Daddy had not written for nearly two months. At least, no letter from him had reached Janice. The Day family in Polktown had not gone into mourning in the Spring and Aunt 'Mira gloried in a most astonishing plum-colored silk with "r'yal purple" trimmings. Nevertheless, Janice had now all but given up hope for her father's life.

The uncertainty connected with his fate was very hard for the young girl to bear. She had the thought with her all the time—a picture in her mind of a man, blindfolded, his wrists fastened behind him, standing with his back against a sunburnt wall and a file of ragged, barefooted soldiers in front of him.

In desperation she had written a letter addressed personally to "General Juan Dicampa," sending it to the same place to which she addressed her father's letters. She did this almost in fear of the consequences. Who would read her letter now that the guerrilla chief was dead?

In the appeal Janice pleaded for her father's life and for news of him. Days passed and there was no reply. But the letter, with her name and address on the outside, was not returned to her.

Broxton Day's fate was discussed no more before Janice at home. And other people who knew of her trouble, save Nelson Haley, soon forgot it. For the girl did not "wear her heart on her sleeve."

As for the Druggs—Hopewell and his wife—they were so worried about little Lottie's case that they had thought for nobody's troubles but their own.

The doctors would not let the child return to Polktown at present. They kept her all through the Summer, watching her case. And Lottie, at a Summer school in Boston, was enjoying herself hugely. She was not yet at an age to worry much about the future.

These months of Lottie's absence were weary ones indeed for her father. Sometimes he wandered about the store quite distraught. 'Rill was worried about him. He missed the solace of his violin and refused to purchase a cheap instrument to take the place of the one he had been obliged to sacrifice.

"No, Miss Janice," he told the girl once, when she spoke of this. "I could not play another instrument. I am no musician. I was never trained. It was just a natural talent that I developed, because I found in my heart a love for the old violin my father had played so many years.

"Through its vibrant strings I expressed deeper feelings than I could ever express in any other way—or upon any other instrument. My lips would never have dared tell my love for 'Rill," and he smiled in his gentle way, "half so boldly as my violin told it! Ask her. She will tell you that my violin courted her—not Hopewell Drugg."

"Oh, it is too, too bad!" cried Janice. "And that fellow down at Lem Parraday's hotel has never succeeded in disposing of the fiddle. I wish he would sell it back to you."

"I could not buy it at the price he gave me for it," said Hopewell, sadly shaking his head. "No use to think of it."

But Janice thought of it—and thought of it often. If daddy were only—only *successful* again! That is the way she put it in her mind. If he could only send her some more money! There was many a thing

Janice Day needed, or wanted. But she thought that she would deny herself much for the sake of recovering the violin for Hopewell Drugg.

Meanwhile nothing further had come to light regarding the missing collection of gold coins. No third coin had been put into circulation—in Polktown, at least. The four school committeemen who were responsible for the collection had long since paid the owner out of their own pockets rather than be put to further expense in law.

Jim Narnay's baby was growing weaker and weaker. The little thing had been upon the verge of passing on so many times, that her parents had grown skeptical of the doctor's prophecy—that she could not live out the Summer.

It seemed to Janice, however, that the little body was frailer, the little face wanner, the tiny smile more pitiful, each time she went to Pine Cove to see the baby. Nelson, who had come back to town and again taken up his abode with the overjoyed Mrs. Beaseley while he prepared for the opening of the school, urged Janice not to go so often to the Narnay cottage.

"You've enough on your heart and mind, dear girl," he said to her. "Why burden yourself with other people's troubles?"

"Why—do you know, Nelson," she told him, thoughtfully, "that is one of the things I have learned of late."

"What is one of the things you have learned?"

"I have been learning, Nelson, that the more we share other people's burdens the less weight our own assume. It's wonderful! When I am thinking of the poor little Narnay baby, I am not thinking of daddy away down there in Mexico. And when I am worrying about little Lottie Drugg—or even about Hopewell's lost violin—I am not thinking about those awful gold coins and *who* could have taken them —"

"Here! here, young woman!" exclaimed the schoolmaster, stopping short, and shaking his head at her. "*That's* certainly not your personal trouble."

"Oh, but, Nelson," she said shyly. "Whatever troubles *you* must trouble *me* quite as though it were my really, truly own!"

What Nelson might have said, right there on Hillside Avenue, too—even what he might have *done!*—will never be known; for here Marty suddenly appeared running wildly and shrieking at the top of his lungs for them to stop.

"Hi! hi! what's the matter wi' you folks?" he yelled, his face red, and his breath fairly gasping in his throat. "I been yellin' after ye all down High Street. Look what I found!"

"Looks like a newspaper, Marty," said Nelson, calmly.

"*But what is in it?*" cried Janice, turning pale.

Nelson seized the paper and held it open. He read rapidly:

"Great battle fought southwest of Chihuahua. Federal forces thoroughly whipped. Rebels led by the redoubtable General Juan Dicampa, whose reported death last Spring was only a ruse to blind the eyes of the Federals to his movements. At the head of a large force of regular troops and Yaqui Indians, Dicampa fell upon the headquarters of General Cesta, capturing or killing his entire command, and becoming possessed of quantities of munition and a great store of supplies. A telling blow that may bring about the secure establishment of a *de facto* government in our ensanguined sister Republic."

"Goodness me, Janice! what do you think of that? There is a lot more of it, too."

"Then—if Juan Dicampa is not dead——" began the girl.

"Sure, Uncle Brocky ain't dead!" finished Marty.

"At least, dear girl," said Nelson, sympathetically, "there is every reason to believe that what Marty says is true."

"Oh, I can hope! I can hope again!" she murmured. "And, perhaps—who knows, Nelson?—perhaps my own great trouble is going to melt away and be no more, just like last Winter's snow! Perhaps daddy is

safe, and will come home."

"I wish my difficulties promised as quick a solution, Janice," said Nelson, shaking his head. "But I am glad for you, my dear."

Marty ran ahead with the paper to spread the good news of Uncle Brocky's probable safety. Janice and Nelson were not destined to be left to their own devices for long, however. As they slowly mounted the pleasant and shady street there was the rattle of wheels behind them, and a masterful voice said:

"Whoa! That you, Schoolmaster? How-do, Janice."

"Dr. Poole!" they cried, as one.

"Bad news for you, Janice," said the red-faced doctor, in his brusque way. "Know you're interested in that Narnay youngster. I've just come from there. I've got to go half way to Bristol to set a feller's leg. They telephoned me. Before I could get there and back that Narnay baby is going to be out of the reach of all my pills and powders."

He did not say it harshly; it was Dr. Poole's way to be brusque.

"Oh, Doctor! Will it surely die?"

"Not two hours to live—positively," said the physician, gathering up the reins. "I'm sorry for Jim. If the fellow is a drunkard, he is mighty tender-hearted when it comes to kids—and he's sober," he added, under his breath.

"Is he there?" asked Janice, quickly.

"No. Hasn't been in town for two weeks. Up in the woods somewhere. It will break him all up in business, I expect. I told you, for I didn't know but you'd want to go down and see the woman."

"Thank you, Doctor," Janice said, as the chaise rattled away. But she did not turn back down the hill. Instead, she quickened her steps in the opposite direction.

"Well! I am glad for once you are not going to wear yourself out with other people's troubles," said Nelson, looking sideways at her.

"Poor Mr. Narnay," said the girl. "I am going after him. He must see the baby before she dies."

"Janice!"

"Yes. The car is all ready, I know. It will take only half an hour to run up there where those men are at work. I took Elder Concannon over there once. The road isn't bad at all at this time of year."

"Do you mean you are going clear over the mountain after that drunken Narnay?" demanded Nelson, with some heat.

"I am going after the baby's father, Nelson," she replied softly. "You may go, too, if you are real good," and she smiled up at him so roguishly that his frown was dissipated and he had to smile in return.

They reached the Day house shortly and Janice hurried in for her dust-coat and goggles. Marty offered his own cap and "blindings," as he called them, to the schoolmaster.

"You'll sure need 'em, Mr. Haley, if you go with Janice, and she's drivin'. I b'lieve she said she was in a hurry," and he grinned as he opened the garage door and ran the Kremlin out upon the gravel.

The automobile moved out of the yard and took the steep hill easily. Once on the Upper Road, Janice urged the car on and they passed Elder Concannon's in a cloud of dust.

The camp where the baby's father was at work was easily found. Jim Narnay seemed to know what the matter was, for he flung down the axe he was using and was first of the three at the side of the car when Janice stopped. Mr. Trimmings sauntered up, too, but the sullen Jack Besmith seemed to shrink from approaching the visitors.

"I will get you there if possible in time to see the baby once more, Mr. Narnay, if you will come right along as you are," said Janice, commiseratingly, after explaining briefly their errand. "Dr. Poole told me the time was short."

"Go ahead, Jim," said Trimmings, giving the man's hand a grip. "Miss

Day, you sartain sure are a good neighbor."

Janice turned the car as soon as Narnay was in the tonneau. The man sat clinging with one hand to the rail and with the other over his face most of the way to town.

Speed had to be reduced when they turned into High Street; but Constable Poley Cantor turned his back on them as they swung around the corner into the street leading directly down to Pine Cove.

Janice left Nelson in the car at the door, and ran into the cottage with the anxious father. Mrs. Narnay sat with the child on her lap, rocking herself slowly to and fro, and weeping. The children—even Sophie—made a scared little group in the corner.

The woman looked up and saw her husband. "Oh, Jim!" she said. "Ain't it too bad? She—she didn't know you was comin'. She—she's jest died."

Janice was crying frankly when she came out of the house a few minutes afterward. Nelson, seeing her tears, sprang out of the car and hastened up the ragged walk to meet her.

"Janice!" he exclaimed and put his arm around her shoulders, stooping a little to see into her face. "Don't cry, child! Is—is it dead?"

Janice nodded. Jim Narnay came to the door. His bloated, bearded face was working with emotion. He saw the tenderness with which Nelson Haley led the girl to the car.

The heavy tread of the man sounded behind the young folk as Nelson helped Janice into the car, preparing himself to drive her home.

"I say—I say, Miss Janice," stammered Narnay.

She wiped her eyes and turned quickly, in sympathy, to the broken man.

"I will surely see Mr. Middler, Mr. Narnay. And tell your wife there will be a few flowers sent down—and some other things. I—I know you will remain and be—be helpful to her, Mr. Narnay?"

"Yes, I will, Miss," said Narnay. His bleared eyes gazed first on the young girl and then on Haley. "I beg your pardon, Miss," he added.

"What is it, Mr. Narnay?" asked Janice.

"Mebbe I'd better tell it ter schoolmaster," said the man, his lips working. He drew the back of his hand across them to hide their quivering. "I know something mebbe Mr. Haley would like to hear."

"What is it, Narnay?" asked Nelson, kindly.

"I—I—I—I hear folks says ye stole them gold coins out of the schoolhouse."

Nelson looked startled, but Janice almost sprang out of her seat. "Oh, Jim Narnay!" she cried, "can you clear Mr. Haley? Do you know who did it?"

"I see you—you and schoolmaster air fond of each other," said the man. "I never before went back on a pal; but you've been mighty good to me an' mine, Miss Janice, and—and I'm goin' to tell."

Nelson could not speak. Janice, however, wanted to cry aloud in her delight. "I knew you could explain it all, Mr. Narnay, but I didn't know that you *would*," she said.

"You knowed I could tell it?" demanded the startled Narnay.

"Ever since that five dollar gold piece rolled out of your pocket—yes," she said, and no more to Narnay's amazement than to Nelson's, for she had told the schoolmaster nothing about that incident.

"My mercy, Miss! Did *you* git that five dollar coin?" demanded Narnay.

"Yes. Right here on your porch. The Sunday you were at home."

"And I thought I'd lost it. I didn't take the whiskey back to the boys, and Jack's been sayin' all the time I double-crossed him. Says I must ha' spent the money for booze and drunk it meself. And mebbe I would of—if I hadn't lost the five," admitted Narnay, wagging his head.

"But I don't understand," broke in Nelson Haley.

Janice touched his arm warningly. "But you didn't lose the ten dollar coin he gave you before that to

change at Lem Parraday's, Mr. Narnay?" she said slyly.

"I guess ye do know about it," said the man, eyeing Janice curiously. "I can't tell you much, I guess. Only, you air wrong about me passin' the first coin. Jack did that himself—and brought back to camp a two gallon jug of liquor."

"*Jack Besmith!*" gasped the school teacher, the light dawning in his mind.

"Yes," said Narnay. "Me and Trimmins has knowed it for a long time. We wormed it out o' Jack when he was drunk. But he was putting up for the stuff right along, so we didn't tell. He's got most of the money hid away somewhere—we don't know where.

"He told us he saw the stuff up at Massey's the night before he stole it. He went there to try to get his job back, and seen Massey puttin' the trays of coin into his safe. He knowed they was goin' down to the schoolhouse in the mornin'.

"He got drunk," pursued Narnay. "He didn't go home all night. Early in the mornin' he woke up in a shed, and went back to town. It was so early that little Benny Thread (that's Jack's brother-in-law) was just goin' into the basement door of the schoolhouse to 'tend to his fire.

"Jack says he slipped in behind him and hid upstairs in a clothes closet. He thought he'd maybe break open the teacher's desk and see if there wasn't some money in it, if he didn't git a chance at them coins. But that was too easy. The committee left the coins right out open in the committee room, and Jack grabbed up the trays, took 'em to the clothes room, and emptied them into the linin' of his coat, and into his pants' pockets. They was a load!

"So, after the teacher come into the buildin' and went out again, Jack put back the trays, slipped downstairs, dodged Benny and the four others, and went out at the basement door. Benny's always swore that door was locked; but it's only a spring lock and easy enough opened from inside.

"That—that's all, I guess," added Narnay, in a shamefaced way. "Jack backed that load of gold coin clean out to our camp. And he hid 'em all b'fore we ever suspected he had money. We don't know now where his *cache* is——"

"Oh, Nelson!" burst out Janice, seizing both the schoolmaster's hands.
"The truth at last!"

"Ye—ye've been so good to us, Miss Janice," blubbered Narnay, "I couldn't bear to see the young man in trouble no longer—and you thinkin' as much as you do of him——"

"If I have done anything at all for you or yours, Mr. Narnay," sobbed Janice, "you have more than repaid me—over and over again you have repaid me! Do stay here with your wife and the children. I am going to send Mr. Middler right down. Let's drive on, Nelson."

The teacher started the car. "And to think," he said softly when the Kremlin had climbed the hill and struck smoother going, "that I have been opposed to your doing anything for these Narnays all the time, Janice. Yet because *you* were kind, *I* am saved! It—it is wonderful!"

"Oh, no, Nelson. It is only what might have been expected," said Janice, softly.

CHAPTER XXX

MARM PARRADAY DOES HER DUTY

It was on the day following the burial of the Narnay baby that the mystery surrounding Mr. Broxton Day's situation in Mexico was quite cleared up, and much to his daughter's satisfaction. Quite a packet of letters arrived for Janice—several delayed epistles, indeed, coming in a single wrapper.

With them was a letter in the exact script of Juan Dicampa—that mysterious brigand chief who was Mr. Day's friend—and couched in much the same flowery phraseology as the former note Janice had received. It read:

"Señorita:—

"I fain would beg thy pardon—and that most humbly—for my seeming slight of thy appeal, which reached my headquarters when your humble servant was busily engaged elsewhere. Thy father, the Senior B. Day, is safe. He has never for a moment been in danger. The embargo is now lifted and he may write to thee, sweet señorita, as he may please. The enemy has been driven from this fair section of my troubled land, and the smile of peace rests upon us as it rests upon you, dear señorita. Adios.

"Faithfully thine,

"JUAN DICAMPA."

"Such a strangely boyish letter to come from a bloodthirsty bandit—for such they say he is. And he is father's friend," sighed Janice, showing the letter to Nelson Saley. "Oh, dear! I wish daddy would leave that hateful old mine and come home."

Nevertheless, daddy's return—or his abandonment of the mine—did not appear imminent. Good news indeed was in Mr. Broxton Day's most recent letters. The way to the border for ore trains was again open. For six weeks he had had a large force of peons at work in the mine and a great amount of ore had been shipped.

There was in the letter a certificate of deposit for several hundred dollars, and the promise of more in the near future.

"You must be pretty short of feminine furbelows by this time. Be good to yourself, Janice," wrote Mr. Day.

But his daughter, though possessing her share of feminine vanity in dress, saw first another use for a part of this unexpected windfall. She said nothing to a soul but Walky Dexter, however. It was to be a secret between them.

There was so much going on in Polktown just then that Walky could keep a secret, as he confessed himself, "without half trying."

"Nelson Haley openin' aour school and takin' up the good work ag'in where he laid it daown, is suthin' that oughter be noted a-plenty," declared Mr. Dexter. "And I will say for 'em, that committee reinstated him before anybody heard anythin' about Jack Besmith havin' stole the gold coins.

"Sure enough!" went on Walky, "that's another thing that kin honestly be laid to Lem Parraday's openin' that bar at the Inn. That's where Jack got the liquor that twisted his brain, that led him astray, that made him a thief— Jefers-pelters! sounds jest like 'The Haouse That Jack Built,' don't it? But poor Jack Besmith has sartainly built him a purty poor haouse. And there's steel bars at the winders of it— poor feller!"

However, it was Nelson Haley himself who used the story of Jack Besmith most tellingly, and for the cause of temperance. As the young fellow had owned to the crime when taxed with it, and had returned most of the coins of the collection, he was recommended to the mercy of the court. But all of Polktown knew of the lad's shame.

Therefore, Nelson Haley felt free to take the incident—and nobody had been more vitally interested in it than himself—for the text of a speech that he made in the big tent only a week or so before Town Meeting Day.

Nelson stood up before the audience and told the story simply—told of the robbery and of how he had felt when he was accused of it, sketching his own agony and shame while for weeks and months he had not been under suspicion. "I did not believe the bad influence of liquor selling could touch *me*, because I had nothing to do with *it*," he said. "But I have seen the folly of that opinion."

He pointed out, too, the present remorse and punishment of young Jack Besmith. Then he told them frankly that the blame for all—for Jack's misdeed, his own suffering, and the criminal's final situation—lay upon the consciences of the men who had made liquor selling in Polktown possible.

It was an arraignment that stung. Those deeply interested in the cause of prohibition cheered Nelson to the echo. But one man who sat well back in the audience, his hat pulled over his eyes, and apparently an uninterested listener, slipped out after Nelson's talk and walked and fought his conscience the greater part of that night.

Somehow the school teacher's talk—or was it Janice Day's scorn?—had touched Mr. Cross Moore in a

vulnerable part.

Had the Summer visitors to Polktown been voters, there would have been little doubt of the Town Meeting voting the hamlet "dry." But there seemed to be a large number of men determined not to have their liberties, so-called, interfered with.

Lem Parraday's bar had become a noisy place. Some fights had occurred in the horse sheds, too. And on the nights the railroad construction gang came over to spend their pay, the village had to have extra police protection.

Frank Bowman was doing his best with his men; but they were a rough set and he had hard work to control them. The engineer was a never-failing help in the temperance meetings, and nobody was more joyful over the clearing up of Nelson Haley's affairs than he.

"You have done some big things these past few months, Janice Day," he said with emphasis.

"Nonsense, Frank! No more than other people," she declared.

"Well, I guess you have," he proclaimed, with twinkling eyes, "Just think! You've brought out the truth about that lost coin collection; you've saved Hopewell Drugg from becoming a regular reprobate—at least, so says his mother-in-law; you've converted Walky Dexter from his habit of taking a 'snifter'—"

"Oh, no!" laughed Janice. "Josephus converted Walky."

Save at times when he had to deliver freight or express to the hotel, the village expressman had very little business to take him near Lem Parraday's bar nowadays. However, because of that secret between Janice and himself, Walky approached the Inn one evening with the avowed purpose of speaking to Joe Bodley.

Marm Parraday had returned home that very day—and she had returned a different woman from what she was when she went away. The Inn was already being conducted on a Winter basis, for most of the Summer boarders had flitted. There were few patrons now save those who hung around the bar.

Walky, entering by the front door instead of the side entrance, came upon Lem and his wife standing in the hall. Marm Parraday still had her bonnet on. She was grimly in earnest as she talked to Lem—so much in earnest, indeed, that she never noticed the expressman's greeting.

"That's what I've come home for, Lem Parraday—and ye might's well know it. I'm a-goin' ter do my duty—what I knowed I should have done in the fust place. You an' me have worked hard here, I reckon. But you ain't worked a mite harder nor me; and you ain't made the Inn what it is no more than I have."

"Not so much, Marm—not so much," admitted her husband evidently anxious to placate her, for Marm Parraday was her old forceful self again.

"I'd never oughter let rum sellin' be begun here; an' now I'm a-goin' ter end it!"

"My mercy, Marm! 'Cordin' ter the way folks talk, it's goin' to be ended, anyway, when they vote on Town Meeting Day," said Lem, nervously. "I ain't dared renew my stock for fear the 'dry's' might git it ___"

"Lem Parraday—ye poor, miser'ble worm!" exclaimed his wife. "Be you goin' ter wait till yer neighbors put ye out of a bad business, an' then try ter take credit ter yerself that ye gin it up? Wal, I ain't!" cried the wife, with energy.

"We're goin' aout o' business right now! I ain't in no prayin' mood terday—though I thank the good Lord he's shown me my duty an' has give me stren'th ter do it!"

On the wall, in a "fire protection" frame, was coiled a length of hose, with a red painted pail and an axe. Marm turned to this and snatched down the axe from its hooks.

"Why, Marm!" exploded Lem, trying to get in front of her.

"Stand out o' my way, Lem Parraday!" She commanded, with firm voice and unfaltering mien.

"Yeou air crazy!" shrieked the tavern keeper, dancing between her and the barroom door.

"Not as crazy as I was," she returned grimly.

She thrust him aside as though he were a child and strode into the barroom. Her appearance offered quite as much excitement to the loafers on this occasion as it had the day of the tempest. Only they

shrank from her with good reason now, as she flourished the axe.

"Git aout of here, the hull on ye!" ordered the stern woman. "Ye have had the last drink in this place as long as Lem Parraday and me keeps it. Git aout!"

She started around behind the bar. Joe Bodley, smiling cheerfully, advanced to meet her.

"Now, Marm! You know this ain't no way to act," he said soothingly. "This ain't no place for ladies, anyway. Women's place is in the home. This here——"

"Scat! ye little rat!" snapped Marm, and made a swing at him—or so he thought—that made Joe dance back in sudden fright.

"Hey! take her off, Lem Parraday! *The woman's mad!*"

"You bet I'm mad!" rejoined Marm Parraday, grimly, and *smash!* the axe went among the bottles on the shelf behind the bar. Every bottle containing anything to drink was a target for the swinging axe. Joe jumped the bar, yelling wildly. He was the first out of the barroom, but most of the customers were close at his heels.

"Marm! Yeou air ruinin' of us!" yelled Lem.

"I'm a-savin' of us from the wrath to come!" returned the woman, sternly, and swung her axe again.

The spigot flew from the whiskey barrel in the corner and the next blow of the axe knocked in the head of the barrel. The acrid smell of liquor filled the place.

Not a bottle of liquor was left. The barroom of the Lake View Inn promised to be the driest place in town.

Up went the axe again. Lem yelled loud enough to be heard a block:

"Not that barrel, Marm! For the good Land o' Goshen! don't bust in *that* barrel."

"Why not?" demanded his breathless wife, the axe poised for the stroke.

"Cause it's merlasses! If ye bust thet in, ye will hev a mess here, an' no mistake."

"Jefers-pelters!" chuckled Walky Dexter, telling of it afterward, "I come away then an' left 'em erlone. But you kin take it from me—Marm Parraday is quite in her us'al form. Doc. Poole's a wonderful doctor—ain't he?"

"But," pursued Walky, "I had a notion that old fiddle of Hopewell's would be safer outside than it was in Marm Parraday's way, an' I tuk it down 'fore I fled the scene of de-vas-ta-tion! Haw! haw! haw!"

"I run inter Joe Bodley on the outside. 'Joe,' says I, 'I reskered part of your belongin's. It looks ter me as though yeou'll hev time an' to spare to take this fiddle to the city an' raffle it off. But 'fore ye do that, what'll ye take for the fiddle—lowest cash price?'

"'Jest what it cost me, Walky,' says Joe. 'One hundred dollars.'

"'No, Joe; it didn't cost ye that,' says I. 'I mean what *yeou* put into it yerself. That other feller that backed out'n his bargain put in some. How much?'

"'Wal," pursued the expressman, "he hummed and hawed, but fin'ly he admitted that he was out only fifty dollars. 'Here's yer fifty, Joe,' says I. 'Hopewell wants his fiddle back.'

"I reckon Joe needed the money to git him out o' taown. He can take a hint as quick as the next feller—when a ton of coal falls on him! Haw! haw! haw! He seen his usefulness in Polktown was kind o' passed. So he took the fifty, an' here's the vi'lin, Janice Day. I reckon ye paid about forty-seven-fifty too much for it; but ye told me ter git it at *any* price."

To Hopewell and 'Rill, Janice, when she presented the storekeeper with his precious fiddle, revealed a secret that she had *not* entrusted to Walky Dexter. By throwing the strong ray of an electric torch into the slot of the instrument she revealed to their wondering eyes a peculiar mark stamped in the wood of the back of it.

"That, Mr. Drugg," the girl told him, quietly, "is a mark to be found only in violins manufactured by the Amati family. The date of the manufacture of this instrument I do not know; but it is a genuine Cremona, I believe. At least, I would not sell it again, if I were you, without having it appraised first by

an expert."

"Oh, my dear girl!" cried 'Rill, with streaming eyes, "Hopewell won't ever sell it again. I won't let him. And we've got the joyfulest news, Janice! You have doubled our joy to-day. But already we have had a letter from Boston which says that our little Lottie is in better health than ever and that the peril of blindness is quite dissipated. She is coming home to us again in a short time."

"Joyful things," as Janice said, were happening in quick rotation nowadays. With the permanent closing of the Lake View Inn bar, several of the habitués of the barroom began to straighten up. Jim Narnay had really been fighting his besetting sin since the baby's death. He had found work in town and was taking his wages home to his wife.

Trimmins was working steadily for Elder Concannon. And being so far away from any place where liquor was dispensed, he was doing very well.

Really, with the abrupt closing of the bar, the cause of the "wets" in Polktown rather broke down. They had no rallying point, and, as Walky said, "munitions of war was mighty scurce."

"A feller can't re'lly have the heart ter *vote* for whiskey 'nless ther's whiskey in him," said Walky, at the close of the voting on Town Meeting Day. "How about that, Cross Moore? We dry fellers have walked over ye in great shape—ain't that so?"

"I admit you have carried' the day, Walky," said the selectman, grimly.

"He! he! I sh'd say we had! Purty near two ter one. Wal! I thought ye said once that no man in Polktown could best ye—if ye put yer mind to it?"

Cross Moore chewed his straw reflectively. "I don't consider I have been beaten by a man," he said.

"No? Jefers-pelters! what d'ye call it?" blustered Walky.

"I reckon I've been beaten by a girl—and an idea," said Mr. Cross Moore.

"Wal," sighed Aunt 'Mira, comfortably, rocking creakingly on the front porch of the old Day house in the glow of sunset, "Polktown does seem rejoyvenated, jest like Mr. Middler preached last Sunday, since rum sellin' has gone out. And it was a sight for sore eyes ter see Marm Parraday come ter church ag'in—an' that poor, miser'ble Lem taggin' after her."

Janice laughed, happily. "I know that there can be nobody in town as glad that the vote went 'no license' as the Parradays."

"Ya-as," agreed Aunt 'Mira, rather absently. "Did ye notice Marm's new bonnet? It looked right smart to me. I'm a-goin' ter have Miz Lynch make me one like it."

"Say, Janice! want anything down town?" asked Marty coming out of the house and starting through the yard.

"It doesn't seem to me as though I really wanted but one thing in all this big, beautiful world!" said his cousin, with longing in her voice.

"What's that, child?" asked her aunt.

"I want daddy to come home."

Marty went off whistling. Aunt 'Mira rocked a while, "Ya-as," she finally said, "if Broxton Day would only let them Mexicaners alone an' come up here to Polktown——"

Janice suddenly started from her chair; her cheeks flushed and her eyes sparkled. "Oh! here he is!" she murmured.

"Here *who* is? Who d'ye mean, Janice Day? *Not yer father?*" gasped Aunt 'Mira, staring with near-sighted eyes down the shadowy path.

Janice smiled. "It's Nelson," she said softly, her gaze upon the manly figure mounting the hill.

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