



COMPASS happiness, since happiness alone is victory. What you make of life, it will be to you. Take it up bravely, bear it on joyfully, lay it down triumphantly.

## MISS SELINA LUE

### MARIA THOMPSON DAVIES

(Continued from last week.)

Miss Selina Lue, generous and tender of heart, keeps the grocery at River Bluff. She feeds the five babies whom she cares for in soap boxes, in the rear of the store. Her friend, Cynthia Page, whom she has taken a young artist, named Alan Kent, to board. They are introduced and Cynthia is annoyed at the young man's apparent assumption of instant friendliness, and Selina, confiding her fears that her beautiful home must be sold, and is taken to see Kent's pictures. Kent tells Miss Cynthia of her love for Cynthia and is partly overheard by Cynthia. Miss Selina gives a party to all her friends for Kent and Cynthia's friend from the city is one of the guests. Cynthia now loves Kent.

"I THOUGHT she would. And how do you think it will do to ask Mrs. Si Bradford to set next to her at the refreshments? You know Mrs. Si is kinder proud on 'count of having a blue tea-pot handed down from her pa's mother, though it's cracked, and a chair she used to set in, only one leg's gone. I know she's sort of slow and heavy-like, but she thinks a heap of herself and I feel it's kind of let everybody set their own price, so I humors her; though I can't seem to sense how a cracked tea-pot and a three-legged chair prove anything on your pa's mother or you. I know Mr. Si will admire to come for you, and I will send him for you prompt."

"Oh, no, I think as it is so early I will just run down by myself and then—perhaps Mr.—Mr.—Si will take me home if it's late."

"Oh, yes, him or Mr. Alan! Well, good-by till I see you. It is most time for us all to dress. Tell everybody you see as you go 'long, please; I don't want nobody to miss nothing."

And again, for the second time that day, Miss Cynthia threw herself with abandon into the processes of the toilet and again the result was deplorable.

"Whiv, honey-bunch, I am afraid the folks will all want to eat 'ye instead of the refreshments—'you look so good—don't sho. Mr. Alan?" was Miss Selina Lue's greeting to her from the grocery door. Mr. Kent stood beside her and was the personification of fresh, cool, elegant, afternoon correctness. Miss Selina Lue judged rightly that the expression glowing in Miss Cynthia's eyes was that of admiration, for before she had received an answer to her question to Mr. Kent about the vision of loveliness at the foot of the steps, she broke out afresh with her delighted exclamations:

"Now, ain't he just too ne, Miss Cynthia? Them white flannels is plumb beautiful before they shrinks, and after that they makes good rust to rub with in cases of rheumatism and sich. I feel just as proud of him!"

"Miss Selina Lue," said Mr. Alan,

his eyes dancing with delight, "I think you asked me a question first. I claim first answer. I do—I do feel hungry when I look at her. I feel that I could without provocation eat—"

"Miss Selina Lue," broke in Miss Cynthia hastily, "I am really getting alarmed; and though Mr. Kent looks cool and afternoon-tea-y—and grand, I begin to think he may be more ferocious than he looks. Lions are—"

"Run, run! Mr. Alan, for that's the car to catch Miss Evelyn on the switch—she ought to be here now in five minutes. Come on, Bennie, and get all the children in line! Tell everybody to come here to the grocery steps and listen to the speech first thing—there's Mr. Bradford now. My, my, Miss Cynthia, don't everybody look fine? Miss' Kinney's pink cotton crape goes so nice with Miss' Dolbs' purple, and if Miss' Tyne ain't fixed up to heat the hand!" Miss Selina Lue met her guests at the foot of the steps and welcomed them with enthusiasm. Miss Cynthia helped do the honors and shared in the general excitement.

"Howdy everybody!" said Miss Selina Lue. "We sure make a fine show. She is going to shake hands right here with us all and then go and see the pictures before they gets dark, and then she comes the refreshments. Miss Cynthia, you hadn't oughter hold Blossom, but you just will do it and muss your dress. Now, Ethel Maud, hold Clemmie careful till her mother gets here, and I will carry the twins as we go down to meet her. I feel like the ladies oughter see it all—you can't begin on manners for entertainments too young."

And so the honored guest found them, an exotic-colored aggregation of palpitating excitement in gala attire and more gala humor. If often human intercourse stamped entertainment does not buy for tenderness or barter much in the way of real pleasure, but on the Bluff it was sparklingly so, real, effervescent, brim and ran over.

The Bluff took Miss Evelyn to its

arms and caressed and admired and indulged over her to its heart's content. She was greeted with a flowery phrases by Mr. Si Bradford, whose oratorical acrobatic feats were as astonishing as the triple handspings that Bennie Dolbs turned in her path at every possible opportunity.

It was well that her fund of enthusiasm was adequate to supply long draughts. Miss Cynthia stood by and watched her with awe and pride and light. She enthused over young Jim Peters in stiff and uncomfortable attire, and his rosy, blushing young mother in soft blue muslin. She admired all six Tyones and was especially interested in Ethel Maud's little barked nose. She expressed starvation at the aroma of Mrs. Kinney's pies and listened with rapt attention to Louella recite a choice piece in nine verses, her did she fail to handle the heirloom tea-pot with becoming reverence when it was transported into her presence wrapped in an old flannel handkerchief.

"My, my," said Miss Selina Lue in an aside to Mr. Alan who had taken his stand by her at the grocery door just one step below that on which stood Miss Cynthia with Blossom in her arms. "Ain't this having a good time? I do hate to break it up by asking her to look at pictures, but Mr. Leeks is a-going to play her a tune on the metzophone, and as soon as it's over an going to send her right up to the barn and keep the crowd down here to help me set out the refreshments. S'posen, Miss Cynthia, you can run up there now so as to be there when Mr. Alan gets her up. I am sorry you won't let me take Blossom away from you, though I know if I try there will be a holloing and it do seem a pity to mix any tears in this party." At the mention of her name Blossom giggled and clung to Miss Cynthia as if she understood that the suggestion of her possible dislodgment was being neglected strenuously by the lady of her adorations.

"Well, Mr. Alan, you'd better go 'long with 'em and hand her the ladder to Miss Cynthia. Then hurry back se you will be here when the piece is finished. Now be's tuning up!"

And obedient to instructions and did hurry—only one lookie—was long. Miss Cynthia knelt on the loft floor and reached down for the ladder he held to her from the ladder and her face was the hue of the roses and her eyes were twin stars, and tender. A moment she held the rapturous baby to her breast and smiled down at him over the golden hood—and Mr. Alan ran for the grocery to the last of 'Won't you come home, Bill Bailey' as executed by Mr. Leeks, his heart lent wings to his feet.

The hour the four of them spent in the study of the pictures was delightful, for Evelyn looked into Miss Cynthia's eyes for a moment, then kissed her on both cheeks and—was merciful and charming.

The pictures as absorbed all three—nay, all four, for from the first time Blossom had been transported to the studio she had gazed at them with side-eyed wonder that had overjoyed the artist—when Miss Selina Lue's beaming face looked down the ladder they could scarcely realize how the time had flown.

"Well, well, what a nice time you all do seem to be having. Such a day as never was on the Bluff before, and everybody so happy! I declare, Mr. Alan have smiled so much since mornin' that he's getting fat. They ain't nobody said a cross word or slapped a child since—suppose. But come down everybody, for the crowd has sung and laughed itself hungry and I can't hold 'em back no longer. Miss Cynthia, honey, did you notice the wreath of larkspur Mr. Alan and

Bennie Dolbs tied around Charity's neck? Don't she look dresy and proud? And she's kinder switching her tail 'round. Trust a woman, if she is just a cow, to shiver some in finery. But I'll go on, and you follow as fast as you can."

The refreshments were appreciated to their line, and as evening wore their appearance and flavor that Miss Evelyn first chose "cross-barred," then accepted "open-faced," and finally begged for "kivered," to Mrs. Kinney's manifest delight. In fact, when the tale was told, there remained only one of each persuasion, which Miss Selina had packed in a basket to send to Mrs. Jackson Page, whose regrets had been profuse though formal.

"You walk on up the Hill with the girls, Mr. Alan, and carry the basket," said Miss Selina Lue as they began after unnumbered farewells to take their departure. "Come back often, Miss Evelyn. You've got friends here on the Bluff as'll stand to you the rest of your life, and fer them you can't come too often. Now, Mr. Alan, hand them pies to Miss Page yourself and don't trust 'em to the girls, for they are having so much good time. I am a-skored to risk 'em."

And so Mr. Kent appeared for the first time before Mrs. Jackson Page, bearing a gift of rare spices; and though at first welcomed icily, after an hour's conversation in which transpired, by her admitted blundering, his parentage and the social and financial standing thereof, he was invited most cordially to dine.

"Law, Miss Selina Lue, where can they, as she sat for a few minutes on the grocery steps in the moonlight. 'It's after ten o'clock, and he ain't never showed up since he took them pants fer setting! Co'ting oughtn't to be to leave in sich hunks; broken does is better.'"

"Answered Mrs. Kinney, honey." "Well, now, Miss Selina Lue, dreamily, her eyes resting on the long shadows the hackberry cast across the street, you know folks git married for a long time, and it do seem like co'ting oughter go on quite a spell 'fore they ain't no returning unless be death—or divorce, which is wusser. And then they is to life, and if they say let it be drawn out into fine strands, though strong as number forty cotton."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE WILTED BLOSSOM

"Don't nothing put the heart in a broke-down woman like a little loving."

Miss Selina Lue.

"Bennie, honey, run up the hill and tell Miss Cynthia that I wish she would come right down, for Blossom ain't so well; and stop in and ask Mrs. Kinney to come and sell the suppers for me, 'cause I don't want to leave the baby."

"Oh, Miss Selina Lue, is she much sick?" Bennie's freckled face drew up into a knot with anxiety, for Blossom was the core of the green apple that at his age passes for a heart.

"Yes, honey, she's pretty bad, and I feel I must see Miss Cynthia a bit. Now run along; and if you see Mr. Alan, send him 'long, too." Miss Selina Lue's strong face was grave and sweet, but had none of the disfiguring marks with which anxiety ravages many countenances. As she turned Mr. Alan entered the back door.

"Hew's the Blossom?" he asked anxiously as he deposited his kit in the corner.

(Continued next week.)

Don't forget seeing your friends and having them join in for a club of subscribers to Farm and Dairy.

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