

down-stairs. Laurie herself took no time for supper.

At nine o'clock the proofs for the first side came up-stairs. By this time the bailiff and the acting editor, sitting side by side at the table under the shaded electric light, were apparently on terms of perfect amity. With an innocent air Laurie volunteered to read the proofs aloud, and lifted a voice of monotony calculated to lull Argus himself. Hennery tipped his chair back, his eyes closed, and his head dropped lower and lower. Before Laurie reached the bottom of the first galley he emitted a sound and convincing snore. By the very look of Hennery you would know him for a hearty sleeper, not to speak of his potatoes during the afternoon.

Instantly Laurie, all excitement, scampered down the basement stairs. Besides Colpas, a weak youth, completely under the dominion of his sister, Higden, the printer, and Peake, who made up the forms, were at work. Into the ears of these two she whispered, and a wide, delighted smile slowly overspread each grimy face; they violently nodded their heads and followed her up-stairs. Laurie unlocked the door into the quarters of the fruit company. Peake grasped the back of Hennery's chair, Higden took the front legs, and the unconscious bailiff was tenderly lifted and carried up the four steps into the dark loft. Inside, there were several great bins reaching to the roof, such as are used for the storage of vegetables. These were made of stout palings, with narrow interstices to allow the passage of air. One of these cages was empty and the door stood open.

Hennery woke up as they sat him down, and struggled to his feet. But the cage door was already closed and the hasp secured with a stout wooden pin. Hennery's fat hand would not pass between the bars. He seized the door of his cage and shook it exactly like that animal from which we are said to derive our descent; his cries were piteous, but quite in vain. Laurie sent him a cigar to soothe his outraged feelings, and after a while he ceased his lamentations.

Meanwhile the packet of copy was produced from Laurie's bosom and sent down-stairs. As she expected, young Colpas presently came up two steps at a time and, without looking at her, darted out through the street door. Laurie spent an anxious five minutes—if they had stayed away she would have been utterly defeated, but she was counting on the motive power of curiosity, and the end justified her: the Colpases, brother and sister, entered the office, the lady plumed, rouged, and grim. She had some sheets of Laurie's copy in her hand. Laurie stood up, and they faced each other, the little one and the old-timer.

"What is this?" demanded Leonora stridently.

"The leading article for to-morrow," said Laurie mildly.

"Not if I know it!" said the older woman viciously.

Laurie was patient. "Have you read it?" she asked.

"The first page is enough!" said Leonora, violently rattling the sheets. "Alderman Telfair is my friend!"

"Please read it," said Laurie.

Miss Colpas held the copy under the light. Laurie watched her narrowly. As she turned over the pages, first her lip uncurred, then her black eyes softened a very little; she paused and bit her lip and frowned. Finally she threw the papers pettishly on the table, her arms dropped indecisively, she avoided Laurie's eye.

"I know very well it all rests with you," said Laurie. "If you and your brother won't set it up, of course there'll be no Plainsman to-morrow—nor ever again!" She paused for a moment to let this sink in. "No one blames you for selling your mortgage," she continued with a reasonable air. "That was simply business. But selling it doesn't bind you to help old Telfair with his dirty work, does it? You are never the one to knife an old friend when his back is turned!"

Frankness was little Laurie's disconcerting weapon. Certainly the devil was in it if man or woman could resist her when she looked like that!

Leonora was in a wretched state of indecision. "Where's the bailiff?" she muttered.

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