

As time went on the slender, green-eyed figure, intent upon business, became one of the familiar sights of Rowland Avenue. The six tall policeman were her sworn friends, and one or another invariably accompanied her when she was called out at night. Policemen are only human; there was not one of them but sometimes drew her aside to mention some little deed of heroism he had performed—hoping it would appear in next day's paper. Laurie enjoyed alike the freedom of the banking offices and the jail. Every one wished her well, from the president of the Board of Trade down to the undertakers, who telephoned her when they had interesting corpses on view.

Her work was supposed to be done when the last of the local news was turned in at eleven o'clock each night, but how could Frank discourage her if she volunteered to stay another hour to help him read proof? They would sit side by side at the table in the rear of the little store, dark but for the single shaded globe hanging low over their heads. Laurie always had so much to say about the day's experiences, her tongue fairly tumbled over itself in her impatience to get it all out. Consider the feelings of the youthful editor as he watched the changing face of his very dear aide, and hung on the delicious tones of her merry, boyish voice. Need I say that the Plainsman was scandalously proof-read? There is more than one pointed story still in circulation concerning quaint misprints which escaped that precious pair of readers.

But as a result of this inspiring hour Frank would set to work each day with renewed courage to keep his crazy bark afloat. The whilom careless youth had now a definite and absorbing aim. Week by week the Plainsman was doing steadily better, but, unfortunately, the increased business only made the pinch of insufficient capital more keen. Leonora was the most troublesome feature of the problem. The mere sight of little Laurie was sufficient to rouse that weather-beaten virgin to a pitch of blind unreasonableness. Frank used his best powers of cajolery, but the tension was stretched little by little towards the breaking point. There was six months' interest on the mortgage overdue.

At Laurie's third council meeting old Sam Puffer produced from his capacious pocket a box of candy, the Eastern kind, very expensive and very stale in Blackfoot, and silently laid it on the reporters' table. Laurie was immensely gratified. From the other aldermen there were audible murmurs of "graft," for Sam was a candidate for Mayor, and this was looked upon as an attempt to suborn the press. But there was nothing in that; for at the next meeting, when Sam Puffer turned up in a somewhat "elevated" condition as a result of too long a dalliance at the mahogany of the Royal Hotel, Laurie regretfully but relentlessly entered the fact in the account of the proceedings. Next day Sam came around to the office and shook hands with her. It did him good, he said, to meet a person with sand enough to call his friends down when they needed it.

The other candidate for mayor was the smug Alderman Telfair, Sam's ancient enemy. He too sought to ingratiate himself with Laurie, but with this difference—that while old Sam was a real man, who admired Laurie for a pretty girl and respected her for a plucky one, Telfair was no more than a puff-ball, who saw in Laurie the means of getting his name before the public. Laurie perceived the difference very clearly.

The Plainsman supported Sam Puffer, of course, but in local politics a man is very often at a disadvantage with a puff-ball. Alderman Telfair was known to be a fool and strongly suspected of grafting; nevertheless he threatened to carry the election by the sheer weight of his protestations of morality. It is so difficult to oppose these platform moralists, without the implication of championing the immoral! The only weapon the Plainsman had against Telfair was ridicule—which inflicts painful but seldom mortal injuries. The town chuckled, and Alderman Telfair writhed under its trusts. Furious reprisals were threatened; the Plainsman merely laugh-

ed editorially and continued its course. Then one night there was a late conference in Alderman Telfair's office—men with a common grudge may be infallibly depended on to smell each other out. Mackinnon was there; also a heavily veiled lady wearing a lace coat and a picture hat.

A week later the blow fell. Frank was in Prince George, the provincial capital, lobbying for some of the government printing. Laurie had undertaken the responsibilities of editor-in-chief, with a heart swelling with pride, destined, alas, to be immediately dashed. Reaching the office after the morning session of the police court, she found Hennery Haddie in the editor's own chair, with his feet on another, and the sanctum odorous of one of the cigars manufactured, according to popular belief, from his stock-in-trade: i.e., rags. Laurie's face reddened at the spectacle.

"Outside is the place to wait," she said sharply.

Hennery arose and puffed out his cheeks. He was a short, square man with a portentously serious eye, the carriage of the alderman he yearned to be, and the clothes of a rag and bone merchant he was. Hennery thought and spoke in purest journalese.

"It is my regretful duty to inform you, miss," he said, "that I have been denoted to take charge here—"

Laurie's face was a study in scorn. "Take charge!" she repeated.

"Owing, no doubt, to my well-known association with the press and public affairs," explained Hennery, with a smirk.

"What do you mean?" demanded Laurie.

"Baliff appointed by the court at the suit of Alderman Telfair, Esquire" — Laurie took her breath sharply.

"Holder of a mortgage of eleven hundred dollars on the chattels of this here establishment, assigned by Leonora Colpas, Esquire—I mean, spinster."

Laurie knew all about the mortgage. Her heart seemed to shrivel in her breast, and for an instant she felt herself a small, small person alone in a vast and cruel world.

"My instructions being," continued Hennery, "to allow the business to proceed in all ways as usual, only everything printed in the paper must be satisfactory to my principal."

Laurie heard him but dully.

At this moment Miss Colpas ascended from the basement, ostensibly to ask about a word in her copy, but really to see how Laurie was taking the blow. She got small satisfaction from the acting editor: the mere sight of the other woman provided Laurie with a tonic. She lifted her head, took a long breath, and issued her instructions with perfect

coolness. When Hennery went to lunch she locked herself in the sanctum and, dropping her head on the desk, cried it out like a girl. Then she sat up and, bending her pretty brows, thought it out like a man. By and by she seized paper and began to write, tearing off page after page, entirely oblivious to her surroundings and to the flight of time. Anon the tears came into her eyes, anon she frowned and then laughed outright. Laurie was putting "soul" into it. She concluded with a great sigh of relief, and, without stopping to read what she had written, folded the bulky package once across and, thrusting it into the bosom of her dress, reappeared in public.

All the afternoon she put things in train for the next day's paper as if nothing had happened. She exerted herself to be agreeable to Hennery Haddie, who, worthy man, was not sufficiently astute to smell danger. Inflated by the importance of his duties, he felt an ever-recurring need of a fresh supply of bar-room hydrogen, and by evening there was a noticeable access of dignity in the bailiff, joined to an increased tendency to puff out his cheeks. Miss Colpas swept home as usual at five o'clock, and was succeeded at the monotype after supper by her brother. Hennery brought back some editorials from his "principle," which Laurie, with a casual glance, sent

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