A Belated Rebel Invasion

By Herbert Quick

Author of
"Alladin & Co."
"Virginia of the Air Lanes," Etc.

I AM an outcast from my native Iowa. I have held high and honorable office, and I have been treated as was Coriolanus of old. I am the victim of the ingratitude of republics, as expressed in a direct primary in Stevens county, Iowa. I am on my way to the great new West, where I shall seek to serve newer communities where perfidy may not be so ingrained in the nature of the body politic. And I shall shun relations other than professional one, with persons of youth, beauty, charm and feminine gender. For by these I am a sufferer. I have with me my notes, and to you is given the first hearing of my side of a case which may become historic.

"The contest is unequal," says Epictetus, "between a charming young girl and a beginner in philosophy." Let this be remembered when I am blamed for the havoc wrought upon my political educational career in Stevens county, Iowa, by Miss Roberta Lee Frayn, of Tennessee. Not that I am a beginner in philosophy. The man who, at my age, has been elected county superintendent of schools is no mere tyro in the field wherein Epictetus so distinguished himself. But neither does the word "charming" adequately describe Miss Frayn, unless one trace back the word "charm" to its more diabolically significant root. I expect to write this, my apologia, and leave the verdict to posterity.

No citizen of Stevens county is likely to be ignorant of the manner in which Miss Frayn was deposited in my mother's farmyard by the wrecking of a railway train, or how her grandfather, Col. Kenton Yell Frayn, died there in her arms and left the young girl penniless. Judge Worthington, hereafter to be mentioned, was on the train and doubtless assisted in extricating Miss Frayn and her grandfather from the wreckage, but I feel that my own efforts were more effective than was reported. We left the young woman in the care of my mother, and I took the judge with me in my buggy.

He was much distraught as we rode along. I tried to say something in the way of furthering my candidacy for the office I now hold; but he repulsed me.

"For God's sake, Oscar," I remember him to have said, "don't try to electioneer me until I can get out of my mind the image of that poor young girl and her dying grandfather!"

I do not care to criticize the judiciary, but will say that Judge Worthington's early promotion to the bench and his undeniable comeliness of person have in a measure induced in him a certain arrogance.

I was triumphantly elected. I went to Boston and won recognition so far as to be placed on the subcommittee for the investigation of Tone-Deafness in the rural schools in the superintendent's section of the National Teachers' Association.

Feeling the growing breadth and fulness of life I returned and assumed my office. Then it was that the Frayn episode may be said to have begun, in a letter from my brother Chester, which I have here, and which runs, using an undignified diminutive:

"Dear Oc—We would like to see you. Mother and all are well, and glad you pulled through, even if you did run behind the ticket so. Am feeding three loads of steers, and they are making a fine gain. Middlekauff's look rough, and all the feeders think he'll lose money on them. He paid four cents for them. This is about all the news. Can't you appoint me your deputy down here to examine Miss Frayn, whose grandfather got killed in that wreck? She wants to teach. She is a Southerner, but an awful nice lady, and just as smart as one of us. She dreads to go to Pacific City to be examined, as she won't let ma get her hardly any clothes. She is very sensitive about money matters, and I had to lie to her about the funds to bury her grandfather with, and tried to slip in $250 more, but she caught me at it and cried. I will be strict and make her write out the examination properly; so send along the questions, and the appointment. Yours truly, CHET."

"P. S.—Judge Worthington's office is so near yours, you might leave the appointment and the questions in there. The judge will bring them down. He comes down quite often now, because he says that the Bogses and the Worthingtons moved into Iowa in the same wagon train in an early day, and he thinks it strange that that accident that killed Colonel Frayn should have brought the families together again. He thinks that Miss Frayn will make a first-rate teacher, so you need not be backward about the appointment and the questions."

Not abating one jot or tittle of my official strictness, I informed Chester that Miss Frayn must appear and be examined as did others in the same situation. Chester is an Ames man, and a fine judger and feeder of cattle, but not fitted for responsibility in belles-lettres.

Professor Dustin, an elderly and myopic educator and the author of a monograph on the Grube method, had charge of the examination when Miss Frayn appeared. I found Chester smoking a vile pipe in my lodgings when I came home.

"Say, Oc," said he, "this four-eyed old trilobite won't do. You've got to get in here and do business yourself."

Conjecturing that he meant Professor Dustin, I inferred that Miss Frayn's papers had been rejected. A glance justified the professor. She had given Richmond as the capital of the United States. A question in physiology called for a description of the iris, and Miss Frayn had answered that, further than that, "she" was a naiad, a dryad, or a nymph, and was pursued by Boreas, or Eolus, or Zephyrus until, turned into a flower, she could say nothing about Iris. The handwriting and drawing were beautiful; but the pages of mathematics were mostly blank, save for certain splashy discolorations presumably of lachrymatory origin, denoting lack of self-control and scholastic weakness.

"It is absurd," said I, "to think of certifying her. While she has a certain measure of intelligence——"

"A certain measure!" shouted Chester. "If you weren't a natural-born saphead, I'd——! Come up to Aunt Judith's!"

I went with him, firm in that solid self-control which gives fixity of character to my nature. I saw in its true light the amiable weakness of my relatives which made them slaves to this girl. I felt as stern and austere as a public officer should, and looked it, I believe, for mother was quite in a flutter as she asked me to read a clipping from an Eastern Tennessee paper describing the departure from that region of the Frayns.

From this I learned that Miss Frayn and the Colonel had been the last of the Frayns, the family having been exterminated in the Frayn-Harrod feud. The Colonel had been an engineer in Lee's army. He had given public notice on leaving that at noon he would nail to the front door of the courthouse, with the revolver of Boone Harrod, the last enemy shot by the Colonel, his version of the origin of the feud. He had carried out this parting piece of bravado with no disturbance except an exchange of shots as the train moved away from the station. I was horrified. Was a person in this barbarous state of culture asking me, Oscar Boggs, member of the national subcommittee on Tone-Deafness——!

"Okky," said my mother, from behind, "this is Miss Frayn!"

I looked at her, and was suddenly impressed with the nonexistence of the material universe, except as centered in and consisting of eyes of a ruddy brown like those of fine horses, rufous hair surrounding the small head like a nimbus, and a fused mass of impressions made up of the abstract concepts of trimness, fire, elegance and unconquerability. I have reported the matter to the Society for Psychical Research, but have received no answer as yet. It was clearly abnormal.

She placed her arm about my mother's waist and looked most respectfully at me.

"You ah the great man," said she, "of the family Ah have so much cause to love." Here she stopped as if to regain self-control. "Ah wish mah po' papahs," she went on, "had——"

"There, there!" said my mother, patting her arm. "It'll be all right anyway, dear!"

I was considering what to say. Her skin was clear, white, daintily transparent, and of a delicacy our Western girls seldom display (owing, I surmise, to climatic influences); she stood there on Aunt Judith's Persian rug, her petite figure with its rounded curves, half-levitated, like Atalanta upon the oat-heads—and there returned upon me the mental vertigo, the lack of cerebral co-ordination, and the obliteration of the material universe.

"Am Ah so igno-ant, really?" said she. "Ah'm fond of children; and Ah must find wohk!"

Why did I hate Dustin? Why could I not command my speech? I always rally at the crisis, however, and did so in this instance.

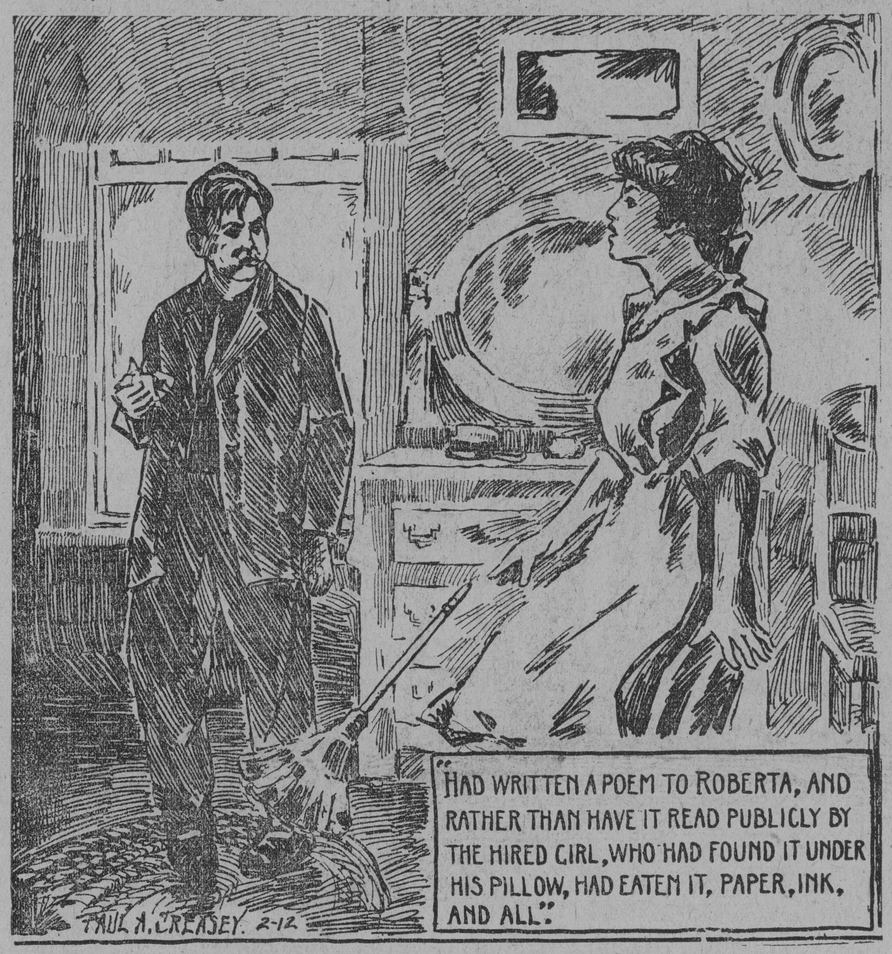
"As for ignorance," said I, "Sir John Lubbock says: 'Studies are a means, not an end.' And Lord Bacon hath it: 'To spend too much time in studies is sloth.' I see that you have acted on these maxims. Professor Dustin's astigmatism and myopia rendered it impossible for him to see you."

I stopped in some returning confusion.

"Those dreadful cube roots and quadratics——" said she.

"The personality of the teacher," said I, "controls the matter."

I heard her laugh, a little delighted laugh, and found myself agreeing to the heresy that, after all, the chief thing is to train the girls to be gentle, and the boys brave! Then I gave her my arm in to dinner. Chester, who had never offered a girl his arm except at a dance or after dark, glared at me. Mother was uneasy at the stirring of the old brotherly an-



tagonisms. I expanded, and told Miss Frayn that if all Southern women were like the only one I had met, I didn't wonder at the feuds. Then seeing whither I was drifting, I asked her plans as to the school she would take, when I sent her her certificate. She said that "Mistah Chestah" was going to let her have the home school.

"A boy like Chester," said I, "will have little influence with Mr. Middlekauff, the director."

"Oh, cut it out, Oc!" burst in Chester. "I've got it all framed up to be elected director!"

"My political plans," said I, "will not allow of a breach between my family and Mr. Middlekauff."

"Well, mine do," retorted Chester. "You'll take your chances with the Middlekauffs, just as I do!"

It was not the occult influence, but a desire to benefit educational conditions, that led me to visit Miss Frayn's school the week Chester's insurgency placed her in it. My memory is hazy as to the matter, but my notes show that her weakness was in the matter of organization.

"Oh," said she, when I mentioned this, "do you all prefeh things so regulah and poky? It's so much mo' pleasant foh the little things to be free!" She called most of the little ones "Honey," and allowed much latitude in whispering and moving about. They crowded around her like ants to a lump of sugar. Some of them were beginning to evince a laxity of pronunciation, sounding the personal pronoun "I" like the interjection "Ah."

In a few days I went back—Chester sneered at me as I went by—to tell Miss Frayn of the necessity of teaching the effects of stimulants and narcotics according to the Iowa law. She was greatly surprised when I told of this requirement.

"What, daily, Mr. Supe'intendent!" she exclaimed.

"Daily teaching," said I. "Our law requires it."

"It seems so unnecessa'y," she said in perplexity. "The young gentlemen will find out all about it in due time; and is it raght to expe'iment with the littlest ones? And wheiah shall I obtain the liquoh foh the demonstrations?"

I felt strangely overcome at this astounding speech, by an indescribable mixture of tender solicitude for her welfare, and horror at her fearful mistake; but I reproved her for jesting at the vice of drinking.

"Vice!" said she, with a bubbling laugh. "Why, down home we-all regyahd it as an accomplishment! But Ah reckon you ah jokin' about teachin' it. Youah jokes and use of the lettah 'ah' ah things Ah shall nevah get used to, Ah'm afraid; but Ah'm glad you don't mean that about the drinkin'."

Despairing of making her understand, I left her, again conscious of being under occult and abnormal control. I was astonished to see in the school several large boys who must have been greatly needed in the fields. They looked at one another sheepishly as I came in, but most of the time they gazed at the teacher rather than at their books. Not having the gift of prophecy, I could not see in their presence the cloud that would soon overshadow my official life. I took their attendance as proof of the popularity of the school. I studied the philosophers, and sought calm of spirit. Learning from Epictetus that the earthen pitcher and the rock do not agree, and from Lubbuck that love at first sight is thought by great minds actually to occur, I re-examined my abnormal psychic symptoms in Miss Frayn's presence, and prudently refrained from seeking her society. Poise alone makes possible a consistent career, and this I had in large measure reconquered, when, like a bolt from the blue—or at least with much abruptness—into my quiet office burst a committee from the Teal Lake Township School Board, accompanied by a number of patrons of the Boggs school—all old neighbors of ours—headed by the defeated Mr. Elizur Middlekauff. This could mean but one thing—Miss Frayn! The rebel invasion was at the door.

"Mr. Middlekauff," said one, "is the spokesman."

"We've got a grievance," said Mr. Middlekauff, "a whale of a grievyance in our deestrict; and we've come right to the power-house to fix it."

"It shall command my most careful consideration," said I. "Please state the case."

"That 'ere railroad wreck," said Mr. Middlekauff, who was a very forcible speaker at caucuses, "let loose on our people a scourge in caliker more pestilential than the Huns and Vandals. We come to you as clothed with a little brief authority, an' accessory after the fact to this scourge business."

"I fail," said I, "to catch your meaning."

"I mean," said he, lowing loud, "that peaches-an'-cream invader fr[illegible] the states lately in rebellion that you've give a shfkit, an' your brother Chet by stratagems an' sp[illegible]s has got himself elected an' put into our school. That's what I mean!"

"I infer," said I, "some implied strictures upon the character or school management or educational qualifications of Miss Roberta Lee Frayn."

"W'l you infer surprisin'ly clus to the truth!" replied Mr. Middlekauff offensively. "We're a-complain' of this schoolma'am with the rebil name; and of her onrivaled facilities f'r spreadin' treason an' emotional insanity! Try to git that through your hair!"

Like lightning a course of policy occurred to me. "Are the defendant," said I, looking them over, "and Mr. Boggs, the director, among your numbers?"

"No," said Mr. Middlekauff. "This is kinder informal. An' besides, we'd crawl out right where we went in if she was here. I tell you she's a—a—irresistible force."

"It is elementary," said I, "that no ex parte investigation can have any validity."

"Now, see here, Oc Boggs!" hissed he, "I don't take any high-an'-mighty standoff from a lunkhead that's stole my melons when he was a kid! You'll hear this complaint, see?"

I did not weaken, but I allowed his standing in the community and party to outweigh offensive orthoepy, rhetoric and manners. Unofficially, I took down the complaint, reserving my ruling. As the horrid tale was told I grew sick at the problem before me. I glean the details of the situation from my notes:

Miss Frayn (all these things are set down as asserted) had assigned William Middlekauff, whose father was a member of the G. A. R., the Confederate side of a debate on the comparative greatness of Washington and Robert E. Lee, and had said: "She reckoned Mr. William ought to have won, as he had the strong side." Complained of as against public policy, adhering to armed insurrection, and giving aid and comfort to the enemy. Quoere (per O. B.): Is complaint good after 40 years of peace, and Reconstruction?

All members of the committee said that every boy in the district more than 16 years of age was irresistibly attracted to her (exact language, "bedaddled over her," O. B.). Hence, her character must be "wrong" somehow. Two boys, each claiming an exclusive franchise to sweep out for her, had met in Allen's feed lot to fight a duel, and been discovered in the act of firing and tied to the feed rack by Allen's hired man, and spanked with the end-gate of his wagon. Clarence Skeen was poorly, and had been found kneeling before a bench calling it his darling Roberta and begging it to be his. Columbus Smith had turned somnambulist, and his father had lost 10 tons of timothy which Clumb had failed to put up in cock. When sleep-walking Clumb had been heard by Vespucci, his brother (known as "Spooch"), to protest with sighs and groans that his heart was broken and to ask Roberta to shed one tear over his grave. Twitted of this by his young sister, Semiramis, Clumb had slapped her and, cursing profanely, had assaulted Spootch, who reproved him, and had fled to the Wiggly Creek woods with no subsistence but a loaf of salt-rising bread, a box of paper collars and a book of poems. Letter from Mrs. Smith asking that this Jezebel's certificate be revoked before all should be lost.

Whipple Cavanaugh had been idle and "lawless" since attending school. Refused nourishment, Pillow wet with tears. Kissed Cavanaugh's mare, Old Flora, on nose after Miss Frayn had patted her on said spot. Had written a poem to Roberta, and rather than have it read publicly by the hired girl, who had found it under his pillow, had eaten it, paper, ink and all. Dr. Dilworthy called in; pronounced him in danger of gastritis and love-sickness with grave prognosis.

Names of 15 boys given, known as "Frayn Mooners," who haunted the shrubbery about the home of Mrs. Jane D. Boggs, where the teacher boarded. Six fights were known to have occurred among them. Tension in the neighborhood was unbearable because of the loosing by Chester Boggs, "in violation of his official oath," of a bulldog which had bitten Albert Boyer, and thrown his mother into nervous prostration.

This epidemic of "worthlessness and sentimentality" was spreading outside the district, as evidenced by an excerpt found in the dog's possession from the upper rear elevation of the Sunday trousers of Boliver Fromme, living in District No. 4. Progress in the studies of the boys confined to amatory poetry and pugilism, both unrelated to their life work. Iowa, My Iowa, Major Byers' stirring lyric, had been supplanted by Maryland, My Maryland, in school singing. Chester Boggs, the director, refused to receive complaints, and was condemned as equally affected with the disease, and most probably he was a "mooner" himself. There was a certificate of Dr. Dilworthy, of Teal Lake, as to the existence of many cases of "extreme mental exaltation accompanied by explosive and fulminant cerebral disturbances traceable to mediate or immediate association with one Roberta Lee Frayn, an individual seemingly possessed of an abnormal power in the way of causing obsessions, fixed ideas, aberrant cranio-spinal functionings, and cranial tempests, in those of her associates resembling her in the matter of age, and differing from her in social habits, hereditary constitution and sex."

I sank back in my chair horrified, with a sinking in the region of the epigastric plexus.

"We kind o' thought, Oc," said Mr. Middlekauff, "that thet would hold yeh f'r a while."

I saw the muddled political relations with which this imbroglio teemed, and clung to delay as my sole hope.

"I am inexpressibly shocked," said I, "and as soon as we can meet with the defendant and the director——"

"What!" shrieked Mr. Middlekauff. "Her present! Arter what them papers says? And everybody follerin' her, if she jest smiles, like a caff arter salt! Why, dad ding me, if I'd trust myself f'r more'n a smile or two. She'll bamboozle the hull thing if she's there. I b'lieve you've got it, you conceited young sprout! No, sir; decide this thing now!"

"I regret the necessity," said I, "of asking time to get the opinion of the county attorney, and to—to——"

"Not by a dum sight!" roared Mr. Middlekauff. "We'll see what the court has to say on this. An' when you're up f'r election ag'in, come round, an' we'll consider it f'r a while—an' then you won't know you're runnin'!"

I was torn by conflicting emotions when they went away. I knew that Middlekauff was a man of influence. I was not averse to seeing Chester rebuked for his fatuous behavior, and for tempting me to a deviation from strict duty. I felt that in taking my stand with the "Mooners" I might be siding with the heaviest body of voters after all. By these whiffling winds of the mind was I baffled, finding no rest in my works on didactics and pedagogics, wondering what Middlekauff would do—until all doubts were settled by the filing of the case of the School Board of Teal Lake versus Frayn; and in a few days it came on for trial before Judge Worthington.

Chester telephoned, asking to see me. He came in looking thinner than I had ever seen him.

"Do you know," said he, "that this case old Middlekauff's got plugged up comes off this morning?"

"Having been summoned by writ of subpena," said I, severely, "I am aware that your wilfulness in placing an untried importation in charge of our school, regardless of her unfitness, or of my political well-being, is this morning bearing its legitimate fruit in the hearing which comes on—not off! And I hope your lack of consideration for the school system, so largely wrapped up in my career, will——"

That Chester was temporarily insane is clear. He flew at me, seized my trachea in his iron hands, compressed it so as greatly to impede respiration, and knocked my head against the wall, using incoherently certain technical terms he had learned at Ames.

"Shut up!" he cried. "You duplex—polyphase—automatic—back-action — compound-wound—multipolar Ass! Shut up!"

An anatomical chart on the wall preserved my head, and I retained my self-possession. When he let me down I took my station on the other side of a table and looked him in the eye, strongly willing that he quiet down.

"Forgive me, Oc," said he humbly. "I promised myself eight years ago not to lick you any more! Pardon me."

"Am I to understand," said I, "that she does not know that the relief sought is her expulsion from the school?"

"Of course she doesn't!" replied Chester. "Do you think I'd let her know? She thinks everybody loves her. Nobody ever dared tell her anything else, either here or down where she was raised. The boys down there were in love with her. She doesn't see anything strange in it—and there isn't."

"A change," said I, "would be wholesome for her."

"She wouldn't know what to do," replied Chester. "And if she were to hear these charges—against herself! Why, I don't know what she might not do! She'd be desperate. She'd think she had no one to defend her—and you know the Frayn way."

"I shall not endeavor," said I, after consideration, "to reconcile medieval notions of honor and personal dignity with proceedings under the Iowa Code. Neither do I feel it prudent for me to see this person."

"Are both sides ready in the next case?" asked the judge, without looking at the calendar.

"We wish to put the defendant on the stand for a few questions," said Beasley, Middlekauff's lawyer. "I don't see her in court, your Honor."

"Call the witness!" said the judge; and the bailiff shouted three times: "Robert Lefrayne!"

"Has this man be subpenaed?" asked the judge; "as he is defendant, I don't suppose you thought it necessary, Mr. Beasley."

We could all see that the pronunciation of the name had misled the judge as to the identity of the defendant.

"To make sure," said Beasley, "we supenaed the party. Here is the writ, your Honor, with proof of service."

"Mr. Clerk," said the judge, frowning sternly, "issue a bench warrant! Mr. Sheriff, attach this witness, and produce him at once. Some of these tardy witnesses will go to jail for contempt if this is repeated! Call your next!"

Chester was pale as a ghost, and accosted the bailiff as he went out with the warrant. Then he came back and listened with flushes of anger and clenched teeth to the reading of the pleadings, to which the judge seemed to pay no attention. At 2, after the intermission, the bailiff, Captain Winfield, an old G. A. R. man, appeared with Miss Frayn on his arm. He was blushing and fumbling his bronze button, while she smiled up at him in a charming daughterly way that brought back dangerous symptoms of relapse in my psychic nature.

"Call the witness Lefrayne!" cried the judge.

Light, airy, daintily flushed, she floated up to the bench. The fine for contempt died in Forceythe Worthington's breast, as he stared in a sort of delighted embarrassment.

"It was raght kahnd of you, Judge Wo'thin'ton," she said, looking up into his face, "to send Captain Winfield to ramahnd me of mah engagement hyah. Why, he was at Franklin, and Chickamauga, and knows Tennessee! And now, gentlemen, what can Ah do foh you-all?"

The judge stepped down from the bench and handed Miss Frayn to the witness chair like a lord chancellor placing a queen on her throne. Beasley looked at the witness as if fascinated. Middlekauff seized him by the lapel of his coat.

"Proceed, gentlemen!" said Judge Worthington.

Beasley gathered up his papers. "Are you the defendant?" asked he.

"Ah don't quite gathah youah meanin', suh," said she, "but Ah think not, suh."

"You're the teacher of the Boggs School, in Teal Lake Township?"

"Oh, yes, suh!" said she. "Pahdon me! I thought you inquiahed about something else."

Judge Worthington stared as if struck by a dart.

"Let me see the papers in the case," said he excitedly.

Beasley handed them up, and the judge examined them carefully. Then he handed them down, turned his back on Miss Frayn, and spoke in a low tone, like one greatly shocked.

"Proceed!" said he.

Something in his tone or in the turning of his back seemed to strike upon the senses of Miss Frayn as unpleasant or hostile.

Chester's lawyer spoke insinuatingly of spite, prejudice and unreasonable provincialism as being at the bottom of the case.

"And," he added, "I may add jealousy—jealousy, your Honor, of the defendant's charms of person, which, as a part of the res gestae, are evidence in this case, if your Honor only would observe them."

The judge started and blushed, but still looked steadily away. Mr. Middlekauff looked relieved. Miss Frayn fretted the linoleum with little taps of her toe, and her delicate nostrils fluttered. There was a mystic tension in the air.

"Mr. Chestah," said the girl, in a low voice, "he seems to be alludin' to—what does he mean?"

Judge Worthington rapped for silence. Miss Frayn's eyes grew bright, and her cheek showed a spot of crimson which deepened as the reading of the affidavit went on. As the legal verbiage droned through the story of the boys' infatuation, I looked at her, and knew that he indignation was swelling fiercely at she scarcely knew what. I began repeating to myself a passage from Seneca.

"Objected to," roared Chester's lawyer, "as incompetent, irrelevant, immaterial, impertinent and grossly scandalous!"

Miss Frayn clenched her hands and held her breath as if at the realization of her worst fears. Then the judge spoke. "The affidavit," said he, "attributes to Miss Frayn a malign and corrupting influence over the whole neighborhood, and——"

"Suh!" he gasped.

Again did the judge rap for order.

"Ruling reserved," said he. "Proceed."

Triumphantly Beasley went on with the resolutions. At last Miss Frayn seemed to understand. She rose with a gesture, and in frozen dignity addressed the court.

"Judge Wo't'h'in'ton," said she, "Ah'm not quite ce'tain Ah get the full meanin' of this, but Ah feel that Ah cain't pe'mit it to go fu'thah. Ah desiah to say to you as a gentleman and an acquaintance, if not a friend, that these ah things than can not be said of a lady, suh!"

"The defendant," said the judge, after two or three ineffectual attempts to speak, "will be heard through her counsel—proceed!"

She was hurt and desperate as she sat down, and in a cold and livid fury. With her eyes level and shining like knife points, she put off, with a look like a blow, Chester's efforts to comfort her. She sat, an alien in an inhospitable land, hedged about by a wall of displeasure at some formless insult, and at friends without chivalry. The judge began stating his decision, giving the argument for the one side and then for the other, as judges do.

"The evidence tends to prove," said he "that Roberta Lee Frayn has a malign fascination over her pupils—the larger boys especially; that she has lured them into personal attendance upon her rather than to study; that she has incited young men to duels, brawls, breaches of the peace, and—"

I could see that she thought the phrase "it tends to prove" and expression of his belief in the charges; and as he went on her face flamed red once more, and then went white as snow. She stepped back from the table as if to clear for action, one little hand lifted, the other in the folds of her dress.

"Suh!" she cried, in a passion of indignation which was splendid and terrible. "This must stop! If mah false friends lack the chivalry to protect me and mah good name, Ah'll defend mahself, suh!"

Chester half rose as if to throw himself into the hopeless contest.

"The defendant does not understand," said the judge. "The defendant will resume her seat! The evidence tends to prove that—"

But the decision was never finished; for the girl drew a short, small pistol and aimed at him. We were frozen in horror. Judge Worthington looked unwaveringly into the muzzle.

"Roberta!" said he.

I then saw a rush by Captain Winfield to strike her arm; the pistol roared out in the courtroom like a cannon; and as Miss Frayn sank back into my mother's arms, Judge Worthington stepped down with a rent across his boulder, from which he withdrew his fingers stained red. From under the table, where irresistible force had thrown me, I saw him take an unresisting hand, and heard him whisper to her.

"Darling!" said he. "You don't understand! Let me explain, sweetheart, and then if you want the pistol back, I'll give it to you loaded!"

Then he stood up and took command.

"The bailiff," said he, "will remove the defendant and Mrs. Boggs to my chambers. I shall investigate this in camera. I am not hurt, gentlemen, more than a pin's prick, and am able to go on an take such measures as are necessary to protect the court. Remain here until I resume the trial!"

"I can tell you," said Middlekauff, "we'll crawl out where we went in. Nobody can stand ag'in her at clus range like that!"

Captain Winfield's face bore a puzzled and mysterious smile as he emerged from the chambers.

"You can't subdue these Southerners, Oc," said he.

"The verdict of history," said I, "is otherwise."

"We just reconstructed and absorbed 'em," said he. "I was there, an' I know. The judge thinks we've got to handle the Frayn invasion the same way."

"I fail to get your meaning," said I.

"The way to absorb this rebel host," said the captain, "is to marry it. It's the only way to ground her wire and demagnetize her. I can't undertake the job, for reasons known to all. You're sort of responsible for her devastatin' course, an' I think it'll cipher itself down to Oscar Boggs as a bridegroom for the good of Teal Lake Township and the welfare of the Boggs School."

My emotions were tumultuous. No such marriage could be forced on me, of course; but duty, duty! Marriage had been to me an asset to be used in my career, some time after my doctor's degree, like casting in chess. I thought of Miss Frayn's untamable nature; and then of her sweetly tender way with the little ones, how they clambered over her while she called them "honey."

"On the main point," said the captain, "the court had its mind made up when I came out. This marryin' has got to be did. Who's to do it is what they're figgerin' on!"

"Captain Winfield," said I, "if the public interests require it, if my constituents demand it, I will make the sacrifice! Dr. Johnson said that marriages might well be arranged by the Lord Chancellor, and Judge Worthington is now sitting in chancery. I will marry the defendant, pro bono publico!"

"Oc," said the captain, in a properly serious manner, though some tittered, "you're a livin' marvel; I'll go back and report."

Almost immediately, as my heartbeats stifled me, they emerged from the chamber. My mother was in tears. Worthington bore Miss Frayn on his arm, and both looked exaltedly happy. Roberta, as I called her in my thoughts, shrank back bashfully, more beautiful than I had ever seen her. It was a great, a momentous hour for me. I felt that I had settled the case.

"I shall ask the plaintiff," said the judge, "to dismiss this case!"

"On what grounds?" interrogated Beasley sharply.

"Don't tell, Forceythe!" said Roberta, hiding her face on the judge's arm as I approached.

"Because the defendant," the judge replied to Beasley, "has resigned. She is about to be married!"

"Didn't I tell you, Oc," said Winfield, slapping me on the back—which in the delightful embarrassment of the occasion I did not resent—"that it was up to you?"

A boy in the audience—I think it was William Middlekauff—caught the judge's statement, and ungrammatically shouted: "Who to?"

"The lucky man?" shouted the crowd. "Name him?"

As it seemed proper for me to do under the circumstances, I went forward to take Roberta's hand in anticipation of the announcement. Then all went dark before my eyes.

"I am happy," said Judge Worthington, "happy and inexpressibly honored to say that the defendant is to be married to me!"

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