



(Continued from Last Week.)

SYNOPSIS.

PART ONE.

Proud possessor of a printing press, and equipment, the gift of Uncle Joseph to his nephew, Herbert Illingsworth Atwater, Jr., aged thirteen, the fortunate youth, with his cousin, Henry Rooter, about the same age, begins the publication of a full-fledged newspaper, the North End Daily Oriole. Herbert's small cousin, Florence Atwater, being barred from any kind of participation in the enterprise, on account of her intense and natural feminine desire to "boss," is frankly annoyed, and not at all backward in saying so. However, a poem she has written is accepted for insertion in the Oriole, on a strictly commercial basis—cash in advance. The poem suffers somewhat from the inexperience of the youthful publishers in the "art preservative." Her not altogether unreasonable demand for republication of the masterpiece, with its beauty unmarred, are scorned, and the break between Miss Atwater and the publishers of the Oriole widens.

The Sunday following the first appearance of the Oriole, Florence's particular chum, Patty Fairchild, pays her a visit. They are joined, despite Miss Atwater's openly expressed disapproval, by Master Herbert Atwater and Henry Rooter. Not at all disconcerted by the coolness of their reception, the visitors and Miss Fairchild indulge in a series of innocent Sunday games. Among them is one called "Truth," the feature of which is a contract to write a question and answer, both to be kept a profound secret. The agreement is duly carried out.

Declining emphatically to participate in any game with her cousin and Henry Rooter, Florence is piqued by Miss Fairchild's open desertion to the enemy, her erstwhile bosom friend apparently enjoying herself immensely in the company of the visitors and leaving with them.

PART TWO.

On her visitors' departure, Florence learns through a conversation between her parents, that her aunt, Julia Atwater, idol of the greater part of the male population of the place, but at present out of town on a visit, has apparently become engaged to a gentleman of the name of Crum, altogether unknown to the Atwater family. Indulging in speculation concerning the fortunate youth, Mr. and Mrs. Atwater concede that for all they know he may be a widower, or divorced, with any number of children, etc. Florence misses none of the remarks.

"Two dollars and a half!" she cried. "Why, I could buy this whole place for two dollars and a half, printing press, railing, and all—yes, and you thrown in, Mister Henry Rooter!"

"See here, Florence," Henry said earnestly, "haven't you got two dollars and a half?"

"Of course she hasn't!" his partner assured him. "She never had two dollars and a half in her life!"

"Well, then," said Henry gloomily, "what we goin' to do about it? How much you think we ought to charge her?"

Herbert's expression became non-committal. "Just let me think a minute," he said; and with his hand to his brow stepped behind the unsuspecting Florence.

"I got to think," he murmured; then with the straightforwardness of his age, he suddenly seized his damsel cousin from the rear and held her in

a tight but far from affectionate embrace, pinning her arms. She shrieked, "Murder!" and "Let me go!" and "Help! Hay-yulp!"

"Look in her pocket," Herbert shouted. "She keeps her money in her skirt pocket when she's got any. It's on the left side of her. Don't let her kick you! Look out!"

"I got it!" said the dexterous Henry, retreating and exhibiting coins. "It's one dime and two nickels—twenty cents. Has she got any more pockets?"

"No, I haven't!" Florence fiercely informed him, as Herbert released her. "And I guess you better hand that money back if you don't want to be arrested for stealing!"

Henry was unmoved. "Twenty cents," he said calculatingly. "Well, all right; it isn't much, but you can have your poem in our newspaper for twenty cents, Florence. If you don't want to pay that much, why take your ole twenty cents and go on away!"

"Yes," said Herbert. "That's as cheap as we'll do it, Florence. Take it or leave it."

"Take it or leave it," Henry Rooter agreed. "That's the way to talk to her; take it, or leave it, Florence. If you don't take it you got to leave it."

Florence was indignant, but she decided to take it. "All right," she said coldly. "I wouldn't pay another cent if I died for it."

"Well, you haven't got another cent, so that's all right," Mr. Rooter remarked; and he honorably extended an open palm, supporting the coins, toward his partner. "Here, Herbert; you can have the dime, or the two

nickels, whichever you rather have. It makes no difference to me; I'd as soon have one as the other."

Herbert took the two nickels, and turned to Florence. "See here, Florence," he said, in a tone of strong complaint. "This business is all done and paid for now. What you want to hang around here any more for?"

"Yes, Florence," his partner faithfully seconded him, at once. "We haven't got any more time to waste around here today, and so what you want to stand around in the way and everything for? You ought to know yourself we don't want you."

"I'm not in the way," said Florence hotly. "Whose way am I in?"

"Well, anyhow, if you don't go," Herbert informed her, "we'll carry you downstairs and lock you out."

"I'd just like to see you!" she returned, her eyes flashing. "Just you dare to lay a finger on me again!" And she added, "Anyhow, if you did, those ole doors haven't got any lock on 'em. I'll come right straight in and walk right straight up the stairs again!"

Herbert advanced toward her. "Now you pay attention to me," he said. "You've paid for your ole poem, and we got to have some peace around here. You goin' straight over to your mother and ask her to come and get you?"

Florence gave up. "What difference would that make, Mister Tattle-tale?" she inquired mockingly. "I wouldn't be here when she came, would I? I'll thank you to notice there's some value to my time, myself; and I'll just politely ask you to excuse me, pray!"

With a proud air, she crushingly departed; and returned to her own home, far from dissatisfied with what she had accomplished. Moreover, she began to expand with the realization of a new importance; and she was gratified with the effect upon her parents, at dinner that evening, when she informed them that she had written a poem which was to be published in the prospective first number of the North End Daily Oriole.

"Written a poem?" said her father.

"Well, I declare! Why, that's remarkable, Florence!"

"I'm glad the boys were nice about it," said her mother. "I should have feared they couldn't appreciate it, after being so cross to you about letting you have anything to do with the printing press. They must have thought it was a very good poem."

"Where is the poem, Florence?" Mr. Atwater asked. "Let's read it and see what our little girl can do."

Unfortunately Florence had not a copy, and when she informed her father of this fact, he professed himself greatly disappointed as well as anxious for the first appearance of the Oriole, that he might felicitate himself upon the evidence of his daughter's heretofore unsuspected talent. Florence was herself anxious for the newspaper's debut, and she made her anxiety so clear to Atwater & Rooter, Owners & Proprietors, every afternoon after school, during the following week, that by Thursday further argument and repartee on their part were felt to be indeed futile, and in order to have a little peace around there they carried her downstairs. At least they defined their action as "carrying," and, having deposited her in the yard, they were obliged to stand guard at the doors, which they closed and contrived to hold against her until her strength was worn out for that day.

Florence consoled herself. During the week she dropped in on all the members of "the family"—her grandfather, uncles and aunts and cousins, her great-uncles—and in each instance, after no protracted formal preliminaries, lightly remarked that she wrote poetry now; her first to appear in the forthcoming Oriole. And when Great-Aunt Carrie said, "Why, Florence, you're wonderful! I couldn't write a poem to save my life. I never could see how they do it," Florence laughed, made a deprecatory little-side motion with her head, and responded: "Why, Aunt Carrie, that's nothing! It just kind of comes to you."

(To be continued.)

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