

The Custard Cup

Florence Bingham Livingston

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SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I—Living in a barn, converted into a dwelling, Mrs. Penfield is manager of an apartment building known as the "Custard Cup," originally "Cloister Court." Her income is derived from laundry work, her chief patron being a Mrs. Horathus Weatherstone, whom she has never seen. Living with her are "Crink" and "Thad," homeless small boys whom she has adopted. They call her "Penzie." Thad tells Penzie a strange man was inquiring for her under her maiden name.

CHAPTER II—A tenant, Mrs. Gussie Bosley, induces Penzie to take charge of a package, which she does with some misgivings.

CHAPTER III—Searching a refuse dump for things which might be of value, Crink, veteran at the game, encounters a small girl, Lettie, who proves a foeman worthy of his steel. He takes her to Penzie, and Lettie is adopted into the family.

CHAPTER IV—The stranger proves to be Mrs. Penfield's uncle Jerry. He announces he is going to remain in the vicinity of The Custard Cup.

CHAPTER V—Uncle Jerry arranges to occupy the loft above Mrs. Penfield's abode.

CHAPTER VI—Uncle Jerry meets Prudence Haggood, no longer young, but attractive, and the two appear to "hit it off" well. Lorenz Percy, young friend of Penzie's, tells her of her engagement to Dick Chase, also a mutual friend.

CHAPTER VII—Friendship developing between Uncle Jerry and Frank Bosley, husband of Gussie, worries Penzie.

CHAPTER VIII—Calmly a tenant, Mrs. Sanders, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, Mrs. Penfield reveals the tragic story of her own life, the sudden loss of her three children in an epidemic and the subsequent death of her husband.

CHAPTER IX—Lettie's pet aversion in the Custard Cup has long been a certain Mr. Josiah Wopple, and the animosity culminates in a physical encounter in which much water is spilled.

CHAPTER X—Dick Chase confides to Mrs. Penfield that his fiancée's stepmother, Mrs. Percy, by pleading physical helplessness, is seeking to prevent their marriage. Penzie skillfully exposes Mrs. Percy's sham, and the lover is forced to withdraw her objections.

CHAPTER XI—The domestic difficulties of the Bosleys become a matter of gossip among the other tenants of The Custard Cup.

CHAPTER XII

A Busy Day for the Gong.

"I'll Caesar, be still!" commanded Lettie severely. "You can't have this chicken, 'cause I'm going to raise it for Penzie. Poor little feller!" she crooned. "We're going to grow you into a nice hen, ain't we? Get away, Filibuster Caesar Penfield, I tell you. This here chicken's been chewed into a ready. Think I'm going to let it be et any more!"

Her hands being fully occupied with the injured chicken, she emphasized her attitude toward Fil by vigorous thrusts of her foot. She was sitting on the back steps, binding up a long yellow leg, the accidental bruising of which had been the basis of this gift. No one would have thought of giving her a whole fowl; but when she had been found lavishing sympathy upon this maimed specimen, the owner had bestowed it upon her with relieved carelessness.

Inactive Liver

"I have had trouble with an inactive liver," wrote Mrs. S. Nichols, of 4412 Spencer St., Houston, Texas. "When I would get constipated, I would feel a light, dizzy feeling in my head. To get up in the morning with a lightness in the head and a tremble feeling is often a sign that the stomach is out of order. For this I took *Theford's Black-Draught*, and without a doubt can say I have never found its equal in any liver medicine. It not only cleans the liver, but leaves you in such a good condition. I have used it a long time, when food does not seem to set well, or the stomach is a little sour."

If it isn't
Theford's
it isn't
BLACK-DRAUGHT
Liver Medicine.

Plan the garden before planting and make it of a size that will receive adequate attention.

And Lettie had accepted it eagerly. The half of a person's kingdom was as much as she ever expected, and that half considerably battered and tattered. The time had not yet come when Lettie would wonder why she was living; so far her brief years had been filled with a desperate struggle to keep that life existent without regard to its purpose, and until recently there had never been anything but the merest scraps to do it with.

"Awk! Awk!" complained the chicken.

"Woof! Woof!" worried the dog.

"Shut up, both of you," advised Lettie sharply. "My landy patience, ain't you both the limit? Keep still, hen, can't you? Don't you never want two legs again?"

"Hello, spitfire. Where's your Uncle Jerry?"

The child's black eyes flashed as she looked up. Instinctively she dis-



"Hello, Spitfire!"

liked Frank Bosley, and the feeling was constantly being strengthened by his treatment of her as a superfluous thread in the fabric of humanity. She made no reply.

"Where's your Uncle Jerry?" he repeated.

"I don't know," declared Lettie briefly, tying the bandage into a hard knot.

"Is he at home?"

"Didn't I tell you I didn't know where he was?" inquired Lettie tartly. He shrugged his shoulders in a way that discredited anything that Lettie Penfield might say.

She glared at him, started to speak, then paused. A plan was springing into being in her mind. She would do something for Penzie. More than once she had seen Penzie's face grow sad and troubled when this man and Uncle Jerry went out of The Custard Cup together, and her lightning intuition had told her that Penzie disapproved of the friendship between the two men. Now here was a chance to show Frank Bosley how the family felt toward him. Then perhaps he would let Uncle Jerry alone. Penzie would be delighted.

"You'd better go home," began Lettie directly. She tied a string to the well leg of the chicken and fastened the other end to a nail on the outside wall of the kitchen.

Frank Bosley laughed—not so much in amusement as in lazy defiance. "Winston!" he called, with his eyes on the loft. "Hoo-hoo! Winston!"

Lettie turned on him. "What'd you mean? Didn't I tell you he wasn't here?"

"You did not," denied Bosley coolly, leaning against one of the clothes-line poles and smiling at her scornfully. "You said you didn't know where he was."

"If he was here, I'd know it, wouldn't I?" she returned, with equal scorn. "He ain't home. Do you get it now?"

Looking up, he gave a shrill whistle. "Hoo-hoo, there! Winston!"

Lettie, tying Fil Caesar to the new wire fence to forestall further interest in the injured chicken, tightened the knot with a jerk and wheeled around. Her lean brown fingers were working. "Don't you b'lieve what I say? When I say he ain't here, don't you b'lieve me?"

He gave her an impudent look from his prominent, heavy-lidded eyes. "No, I don't, if you want to know. What do you think you are, anyhow? You ain't anybody. And stop sassing me, darn you!"

A flush rose in Lettie's pale cheeks. She stamped her foot. "I am somebody, too," she stormed. "I'm going to be a fine woman sometime. Penzie says I'm to be. So!"

Frank Bosley threw back his head and laughed. Straightening to catch his breath, he suddenly bent forward, as if limp from merriment. Lettie, watching, felt her rage turn to fear, to cold terror. Was it possible that Penzie's love had held up a false hope to encourage her and that everybody else looked down on her?

"Oh, gee!" he gasped, recovering himself. "Who'd think Penzie'd string you like that?"

At the words, the child's fear was swallowed up in recurring anger. Her beloved Penzie had been criticized.

"Don't you dare talk 'bout Penzie," she flushed. "Get outa here, you nixy stiff! Get outa—" She dashed toward him with outflung arms, as one might to frighten a small animal;

then stepping so abruptly that she swayed dizzily for a moment. "Excuse me," she muttered. "O Lord!" She turned and flew into the house, banging the kitchen door behind her. The minutes that supervened were troubled by a thuddy thumping, as of a drum gone wrong.

When Lettie reappeared she was carrying an armful of boards, a tomato can of old rescued nails, and a hatchet with a notched blade. The household did not possess a hammer, an implement too highly specialized to be afforded; the hatchet had squeezed in by its diversity of service.

Frank Bosley was still there, sitting on a small stump, smoking a cigarette. He watched lazily while Lettie spread her materials down on the walk.

"What's the nifty notion?" he drawled.

She gave him a brief glance. "You here yet?"

"Sure, and talking. I asked, what you making?"

"I'm going to make a coop for—"

She broke off and sat back on her heels, considering.

"For the pepper-and-salt shipwreck?" he put in helpfully.

"Tain't a shipwreck," defended Lettie. "It's a Plymouth Rock, guaranteed, and it's going to be a good one. I gotta name her." She reflected deeply, trying out names soundlessly, with lips moving. "I'll call her Bonnie Geraldine," she said aloud.

This decision, honoring the two daughters of Mrs. Weatherstone, was the highest kind of tribute, being spontaneous and given without intention of flattery. The young ladies were only names to Lettie, who had no more thought of ever seeing a Weatherstone than she had of glimpsing the North pole, rising out of its cake of ice and bearing aloft the flags of the various nations that have discovered it.

"Better call it the Calico Curiosity," he suggested between slow puffs.

Lettie bit her lips till the color left them. Taking up two pieces of board, she propped them together to see if they would form the conventional gable roof of a chicken coop. They would not. With a sigh she discarded one and took up another.

"You can't do it," observed the man. "You don't know how."

"Why don't you help me, then?"

"I? Child, I have better things to do."

"Yes, you have!" she retorted. "Such as slinking in the basement door to see the cross-eyed man!"

With his finger on the clasp of his cigarette case, he paused. Lettie, watching him calmly, was quick to see that her shot had told.

"And the little man that carries a cane," she continued.

"If I was in your place," Lettie proceeded with relish, "I wouldn't leave my machine in the same spot all time. It's kinder noticeable, 'tween them two eccl'ypst trees on Everidge street, and— Here, Bonnie Geraldine," she commanded, turning to her new acquisition, "stop flopping 'round so. That dog ain't Fil, treat her decent, can't you? You gotta get 'quainted and be friends. How can I love you both it—"

She heard steps behind her. Switching about, she encountered the white anger of Frank Bosley.

"You imp of satan!" he growled. "Hold your tongue in your head if you don't know how to use it. Yes, he ain't never seen me in any such place. If you want to play safe, you won't get me mixed with somebody else and go blabbing."

Lettie stood up and confronted him coolly, thin shoulders thrown back, dark eyes undaunted.

"If it wasn't you, what're you getting so mad for? How do you know I ain't praising you?"

"I don't care what way 'tis. Whoever you saw, 'twan't me. D'you understand? You needn't get me mixed up with anybody else."

"I hadn't got you mixed up, Mr. Frank Bosley. I got your number, and I know a lot I hadn't told. I seen you three fellers more'n once; and way you slink, I know you're 'shamed of something. All is, if you want me to keep still, you get outa here and keep away from Uncle Jerry."

With an assumption of recovered composure, he returned to the stump, took out another cigarette, struck a match, and contemplated the child with well-simulated indifference.

"Don't worry, spitfire."

Lettie was immensely disappointed. She had thought she was making headway, and here she was back where she had been in the first place. It took scarcely ten seconds for her anger to rise.

"Get outa here," she shrieked. "Get out and keep out."

"Dry up," he retorted. "I've heard 'nough from you, young lady. I didn't come here to be sass'd. I came to see your Uncle Jerry, and right here I stay till he comes."

"No, you don't; no, you don't," stormed Lettie. "You're going now, or I'll— Oh, by jingoes, there I go again! Excuse me, I gotta—"

Black curls lashing her thin shoulders, she sprinted to the steps and clipped into the kitchen. The wooden tattoo began again and continued steadily for some time. When it finally ceased, Lettie came back wearily and threw herself down on the walk. Turning all the nails out of the tin can, she proceeded to sort them according to their degree of curvature, few of them being straight.

"Bonnie Geraldine," she said softly, "you sit right still. You're going to be well pretty soon." She threw a nail back into the can, as being beyond her skill in driving. She looked up at Posley.

"I really wish you'd go home," she urged, in a voice of great reasonable-

ness. "We don't want you here; honest, none of us do. We don't think you're a good friend for Uncle Jerry and—"

An insolent laugh interrupted her plea.

"I mean it," she continued, with growing vehemence. "We don't like you to come here. Please go away."

"Dry up, you little fool. I'm tired of your putter. Ah, there you are, Winston. Say, old man, I thought you'd never come. How does it look?"

Jerry Winston walked into the yard.

"Pretty good, I guess. Let's get somewhere and talk it over."

Lettie had risen and was watching them anxiously, her large eyes widening as her dismay increased.

"Come on over to my house," suggested Frank Bosley.

"All right."

Lettie stepped forward. "Uncle Jerry, she begged, 'Don't Go With That Man.'"

Jerry, she begged, "don't go with that man. Penzie doesn't like it."

Jerry Winston fixed her with a look such as she had never before received from him. "Keep still, Lettie, and mind your own business."

"But, Uncle Jerry," she gasped, "you mustn't. It's making her unhappy. Oh, please don't."

"Lettie," he returned, in a tone that pierced her heart, "you tend to your own business. I tell you. You're making a big mistake. I choose my own friends, and I choose good ones, too."

"Oh—oh—oh!" she screamed, wringing her hands in agony. "I can't have it. I can't stand it. It makes her so unhappy. Oh, Uncle Jerry, you got me going. Come back, or I'll—"

She reached over and gathered up a handful of nails; then dropped her hand. The nails fell with a jangle on the board walk.

She was alone. Uncle Jerry had gone with Frank Bosley. During the moment that she realized her failure to frustrate this friendship, her breath stopped, from the most acute despair. Then her anger rose, mounting to rage—against Uncle Jerry, against Frank Bosley.

"I'll show him; I'll show him!" she vowed in a fury. On a mad impulse she tore around the house—then whirled and tore back again. "O Lord," she groaned, "why can't I remember? I gotta remember, 'cause I gotta stay with Penzie."

Again she pelted into the kitchen and reached for the soy rolling-pin. Vicious blows rained on the board-blows of rage against the two men, blows of exasperation over her failure, blows of wild wrath against her own temper.

"Devil, you shan't have me. You shan't; you shan't. Devil, do you hear? You—shan't—have—me!"

Over and over she uttered this defiance, and with every word she struck the gong till the heavy board swung against the wall.

"O Penzie," she sobbed brokenly, "I'm trying—I'm trying. Honest, I'm—"

On and on she pounded, her emotion reaching frenzy, a frenzy like that of the worn piper who dances till he falls. Her arm ached, but her energy did not relax. Her blood went queer, like a great wave, leaving her head cold. Then another great wave that flooded her with heat, rolled over her, shut off her breath, receded! A black wave!

She was still lying there on the floor beneath the temper gong when Mrs. Penfield came in—her face white in its frame of black curls, her right hand limp on the rolling-pin that had come down with her on its broken string.

TO BE CONTINUED

Dead Right

Here lies the body of William Jay, who died maintaining his right of way; He was right, dead right, as he sped along, But he's just as dead as if he's been wrong.

W. W. HARGETT,

Dealer in

PLUMBERS' SUPPLIES

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All Work Guaranteed.

Phone 372-R. Monroe, N. C.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FOR ALDERMAN

I hereby announce myself a candidate for alderman from Ward Three, subject to the action of the Democratic primary. JAS. T. SHUTE.

FOR ALDERMAN

I hereby announce myself a candidate for alderman from Ward Two, subject to the action of the Democratic primary. W. G. GRAVELY.

FOR ALDERMAN

I hereby announce myself a candidate for alderman from Ward Five, subject to the Democratic primary. G. B. CALDWELL.

For Alderman

I hereby announce myself a candidate for re-election as alderman from Ward Four, subject to the democratic primary. W. E. FUNDERBURK.

FOR ALDERMAN

I hereby announce myself a candidate for alderman from Ward Four, subject to the democratic primary. J. DUNHAM BUNDY.

FOR ALDERMAN

I hereby announce myself a candidate for alderman from Ward One, subject to the democratic primary. LEE BROOM.

For Alderman

I hereby announce myself a candidate for the nomination for Alderman from Ward One, subject to the democratic primary. ELIJAH SIMPSON

FOR ALDERMAN

I hereby announce myself a candidate for alderman from Ward Five, subject to the Democratic primary. VANN FUNDERBURK.

FOR ALDERMAN

I hereby announce myself a candidate for Alderman from Ward 3, City of Monroe, subject to the action of the Democratic primary. T. L. CROWELL.

FOR ALDERMAN

I hereby announce myself a candidate for re-election as alderman from Ward One, subject to the Democratic primary. W. J. TRULL.

FOR ALDERMAN

I hereby announce myself a candidate for alderman from Ward Three, subject to the Democratic primary. R. H. CUNNINGHAM.

FOR MAYOR

I hereby announce myself a candidate for the office of mayor of the city of Monroe, subject to the action of the Democratic primary. C. E. HOUSTON.

FOR ALDERMAN

I hereby announce myself a candidate for alderman from Ward Four, subject to the action of the Democratic primary. A. A. EDGEWORTH.

FOR ALDERMAN

I hereby announce myself a candidate for alderman from Ward Four, subject to the Democratic primary. V. C. AUSTIN.

For Alderman 2nd Ward

I hereby announce myself a candidate for re-election as Alderman from Ward No. 2 subject to the action of the Democratic primary.—P. Hayse Johnson.

FOR MAYOR

I hereby announces myself a candidate for Mayor of Monroe, subject to the action of the Democratic primary. J. W. FOWLER.

FOR ALDERMAN

I hereby announce myself a candidate for Alderman from Ward 2, subject to the action of the Democratic primary. O. H. MOORE.

For Alderman

I hereby announce myself a candidate for alderman from ward 4, subject to the action of the Democratic primary.—R. H. Hargett.

NOTICE OF SALE BY TRUSTEE

By virtue of a power of sale contained in a certain deed of trust executed by James Fuller to the undersigned trustee on the 16th day of Sept., 1918, and duly recorded in Book A. V. at page 353 in the Reg. of Deeds office of Union Co. I will, Monday, May 7th., 1923, at 12 o'clock, m., at the Court House door in Monroe, N. C., sell to the highest bidder, for cash, the following described real estate, to-wit:—

A certain tract or parcel of land lying and being in Union Co., N. C., adjoining the lands of Mrs. Bettie Bundy, H. D. Griffin, C. H. Richardson and John Blakeney, and being all of the lands on the north side of a ditch running east and west which said ditch commences on the west side of the said H. D. Griffin's line and runs due west from said line along the said ditch 41 chs. to a stone; thence 2 chs. less 7 links to a stone in John Blakeney's east line; thence 11 1/2 acres by estimation, more or less and being the same lands as conveyed by N. S. Matthews and wife to James Fuller by deed dated Sept. 16th., 1918.

The holder of the notes secured by said deed of trust having demanded sale of the said premises to satisfy said notes.

This the 6th day of April, 1923.

R. W. LEMMOND, trustee.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Having this day qualified as administrator, cum testamento annexo, of S. O. Blair, late of the county of Union and state of North Carolina, notice is hereby given to all persons holding claims against said estate to present them to the undersigned administrator, duly authenticated, on or before the 10th day of March, 1924, or this notice will be plead in bar of their right of recovery.

All persons indebted to said estate, will please make prompt settlement. This 6th day of March, 1923.

MONROE BANK & TRUST CO. and I. H. BLAIR, Administrators, c. t. a., of S. O. Blair, deceased.

John C. Sikes, Attorney.

NOTICE OF CITY ELECTION

Notice is hereby given that an election will be held for the purpose of electing a Mayor and five Aldermen for the City of Monroe, North Carolina, on Tuesday after the first Monday in May, 1923, it being the 8th day of May, 1923.

The polling place in said election shall be at the court house in Monroe, N. C., at which place the Registrar and Judges of election shall provide six boxes, one for ballots for candidates for Mayor and one for candidates for Aldermen from each of the five wards of the City respectively.

J. G. Rogers is appointed Registrar and Duncan Huntley and Paul Griffith Judges of Election.

This notice shall be published in the Monroe Journal once a week for four successive weeks, the date of the first publication being thirty days or more preceding the date of the election.

By order of the Board of Aldermen, March 22, 1923.

J. H. BOYTE, City Clerk.

State of North Carolina

Department of State

CERTIFICATE OF DISSOLUTION

To all to whom these presents may come—Greeting:

Whereas, it appears to my satisfaction, by duly authorized record of the proceedings for the voluntary dissolution thereof by the unanimous consent of all the stockholders, deposited in my office, that the Hotel Joffre, Incorporated, a corporation of this State, whose principal office is situated in the city of Monroe, County of Union, state of North Carolina, (J. E. Ashcraft being the agent therein and in charge thereof, upon whom process may be served), has complied with the requirements of Chapter 22, Consolidated Statutes, entitled "Corporations," preliminary to the issuing of this Certificate of Dissolution:

Now, Therefore, I, W. N. Everett, Secretary of State of the State of North Carolina, do hereby certify that the said corporation did, on the 9th day of March, 1923, file in my office a duly executed and attested consent in writing to the dissolution of said corporation, executed by all the stockholders thereof, which said consent and the record of the proceedings aforesaid are now on file in my said office as provided by law.

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal at Raleigh, this 9th day of March, A. D. 1923.

W. N. EVERETT,

Secretary of State.

NOTICE OF CREAMERY SALE

Notice is hereby given that under and by virtue of an order made by W. F. Harding, Judge, the undersigned receiver for the Monroe Creamery Company will on

Saturday, the 21st day of April, 1923, at 12 o'clock M., at the courthouse door in the City of Monroe, offer for re-sale all property of said creamery company, including all machinery of every kind and description, all fixtures of every kind and description, and all ice cream machinery and fixtures of every kind and description.

TERMS OF SALE—CASH.

Persons interested in said plant will have the opportunity of investigating and examining said plant, and the machinery and fixtures by calling at said plant on any day between this and the date of the sale.

This plant will be operated by the receiver until the date of sale, and thereafter until said sale is approved by the Court. The machinery therefore will be kept in good condition and will not be permitted to lie idle.

This being a