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WHICH AFTER ALL DIDN'T ACCOMPLISH WHAT IT WAS MEANT TO.
 (COLIA E. SHUTE, in Springfield Republican.)
 CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK'S ISSUE.

"It'd be the best thing you ever did," she continued, decidedly. "If you're thinkin' serious of July Frayle you're makin' a mistake. She's a sassy, sharp-spoken gal, without one mite of respect for old folks. She fairly driv me away just now by her talk an' actions. There ain't a better gal in the kinty than Hitty Wells. What if she ain't a beauty! Looks ain't everything, an' that's all there is to July Frayle."

Reuben sat stupefied, unable to say a word in reply. He was reserved, quiet, young fellow, and this unexpected intrusion into the sanctities of his affections completely unnerved him. His confusion emboldened Miss Polly to disclose her reasons for taking such an unfavorable view of Julia Frayle's character. She had a natural aptitude for description, and a really remarkable memory for slight and innuendoes, real and imagined, and as she talked this memory asserted itself, giving a disastrous coloring to certain events that, viewed from Miss Polly's prejudiced standpoint, furnished testimony of pitiless kind against the spirited but good-hearted girl. Reuben Carter's face grew serious as he listened, for later he did, though filled with resentment against his caustic little informant, and desisting himself for so doing. Still he had no doubt that what she said was true, and when he put her down at her door he felt that it was as well that he had learned these facts in time to subdue the strong affection that, all unsuspected until recently, had been growing in his heart for Julia Frayle.

He lived with an invalid mother, a free, full little woman whom he adored, and it made his heart leap when he reflected how easily illusion might have led him into committing a mistake that would have made her life of suffering a still harder one.

That evening Miss Polly, watching at her little front window that spied upon the village street, saw Reuben Carter leave the bunch of columbine at Hitty Wells's door.

More than a week later a protracted and unseasonable rain, that almost achieved the proportions of a deluge, swelled the river that flowed through the town to a size that caused great anxiety to those who lived near its banks. It seemed as if their homes must become the prey of the advancing waters if the countless little streams and brooks that found an outlet therein continued to contribute with such dangerous unremitting force. The big bridge that crossed the stream was still standing and unyielding, but another, lower down, of far less solid and pretentious construction, was not to be depended upon should the river continue to rise.

Polly Anderson's little cottage was in the endangered section, on the river side of a pretty, elm-shaded street. But few houses lay in that vicinity, and behind them stretched usually a broad flat expanse of meadow land, but this meadow had been suddenly transformed into a turbid lake in which trees were dwarfed and bushes barely showed their remnant heads.

It was not for lack of invitations that Polly Anderson had remained at home during the rise of the waters, for there were none of her acquaintances who would not willingly have received her at a period so possessed among her engaging habits that of preferring to favor them with her company at inconvenient seasons, and withhold her presence if by any combination of circumstances it would have been really desirable. So, though by remaining in her threatened cottage she caused genuine anxiety to her friends, remain there she did, regardless of remonstrance.

Mrs Frayle had been one of the earliest and most urgent of those who had pressed their hospitality upon her. "Now, Miss Polly," she had urged, with tears in her soft, kind eyes, "do come home with me, I shan't get a wink of sleep while she's gone bag and baggage, and I met old Elder Penny just now, an' he said he was comin' down this afternoon to take Mary Ellen's family home with him. I don't believe the Ayres'll dream of sleepin' in their house over night either."

"Catch 'em," interposed Miss Polly, scornfully. "They're allers glad enough to get an excuse for movin'. I never seed sich an onsey pack."

Mrs Frayle dropped her arms despairingly at her sides. "Or're 'sly'n' in the face of Providence, Polly Anderson," she said, more severely than she could usually bring herself to speak. "You know as well as I do that the bridge's in danger. If it should give way there's nuthin' to prevent it's comin' right down on you, an' I believe your chance wouldn't be wuth reckonin' on."

"The water ain't riz an inch since dinner," affirmed Miss Polly obstinately. "By to-morrow mornin' it'll be an' away back of them trees. I've seen freshets afore."

"Well, I'm sure I hope you'll live to see 'em agin,'" said Mrs Frayle hastily, and with a tartness for which she was instantly penitent. "Do come, Miss Polly, I'm real sorey about that bridge."

"Don't say another word, Miss Frayle," advised Miss Polly, with a warning intonation. "The worst of it's over, I promise you, an' I never comid abide folks that scared at nothin'."

Mrs Frayle went away without further expostulation. But often through the evening she glanced down anxiously from her window toward the low-dipping village street. The moonlight shone upon the broadened river, upon the inflow over the low marsh lands, and the row of little houses so dangerously near at hand. "I wish I'd dragged her away by main force," she said to Julia, who was mending stockings by the light of a

kerosene lamp at the center table. "There, Aunt 'Liza, you've worried enough over Polly Anderson," answered the girl impatiently. "If a person won't git out of danger I don't see whose fault it is if they git hurt except their own. I'm sure I don't feel as if I had any cause to moon over her, and I shouldn't think you had either."

Mrs Frayle turned in a startled way. It was the first time Julia had alluded to Miss Polly's interference in her love affair since the day of her memorable visit. The fact that neither she nor Reuben Carter—who previously had been an almost daily visitor—had been to the house since, pointed unmistakably to the conclusion that the former felt some degree of culpability in the matter, for it was characteristic of her methods that when an arrow had gone its destined way she abandoned the field until all immediate danger of a return shot was over. Julia bent over the stocking, weaving, the threads in and out with a diligence that had something forced and forlorn about it. She was looking pale, and her lips had a sad unnatural droop. Mrs Frayle's desire to justify herself overcame her fear of angering her niece.

"Ain't I sayin' she treated you right," she said, extenuatingly. "To tell the truth, July, it's because I come so near somethin' to hatin' of her that I don't feel right not to do what I can for her at a time like this."

Julia gave a mocking laugh, and then suddenly rose sobbing, and with her face hidden in her hands ran upstairs like a whirlwind. When Mrs Frayle dared follow her and call softly at the door, she received no answer, but could hear her sobbing still.

Complexity of feeling drove sleep from Mrs Frayle. Resentment and anxiety colored her thoughts of Polly Anderson, whose love and pity, and the tenderest longing to be comfort for her afflicted niece, made her very miserable when she thought of Julia's unfortunate predicament. More than once she got out of bed and tiptoed to the door of the girl's room, but it was not until late that she was relieved by quietness within. Then she had gone back to her pillow and fallen asleep, only to be awakened soon after by the clanging of the village bell. Julia was at her bedside before she had fairly realized what had awakened her.

"Aunt 'Liza! Aunt 'Liza!" called she, in the sharp tone of one aroused to a state of things not fully comprehended. "Wake up, Aunt 'Liza!"

She shook her aunt by the arm, and Mrs Frayle sat up in bed automatically. The sharp scratching of the match with which Julia was trying to light the lamp set her shivering with nervous dread.

"It's the bridge, July. It's that bridge. I knew 't would go. O, why didn't I make Polly Anderson come away! What shall we do, July?"

Julia ran to the window and looked out. A cry of fright burst from her lips as she did so, and hearing it Mrs Frayle nerved herself to join her.

The moon was high, and its white light fell on the world outside, bringing out the salient points with photographic definiteness. The broadened sheet of water that had so dismayed Mrs Frayle the previous evening had now so widened that it seemed as if nothing but wind filled the lower part of the town. The sound of its impetuous onward rush made itself evident to the watchers at the window, while the bell clamored spasmodically as if to call the inhabitants to witness the inevitable destruction of whatever lay in its path.

Mrs Frayle's inherent helplessness asserted itself.

"I guess we'd better be a dressin' of ourselves," she said, moving backward and pulling down the window shade with a resolute snap.

When she and Julia went down the hill a little later they were passed continually by people hurrying to the lower town. The hillside above the water line was black with watching crowds.

It was indeed a thrilling scene upon which they were gazing. On this inland sea, as out of place as if the product of mirage, the three little houses rested, complete and pitiful wrecks of the tidy little places so recently the pride of their occupants. The two lower ones, though twisted out of position and shorn of chimneys and all outward decorations, were not in as deplorable a plight as Miss Polly's, which had been completely overturned and crushed into splinters at one end. A portion of the framework of the bridge had become inextricably entangled with this ruin, and the two swung back and forth in the current like some threatening and formidable monster of prehistoric times.

"There ain't nobody left there, that's one comfort," said a man of evident local prominence. "They all had fair warning yesterday, an' the whole kit an' bin' of 'em got away. Lucky move, too, I'm thinkin'."

"Where'd Polly Anderson go, equire?" asked anxious-faced Mrs Frayle, who had arrived just in time to hear this reassuring remark.

The man turned upon her with a falling countenance.

"Moses an' Aaron!" ejaculated he. "Ain't she with you, Miss Frayle? She sent word she was goin' to your house, an' I 'sposed of course she went."

"She never," gasped Mrs Frayle. "I couldn't git her started no ways when I was down there."

In stentorian tones the equire put the question whether anyone within hearing knew of Polly Anderson's whereabouts. No one did. The crowd had assembled to watch the destruction of the houses, but the possibility that a human life had been or was to be sacrificed aroused it to a high pitch of excitement. The equire was persecuted with suggestions and advice.

"If it's there don't you souse she'd have common sense enough to signal somehow?" he inquired irritably.

"Perhaps she's stanned. The bridge must have 'sve the house an' awful far to keel it ovr, that way," remarked a workman, sensibly.

Julia Frayle, turning quickly at this remark to look again at the displaced cottage, stumbled against Reuben Carter. The seriousness of the situation overcame all embarrassment. She spoke impulsively.

"O, Reuben, do you think she's in there?"

"I'm afraid so," he replied. "I've asked everybody who'd be likely to know, an' nobody's seen her. Nat Means's boat hasn't been put in yet. It's up to the saint shop, an' Nat an' I are going to see if we can git through all that floatin'

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rubbish, an' find out whether she's there or not."

Julia gave a little involuntary cry. "Ain't it dangerous?" she asked, looking up at Reuben with frightened eyes.

"Not very, I guess. The logs is the worst," he answered shortly, becoming suddenly very ill at ease. Julia's concern instead of pleasing him seemed to have a contrary effect. He turned as if about to go, stung evidently by some rankling recollection, then lingered a moment longer. "Polly Anderson's played me a mighty mean trick lately," he added, with an angry light in his deep-set eyes, "but I can't see her drowned out there if she has. I wish I could tell you about it, Julia, but I don't see how I can, ever." His face clouded more deeply, and he stopped abruptly. "I must be burryin' off," he said, almost gruffly, and walked away.

Julia flushed hotly, and retreated to the group in which Mrs Frayle was standing.

Men were bringing planks and boards with which to form a raft, for the preservation of Nat Means's boat was unknown to any but the two young men and Julia Frayle. The sound of their hammer reverberated unceasingly at that place and hour. So universal was the interest in its construction that Reuben Carter and his companion had approached quite near before they were observed. The sensation created by the appearance of their boat spread like the overflow, and cheers greeted them as they passed by, carefully avoiding the logs that were continually drifting down upon them.

Followed by the straining gaze of the people on the hillside, the boat moved cautiously toward the overturned cottage, and at last was seen to encircle the house, the men rising and peering into every available opening. Then it stopped and Reuben Carter climbed through a window and disappeared.

Julia Frayle turned away impatiently from the chorus of wild exclamations that at once arose. The sound irritated her. She wondered what Reuben had seen within, how long it would be before he would reappear, and a picture of Polly Anderson, maimed, suffering, pinioned under heavy furniture or falling beams, unnerved her. Her fingers gripped each other with a force that left white lines along the knuckles, and she screamed aloud as a hand was laid on her arm.

"July Frayle, I've been looking everywhar for you. Do you s'pose he's found her?" panted her aunt, scarcely able to speak aloud.

"I dunno. He's gittin' out now. Look! Look! Aunt 'Liza!" cried Julia.

"I'm afraid to look," confessed Mrs Frayle, miserably. "If I should see him brin'g' her out, I should feel as though I'd killed her myself."

"Well, you needn't feel that way yet, Miss Frayle," remarked a bystander, dryly. "He ain't got her, an' they're comin' this way agin. She can't be there arter all."

"Well, I declare to man!" ejaculated Mrs Frayle, feebly. She lightened her hold on Julia's arm. "Don't you go an' leave me alone agin," commanded she, an' 't stand much more."

Reuben Carter was dripping when he stepped up to the bank.

"I poked an' waded into every hole an' corner, an' I can't find a sign of her anywhar," he announced to the gaping crowd. "Perhaps she tried to git away too late, an' got kerried off by the current," suggested a pallid woman. "Somehow I've felt all along as if she's jammed in among them logs somewheres."

This grim theory found numerous adherents, and armed with poles and axes, and with a third man to assist, Reuben Carter and Nat Means again set forth in quest of Polly Anderson, while the raft was hurriedly finished and poled down in the same direction.

Morning had now dawned, but the wearied people could not be induced to leave the scene of the disaster. It seemed so probable that Polly Anderson's boat might at any moment be discovered in the floating mass of debris that they were loath to give up the search in its progress by the broken remnants of the bridge, blocked the egress of the waters below, that they remained as if rooted in their places, pale with anticipation of what might be disclosed, and almost wordless in the stress of expectation. Now and then a movement of unusual activity on the part of the searching party would be recognized by a surging chorus of exclamations, or a shuddering of the crowd to emanate from a single huge throat. Then all would be breathlessly quiet again, until a fresh cause for the exhibition of emotion arose.

The long-continued tension was at its height when the crowd began to be augmented by the arrival of dwellers in the more remote sections of the village, who had been forced to wait until morning to investigate the inland sea that had formed. One of the wagons loaded down with these late arrivals, coming around the hillside at all possible speed, bore on its front seat a shrill-voiced old woman, whose tones fell upon the ears of all within hearing with the potency of an electric crash. Mrs Frayle started forward as if galvanised.

"Merciful goodness! Polly Anderson!" cried she, gaspingly, running to the side of the wagon and clutching this woman by the arm. "The hull town's huntin' for you out there. Where you been?" Her face was quivering, and the



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tears began to run down her withered cheeks.

Polly Anderson's sharp features sharpened under the scrutiny bent upon her, but she was fully equal to the exigencies developed by the occasion.

"Been?" she repeated, calmly. "Why, I been up to Elder Penny's. I thought I might as well go along when he came for Mary Ellen's family yesterday, an' s'pose I'll get the hull of my insurance, Squire, won't it?"

"Damn your insurance!" said the equire, forcibly, in a swift revulsion of feeling. "What'd you send us word you was goin' to Miss Frayle's for? We've been workin' all night to get track of you. Seem's if it would have been decent for you to have let us know."

He turned away to recall the exhausted workers with muttered exclamations that it was well for Miss Polly she did not catch. The crowd gathered about her, some disposed to be indignant at her sentence with flaming cheeks, and a inclination to regard the whole thing as a huge joke, and all agreeing that it was just what might have been expected of Polly Anderson.

"Contrary critter!" remarked the woman who had been responsible for the investigation of the log jam. "If it had been anybody else suthin' would 'a happened to her, but we might 'a knowed better to count on Polly Anderson's bein' anything like other folks. But there! What be I sayin', I'm thankful she's safe, anyways."

Engrossed in listening with poorly concealed gratification to the tale of her attempted rescue—for Miss Polly was taking her delight in this enhancement of her local importance—she was still the center of an animated group when the searching party returned. Even under these unusual circumstances it did not escape her trained observation that from Reuben Carter's hand hung a drenched and withered bunch of columbine, unrecognizable save by the enlightenment of prior acquaintance. The supremely selfish heart of the designing old woman had been touched by the recital of Carter's tireless efforts in her behalf, and as she came near she stepped forward and beckoned him to one side, while the crowd, just beyond hearing, breathlessly watched what they supposed to be a gracious acknowledgement of her indebtedness to him.

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some repairing on the Edmund's house. Darius Bristol of Marbledale was in town last Sunday.

Mrs Caroline Wildman has visited her sister, Mrs Bronson.

The family of Edward Montrose, who have been seriously afflicted with the grip, five being down with it at the same time, have nearly recovered. Dr Griswold was in attendance and Mrs Blackman the nurse.

William F. Wildman is very poorly and confined to his bed.

Mrs Irwin Tuttle of Southbury and two children, Ruth and Bessie, have been guests of Mrs R. A. Canfield.

The many friends of Miss Caroline Foster will be pleased to know there is a little improvement in her condition. She has been sick nearly five months.

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