Carolyn of the Corners

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JOSEPH STAGG IS FILLED WITH DISMAY WHEN HE LEARNS CAROLYN HAS BEEN LEFT TO HIS CARE.

Synopsis.—Her father and mother reported lost at sea when the Empress, on which they sailed for Europe, was sunk, Carolyn May Cameron—Hannah's Carolyn—is sent from New York to her bachelor uncle, Joseph Stagg, at the Corners. The reception given her by her uncle is not very enthusiastic. Carolyn is also chilled by the stern demeanor of Aunty Rose, Uncle Joe's housekeeper.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

The window was open and she went to it and looked out. A breath of honeysuckle blew in. Then, below, on the porch, she heard the uneasy movements of Prince. And he whined.

"Oh, poor Prince! Do doesn't like me either because of me," thought Carolyn May.

Downstairs, in the great kitchen, Aunty Rose was stepping back and forth, from table to sink, from sink to dresser, from dresser to pantry. As the daylight faded she lit the lamp which swung from the ceiling and grew light to all the rooms.

It was altogether impossible for the wisest person to guess what were the thoughts in Aunty Rose's mind.

A glad little ejaculation from the dog led to the rail of the porch sounded suddenly. Even Aunty Rose could not mistake that cry of welcome and she knew very well who was the object of it. Joseph Stagg, who had heard of the accident, was home, and now she crossed the room with firm tread and opened the porch door. Yes, a little white figure was down there hugging the whining mongrel.

Carolyn May's tearful face was raised from Prince's rough neck.

"Uncle Joseph," she said, "I'm sorry—so awfully! It just had to say good night all somebody. Eldra's mother came and heard our prayers and tucked us into my bed after my papa and mamma went away. So if Eldra's sorry as bad.

"But tonight—why! tonight there isn't anybody cares whether I go to bed or not. So I—I just came out to bed my love—how angry I feel!

"You would better come in now and wash your face and hands again before going to bed. That dog has been hugging them with his tongue.

Sobbing, the little girl obeyed. Then she would have gone back to the table without a word had not Aunty Rose detained her.

"Come here, Carolyn May," she said quite as sternly as before.

The little girl approached her. The old lady sat in one of the straightest of the straight-backed chairs. Her hands in her comfortable lap. The evil blue eyes were raised to her compound face timidly.

"Now, I'm going to say some more words before going supper, my dear Carolyn May," she said.

"Oh, may I?" gasped the little girl.

She dropped her hands into Aunty Rose's lap. Somehow those were the larger, comforting hands and rubbed into them as the cat rubs its head on the brushed mat.

"Carolyn May," said Aunty Rose, "I'm afraid you have been spoiled a long ago the grace we sigh. When the earnest little voice asked in the fun and supplication a desire for the blessing of 'Uncle Joe and Aunty Rose' the latter's countenance reformed the severest.

She asked a blessing upon all her friends, including the Peters, and even Prince. But it was not the last time in the timid question to Aunty Rose the ground to be almost too much for the good woman's studied calm.

"Aunty Rose, do you s'pose I might ask God to bless my mamma and papa?" she said. "I—I sort of feel as if somehow I don't think it would do any no because if I could keep that in my prayer?"

CHAPTER III.

"Well—Shall Be a Nuisance."

Mr. Joseph Stagg, going down to his store after a hasty breakfast, met the shop of Jedidiah Parker, at which he did not even look, finally came to his destination in a very thoughtful mood. He disturbed had he been to the arrival of his little niece that he forgot to question and cross-question young Chatwood concerning reported to possible customers that had been in the store during his absence.

"Then young Mr. Stagg's so kind as to offer to take her to the people in morrow afternoon," Mrs. Gormley was saying Chatwood a great deal smarter than other people thought him.

"You know, mother," he said, on the evening of the arrival of Carolyn May, "I never have seen any girl so clumsy to rise, warble' for Mr. Joseph Stagg."

"But he pays you, Chet," his mother reminded him.

"Yes, I know. Don't he expect I'd leave him till I saw something better."

But reasoned her. Next I might be essential for him to fill the store some time and never see nearly six of slight dollars a week. But now it appear to be different.

"Dear, silkwood, Chet?" she asked, puzzled.

"Because now Mr. Stagg's so bored an nuffs—so hard to get the goods to suit," declared the youth. "He doesn't like to don't do nothin' mean. That can't go that way. But he don't want to have a mite of interest in anything but his store. Now, it seems to me, this little niece is bound to wake him up. He calls her Hannah's Carlyle."

"Hannah Stagg was his only sister," said Mrs. Gormley softly. "I remember her too."

Young Chet's fun died, or something, and left this little girl. Chet nodded and, "Mr. Stagg's bound to think of something to amuse the youngster. And he hates to be'll need me more. And I'll have a chance to show him I'm worth something to him. So, by and by, he'll be interested in the business," went on the boy, his honesty face glowing with enthusiasm. "I'll be glad to take Carolyn over the day after to-morrow."

Stranger things have happened.

Perhaps even Chetwood's assurance would have been questioned had he just then known the thoughts in the hardware merchant's mind. Mr. Stagg sat in his back office poring over the letter which he had received from his lawyer friend, a part of which read:

"I am sorry to tell you that your niece has a little girl—to say nothing of a dog—with her. Both are very much attached to her and I am afraid that Mrs. Parker will be unwilling to part with her. Under the circumstances I would suggest that you write to her at once and tell her that you will be willing to keep the child. I am sure that Mrs. Parker will be willing to do so."

Mr. Stagg had read this letter with a frown. "Then she's not going to be adopted," he grumbled. "It's time to be making the move."

"Either always did that the first thing I knew I'd be left with the child," Mrs. Parker's Privilege. And she was right the last Thursday in the month. The letter was written on the first Monday.

The knitting needles lay idle in Mrs. Tetlow's lap, and her eyes were fixed on earth and forth.

Mrs. Spencer's folks always came by Wednesday night," she said. "I'm sure I don't know what I'm going to do with her. I'm sure I don't know what I'm going to do with her. I'm sure I don't know what I'm going to do with her.