



Carolyn of the Corners

BY RUTH BELMORE ENDICOTT

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CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

"Go on! Good dog!" cried Mr. Stagg. "Lead the way to Hannah's Carlyn!"

He heard the little girl screaming: "Oh, Uncle Joe! Oh, Uncle Joe! Here we are!"

Cherry rattled the buckboard down to the bottom of the hollow and stopped.

There was some smoke here, but not much. The man leaped to the ground when he saw a figure rise up from the foot of a tree by the spring—a figure in brown.

"Joseph! Thank God!" murmured Amanda.

The hardware dealer strode to her. She had put out both her hands to him, and he saw that they were trembling, and that tears filled her great brown eyes.

"Oh, Joe!" she said, "I feared you would come too late!"

"But I'm here, Mandy, and I'm not too late!" he cried; and, somehow—

neither of them could, perhaps, have explained just how—his arms went around her and her hands rested on his shoulders, while she looked earnestly into his face.

"Oh, Joe! Joe!" It was like a surrendering sob.

"It's not too late, is it, Mandy? Say it isn't too late!" he pleaded.

"No, it's not too late," she whispered. "If—if we're not too old."

"Old!" almost shouted Joseph Stagg. "I don't remember of ever feeling so young as I do right now!"

and suddenly he stooped and kissed her. "Bless me! what fools we've been all this time!"

"Oh, Uncle Joe! Oh, Miss Amanda!" cried Carolyn May, standing before them, and pointing with a rather grimy index finger. "You aren't mad at each other any more, are you? Oh, I am so glad! so glad!" and her face showed her pleasure.

But the situation was too difficult to allow of much but practical thoughts.

"Where's the old woman?" asked Joseph Stagg quickly.

"Her husband came with a horse and buggy late last night and took her over to the new camp," was the reply.

"The fire was coming into the camp when I left. We must get out of here in a hurry," declared Mr. Stagg.

"We aren't going to be burned up now, when Uncle Joe is here, Miss Mandy," Carolyn May declared with confidence. "See how nice he and Prince found us? Why, they are regular heroes, aren't they?"

"They are, indeed, child," agreed the woman. She turned to Joseph Stagg, happiness shining in her eyes, and looking prettier than ever before in her life, he thought.

The hollow was rapidly becoming filled with smoke. The man did not understand this, but it foreboded trouble. He turned Cherry and the buckboard around, and then he helped Amanda into the seat.

"Up you go, too, Carlyn May," he said, lifting the little girl into the rear of the buckboard.

Joseph Stagg felt very serious as he seated himself by Amanda's side and picked up the reins. The horse quickly retraced his steps up the hill to the tote road. As they came out into this broader path they saw the smoke pouring through it in a choking cloud.

"Oh, Joe," gasped Amanda, "it's coming!"

"It surely is," agreed the hardware merchant. "We're in a hot corner, my girl. But trust to me—"

"Oh, I do, Joe!" she exclaimed, squeezing his arm. "I am sure you know what is best to do."

"I'll try to prove that so," he said with a subdued chuckle.

"Oh, Uncle Joe!" cried Carolyn May suddenly, "can't we get out of this awful smoke? It—it chokes me!"

"Wait," whispered Amanda to the man. "I'll lift her over the back of the seat. I think she had better be in my lap."

"Praps that's so," he agreed, and he held in the nervous Cherry for a moment till the change was accomplished.

The roaring of the fire grew louder and louder in their ears.

Suddenly Joseph Stagg dragged Cherry's head around. The horse snorted and hesitated, for the smoke was blinding him.

"I pretty near missed these forks!" exclaimed the hardware merchant. This left road takes us toward the lake.

"Oh, Joe, can we reach it?" whispered Amanda.

"We've got to!" he returned grimly. "It's three miles, if it's an inch, but Cherry has got to make it."

They were relieved after a minute or two in this new road. But it was a rougher way, and the buckboard bounced until Carolyn May cried out in fear.

They drove over a little hillock that raised them higher than the tote road had done. Amanda clutched Mr. Stagg's arm again and uttered a half-stifled "Oh!"

He shot a glance to the left. A

mass of flame broke out in the wood not far off this trail—the top of a great tree was on fire.

"The wind is carrying brands this way," muttered the man. "A dozen new fires will be started. Well, gid-up, Cherry!" and he seized the whip again.

The horse was well spent now, but he was plucky. He tried to increase his stride. A hot breath of wind came rushing through the forest, bending the branches and shaking the leafy foliage. The wind seemed fairly to scorch the fugitives.

The roaring of the fire increased. Through the more open woods which



"Oh, Uncle Joe! Oh, Miss Amanda," cried Carolyn May.

bordered this path they saw the smoke advancing in a thicker wall—and one as high as the tree tops.

"You've got to make it, old boy," muttered Joseph Stagg, and he lashed the horse again.

The splintered Cherry leaped forward, both the woman and the child screaming.

"Is it far? Is it far?" gasped Amanda in his ear.

"Too far for comfort. But keep your heart up."

As the man spoke, a blazing brand swung through the air and came down, right on Amanda's shoulders. Carolyn May shrieked. Joseph Stagg brushed off the burning stick.

Cherry mounted another small ridge and then they clattered down into a little hollow where there was a slough beside the road. The water was green and stagnant, but it was water.

The man pulled in the hard-pressed horse and leaped down, passing the reins to Amanda. He whipped off his coat and dipped it in the mudhole. He drew it out dripping with water and slime.

"Look out, here! Have to shut your eyes!" he warned his two companions on the seat of the buckboard, and threw the saturated coat over Miss Amanda's head. The dripping garment sheltered Carolyn May as well.

"Now, good horse!" he yelled to Cherry, leaping back to the seat. "Gid-up!"

The horse started up the slope. Another swirling brand came down upon them. Joseph Stagg fought it off with his bare hand. His shirt sleeve caught fire and he was painfully burned on the forearm before he could smother the blaze.

Another flaming brand fell, landing on Cherry's back. The horse squealed and leaped forward at a pace which Mr. Stagg could not control. Maddened by the burn, Cherry had taken the bit in his teeth and was running away.

The man threw down the reins. He could do nothing toward retarding the frightened horse's pace. Indeed, he did not want to stop him.

His left arm he flung around Miss Amanda and the child, and with his right hand clung to the rocking seat of the careening buckboard.

The wet steaming coat saved the woman and the child from injury. Joseph Stagg had lost all count of time. The forest road might still extend ahead of them for a mile, for all he knew.

But suddenly they broke cover. Cherry still galloping wildly, and plunged down an open ravine to the edge of a lake of sparkling water.

"Bless me! The lake! the lake!" hoarsely shouted the man.

The walls of the ravine sheltered them from smoke and fire for a moment, but the brands still fell. Cherry had halted on the edge of the lake, but Joseph Stagg urged him on into the water, flank deep. The shore was narrow and afforded little space for refuge. He lifted Amanda and the child bodily from the seat and dropped them into the water.

"We're safe now," he said hoarsely, jumping in himself, and holding Carolyn May and Amanda. "We've got wa-

ter enough here, thanks be! Hang on to me, Mandy. I'm not going to let you get away—no more, never!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"Two's Company."

Toward the east the forest tract was completely burned to the banks of Codler's creek. As the wind which had sprung up had driven the fire westward, there was little danger of the flames pressing nearer than the creek to Sunrise Cove and The Corners.

Joseph Stagg led the horse out of the water and advised Miss Amanda and Carolyn May to get into the seat of the buckboard again. Then he set forth, leading the horse along the narrow beach, while Prince followed wearily in the rear.

It was a rough route they followed, but the blackened forest was still too hot for them to pass through, had they been able to find a path. This was a lonely strip of shore and they saw no living soul but themselves.

It was a long tramp, and the horse, the dog, and the man were alike wearied. Carolyn May went fast asleep with her head pillowed in Miss Amanda's lap.

The latter and Joseph Stagg talked much. Indeed, there was much for them to say after all these years of silence.

The woman, worn and scorched of face, looked down on the smutted and sweating man with an expression in her eyes that warned him to the marrow. She was proud of him. And the gaze of love and longing that the hardware merchant turned upon Amanda Parlow would have amazed those people that believed he had consideration and thought only for business.

In these few hours of alarm and close intimacy the man and the woman had leaped all the barriers time and pride had set up. Nothing further could keep Joseph Stagg and Amanda Parlow apart. And yet they never for one instant discussed the original cause of their estrangement. That was a dead issue.

The refugees reached The Corners about nine o'clock. Jeddiah Parlow had hobbled up to the store and was just then organizing a party of searchers to go to the rescue of the hardware dealer and those of whom he had set forth in search.

The village turned out en masse to welcome the trio who had so miraculously escaped the fire. Aunt Rose's relief knew no bounds. Mr. Parlow was undeniably glad to see his daughter safe; otherwise, he would never have overlooked the pitiable state his horse was in. Poor Cherry would never be the same unblemished animal again.

"Well, I vum!" he said to Joseph Stagg, "you done it! Better'n I could, too, I reckon. I'll take the hoss home. You comin' with me, Mandy?" Then he saw the burns on the younger man's shoulders and arms. "The good land of Jehoshaphat! here's work for you to do, Mandy. If you air any sort of a nurse, I reckon you got your hands full right here with Joe Stagg," he added, with some pride in his daughter's ability. "Phew! them's bad-lookin' burns!"

"They are indeed," agreed Aunt Rose.

It was a fact that Mr. Stagg was in a bad state. Carolyn May had suggested that Aunt Rose would dress his burns, but Miss Amanda would allow nobody to do that but herself.

When the curious and sympathetic neighbors had gone and Miss Amanda was still busy making Joseph Stagg comfortable in the sitting room, Aunt Rose came out into the kitchen, where

she had already bathed and helped Carolyn May to undress, and where the little girl was now sleepily eating her supper of bread and milk.

"Well, wonders don't ever cease, I guess," she said, more to herself than to her little confidant. "Who'd have thought it!"

"Who'd have thought what, Aunt Rose?" inquired Carolyn May.

"Your uncle and Mandy Parlow have made it up," breathed the woman, evidently much impressed by the wonder of it.

"Yes, indeed!" cried the child. "Isn't it nice? They aren't mad at each other any more."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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WAS TOO PREVIOUS

Sarcasm That Berlin Newspaper Probably Regrets.

Prophecy That American Soldiers Would Soon Cross the Rhine and Enter German Fortresses Has Been Very Literally Fulfilled.

The most biting irony that came out of Germany during the war was contained in the Berlin Lokal Anzeiger, a little more than a year ago. Several of our soldiers had been captured by the Germans. They were dragged all over the empire and exhibited to the enraged populace, just to show the Germans that the Americans were "not to be feared." The day the unfortunate prisoners arrived in Berlin the paper printed the following under the heading, "Good Morning, Boys!"

"Three cheers for the Americans! Clever chaps they are, it cannot be denied. Scarcely have they touched the soil of this putrefied Europe when already they are forcing their way into Germany. Before long they will cross the Rhine and also enter our fortresses. That is express train speed for American smartness.

"It is our good fortune that we are equipped to entertain numerous guests and that we shall be able to provide quarters for these gentlemen. However, we cannot promise them doughnuts or jam, and to this extent they will be obliged to recede from their former standard of living.

"As Americans are accustomed to travel in luxury and comfort, we assume that these advance arrivals merely represent couriers for larger numbers to follow.

"We are sure the latter will come and be gathered in by us. At home they believe they possess the biggest and most colossal everything, but such establishments as we have here they have not seen.

"Look here, my boys, here is the big firm of Hindenburg & Co., with which you want to compete. Look at its accomplishments and consider whether it would not be better to haul down your sign and engage in some other line.

"Perhaps your boss, Wilson, will reconsider his newest line of business before we grab off more of his young people."

"Clever chaps they are, it cannot be denied. Yes, they were 'clever chaps.' So clever that today, a short year after the sarcasm was printed in the Berlin newspaper, they are actually crossing the Rhine and entering fortresses which seemed so secure when the flippant editor gibed the little handful of soldiers who had been overcome.

Yank Artillery Made Record.

The French take more pride in their artillery than in almost any other feature of their military service, writes C. W. Barron in the Wall Street Journal. In this war they made world records in effective gunnery. The American boys watched the French move 13½-inch guns into position in 45 minutes with horses and motors. Then the Frenchmen saw the American boys do it in 12½ minutes, and they did not use either horses or motors.

Fifty American officers and men put the gun into place and they were the talk of the town at that French camp. Afterward the French called upon their officers for themselves and all their man power to do this work when the tractor was not about.

When the Germans met the American gunners they thought a new kind of rapid-fire three-inch gun had come into the war because it shot so much more rapidly.

How He Got Needed Umbrella.

W. M. Hughes, the premier of Australia, once came by an umbrella through ill-fated means. He is fond of telling the tale against himself.

While he was walking home one pitch-black night a sudden storm broke and, seeking shelter from the rain, he hastened to the nearest doorway. After waiting there for a few minutes, he spied a small boy coming along with an enormous umbrella.

The premier, thinking the owner might offer to share, called out sharply: "Hi, there, young man! Where are you going with that umbrella?"

The lad, startled at the sound which apparently emanated from nowhere, dropped the umbrella and fled up the street as hard as his legs would carry him. He vanished utterly, and Mr. Hughes' predicament was solved.

Some Fliers Are Anchored.

"I picked you out to write to because I can see by your eyes you're the lonesome kid," gushed a letter addressed to the handsome young aviator whose likeness had just appeared in the Great Lakes Recruit.

The handsome young aviator is a Kansas City man. "Now, Mary," he wrote to his wife, "in case you don't feel toward me as you used to, this is the time to speak up, as you will observe by the enclosed." And he sent her the letter.

Lived Long After Burial Alive.

John Boyle, who died at Jersey City, N. J., recently, was one of the four men rescued alive in 1891 from the Jeanville mines of J. C. Hayden & Co., when 21 miners were entombed for 19 days by a rush of water. The four survivors ate a mine mule drowned with their 17 comrades.



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