

Stella Dallas

By OLIVE HIGGINS PROUTY

(Continued From Yesterday.)

When Stephen's business took him to New York, Laurel was enrolled as a pupil in the exclusive school of the community. She attended the exclusive dancing class, and she attended the exclusive Sunday school. Stella belonged to a few helpful organizations herself. Her name was in the Blue Book. She had at least a few acquaintances with almost everybody "worth-while." She had lots of men friends. She believed she had quite a few women friends of value. There was, besides Stephen's membership at the River club, an asset indeed to her now, since she had no house of her own in which to entertain crowds, and pay back social debts.

It was a very unhappy day for Stella when she first learned that Stephen had resigned from all his Milhampton clubs. She thought it was the cruelest blow he could deal her. At that time Stella was mercifully unaware how many more cruel blows were to follow, not from Stephen alone, but from everybody—from all sides. They didn't come all at once. If they had, she must have been convinced of the futility of her efforts, and given up her fight early.

Her defeat was gradual. She lost ground by degrees. Her various points of vantage and fortresses of strength fell slowly. This season she failed to receive an announcement of the Current Events class; next season, her name appeared to have been dropped from the charity ball list. The season after the small Luncheon club she belonged to was reorganized and she was omitted. Every year there were personal slights of various kinds, and she was, in fact, inattentive from all quarters. Laughingly—bitterly, too—she told herself that the people in Milhampton must be having some sort of chronic eye difficulty. So many old friends and acquaintances failed to recognize her, lately. But Stella didn't lose hope. She didn't, anyhow, show that she lost hope. She managed to keep her eyes bright, and her lips smiling, and her head erect, in spite of repeated rebukes.

"Why, I've got to. For Lollie's sake," she said. "Lollie mustn't know her mother has got anything to look sour-faced over. Oh, we'll be all right after a while—Lollie and me," she told Edie McDevitt. "We'll come out on top in the end. You watch us."

It was always "Lollie and me," always "we," and "us," by that time. Stella didn't even think in the singular number, once her maternal instinct had worked its way up through her vanities and self-interests and appeared in her conscious mind. The seed of it must have been planted deep, for it took a period of years to appear. In vain Stephen had looked for it when Laurel was a baby; and later when she was in the helpless, toddling stage.

For the first half-dozen years of Laurel's life, Stella took her lightly. Not that she neglected her in any obvious way. She couldn't. There were certain manners and forms in the modern bringing-up of a child that had to be observed. She had an excellent nurse-girl for Lollie; she spent hours in the selection of Lollie's clothes; she had a Mother-Goose crèche at Lollie's windows; a Noah's Ark parterre on Lollie's walls. There were low chairs, and low shelves. Stella loved to show Laurel's room to guests, when occasion arose. Laurel benefited by many an attention from Stella in those days that did not spring from the maternal instinct. However, the maternal instinct must be growing and growing beneath the surface, and growing according to nature's own methods—sending down tough wiry roots in the dark; all the while it was sending up its tender arrow-shaped shafts of hope for when it did shoot into the light, the plant was strong and vigorous.

During the years between Laurel's sixth birthday and her thirteenth there were many times for Stella to use her claws. There were many times that Laurel was hurt and Stella knew it. "Though the funny little kid doesn't think I do. She never lets on to me. I just have to guess at it from the way she acts."

If she came home from school especially quiet and uncommunicative, and was not very hungry at dinner, Stella would begin to be suspicious. "What's the matter?" she would demand with a piercing look. "Nothing," Laurel would reply, feigned surprise and wonder in her face.

"Has anything happened at school?"
"No."
"Who'd you play with at recess?"
"Nobody special."
"Did you play all alone?"
"No."
"Look here, Lollie. Answer me. Has somebody been horrid to you? Has somebody hurt your feelings?"
"No."

Stella stared at her hard enough, probed long enough, Laurel might reply, "My stomach aches a little bit," and pay the price of two shreds of wheat biscuit and no dessert for dinner.

It would never be from Laurel that Stella would get the first wind of a party in prospect from which Laurel was omitted. Laurel would never tell her that the girls in her class were meeting every few days at each other's houses to work for a fair, or to rehearse a play or fete in which she had no part. When information of an event of this sort did reach Stella, she knew then what had been the cause of Laurel's quiet, brown study day a week ago. And yet she couldn't use her claws after all. It

Iowa Girl Poet Wins Praise From Nebraska Poet Laureate



Catherine Elizabeth Hanson.

A rising young Iowa poet is Miss Catherine Elizabeth Hanson of Le Mars, Ia. Many of whose verses have appeared in The Omaha Bee.

Miss Hanson was born at Le Mars, Ia., 18 years ago. Despite her youth she has already won recognition, not only in verse, but in varied literary fields. Her work has also been commended by John G. Neihardt, Nebraska's poet laureate.

During the war Miss Hanson was awarded a national four-minute certificate of honor by the United States government and was made a Four minute man of honor for her services as a speaker.

She is the possessor of many beautiful medals won on the speaking stage for her prowess in dramatic art. Among them are a silver treasury medal awarded her by the government, two gold medals won in dramatic contests for the interpretation of Shakespearean plays and another silver medal which was presented to her by the Women's Christian Temperance union when she made an appeal for better morals, temperance, and the disruption of the drug traffic.

Much of Miss Hanson's verse is devoted to sentimental subjects. The following poem, "Love," is typical of her work:

Love is the light, the majesty of life—
In joy or woe, a giant power it stands;
Take it away—a wilderness you'll find,
A barren waste amid most fertile lands.

Love's darts are silver, and they turn
To fire,
That dormant spark in noble heart of youth;

Not all the gems in this great world
Of ours
Could flash forth such a brilliancy forsooth!

Love is the sun of life, and sum
thereof;
Life without love—a world without a sun;

Food for the soul that helps it
broaden out,
To love but once before our life is done.

If, breaking forth from prison bonds,
we dare
To snatch from Phoebus' hand celestial fire,

would be the worst policy in the world.
For the sake of Lollie's future, for that dim, far-away, full-of-promise time when Lollie would "come out" (girls "came out", now, in Milhampton), she must be as nice and as plucky as she knew how to be when she knew who could help her daughter.

Laurel could see through her mother's little shams and deceptions, devised to spare her pain, much quicker than Stella could see through Laurel's. At 18 Laurel was an odd mixture of artificiality and truthfulness, of craft and naïveté, of grownup woman and little girl. She could deceive her mother without flickering an eyelash, and could repeat to strangers the little white lies Stella taught her, with the finesse of a woman of the world, but at school in her work and play, she was never anything but strictly honest.

Laurel never asked her mother questions about big things. She had discretion. She could receive her mother's subject ever so quickly if she did. And once she had exclaimed, "Oh, my! Laurel, nice the girls don't talk about things of that sort!"

Until then Laurel had thought that perhaps she might ask her father. He liked talking about big things, about certain big things, that he—like beautiful music, and beautiful sunsets, and being honest and a good sportsman, and all that. But Laurel was shy with her father during the short periods she spent with him. He always introduced the subjects of their conversations. She'd sooner die in ignorance than to ask him a question that wasn't "nice."

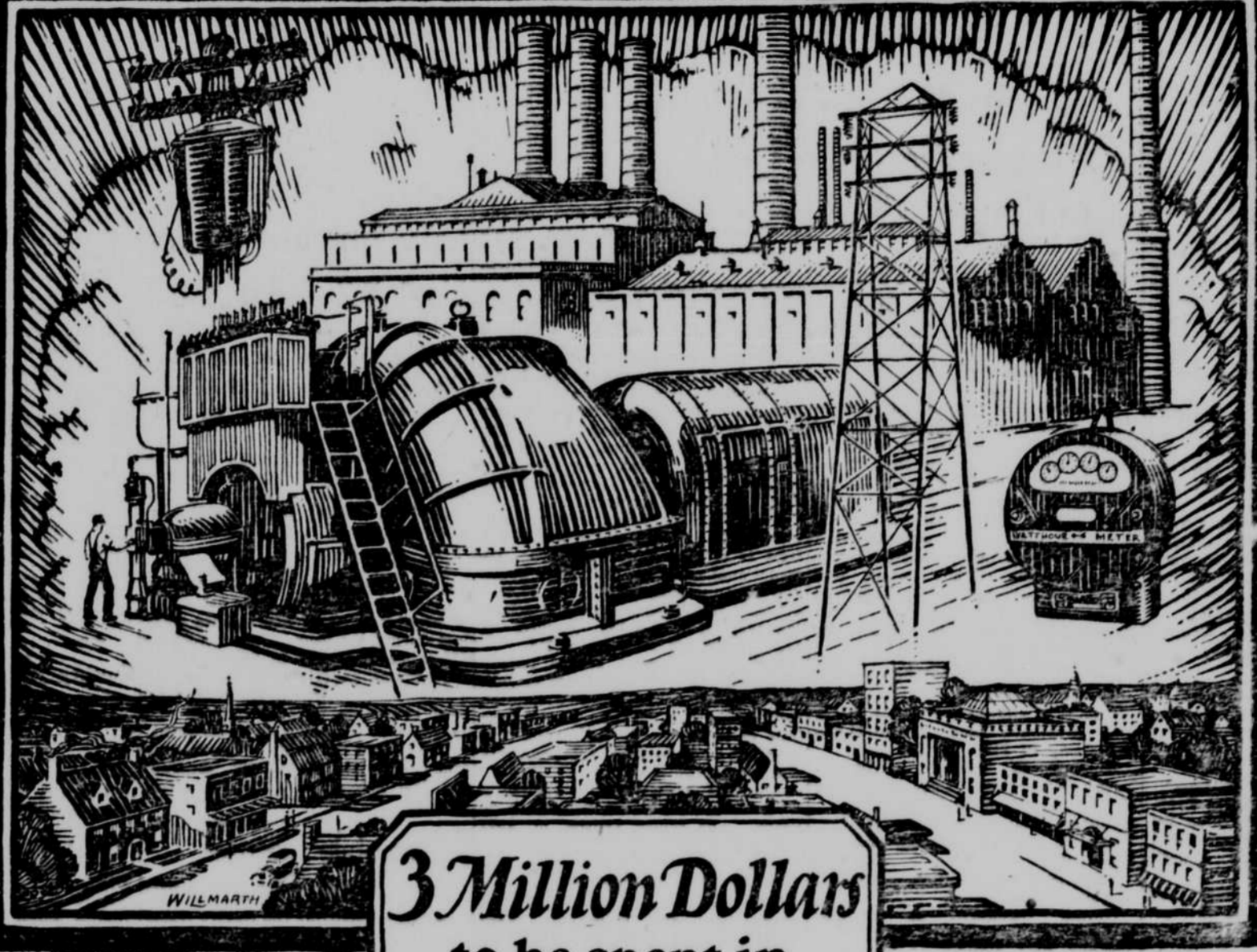
CHAPTER XI.

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When Helen Morrison caught the timid, butterfly-like creature that Laurel was at 13, in her soft deft hands and cautiously lifted one scooped palm from over the other, as it were, and peered into the dark, domed chamber to see what sort of creature was there, her interest was instantly aroused. She had never seen a little-girl specimen of Laurel's sort—so composed and self-possessed in speech and manner, so at home in smart, up-to-date sportsman familiar with smart, up-to-date beauty-shop secrets—but underneath like a child who has lived on an island, alone somewhere, untold and unthought.

"She's like a book I bought in Florence once," Helen Morrison told Stephen one day, after Laurel had been visiting her. "It's a beautifully bound book, in full leather, and hand-tooled, in gold blue and gold. But its pages are blank. I bought it to write odd bits of poetry in. Yes, Laurel is a little like that—beautifully finished on the outside, but full of pages as white as snow that never have been written on."

(Continued in The Morning Bee.)

Happy New Year



3 Million Dollars
to be spent in
1924

Someone Asked—Is Omaha Growing?

THE answer is Yes! Omaha is growing steadily and surely. That's what counts in the genuine development of any city. Many new residential additions are being rapidly developed. Thousands of homes are being built. Several fine office buildings have sprung up in the business districts. Many new industries have located here.

BANKING, building and population figures of 1923 prove Omaha's growth, but the truest barometer of all is the electric light and power industry. As new additions are developed electric extensions must be made. As new industries locate here, and others develop, the output of the power plant must be increased; new machinery must be installed; transmission lines must be erected to carry the load.

Omaha had a "great year" in 1923. From all indications 1924 will be even greater. The Nebraska Power Company is prepared to meet this development. It stands ready to serve, not only for 1924, but additions and extensions are now being made to take care of the city's needs for several years to come. Because our industry is absolutely essential we must make plans and build for the future as well as take care of the present.

We Will Spend \$3,000,000 in 1924 for Power and Light Additions and Extensions.....

"SERVICE HEADQUARTERS"

This new building, being erected at Forty-third and Leavenworth streets, will house the garage and storeroom. The pole yards will be adjoining. The "Service Headquarters" is a big factor in keeping Omaha's light and power rates low, for with its efficiency of operation costs are kept down. From this centrally-located station emergency repair cars will be rushed in answer to "trouble" or repair calls. In this building there will be located also an employee's auditorium, where dances, parties and meetings of the Nebraska Power company family will be held. Everything is done to make their daily work as pleasant as possible. As a result the public benefits, for a better and a higher grade of service is given by men and women who are contented and happy. This building and equipment will cost \$180,000.

CENTRAL SUB-STATION

The Central sub-station, now under construction at Twentieth and Howard streets, will supply the downtown district with light and power. Latest improvements are being installed to assure a high standard of continuous service. In case of a breakdown in any of the switching equipment, a new switch can be installed within less than a minute. The building will be two stories high and a basement. The machinery is being installed as the building is being erected. Electric energy will be transferred from the power plant to this sub station at high voltage and redistributed from here to the downtown section of the city. The increased demand at South Omaha will necessitate an additional transmission line to that section this year. Extensions will also be made in many of the outlying sections of the city. The cost of this structure and equipment will be \$600,000.

LINE AND CABLE EXTENSIONS

Omaha's rapid growth has brought about a demand for large extensions of electric light and power service. New cables, the largest ever laid in Omaha, are being placed under the downtown streets to take care of increased industrial demand. In order to keep electric light and power "shot downs" to the absolute minimum, special emergency lines also will be placed underground. In case there is trouble on a main circuit, an emergency feeder will be put into service instantly. The cost of these improvements will be \$400,000.

POWER PLANT ADDITIONS

A large addition is now being built to the power plant at the foot of Jones street, to house another huge turbo-generator—the same size as Big Joe. A mammoth boiler, two circulating pumps and a 35,000 square foot condenser are also being installed. The condenser will condense 235,000 pounds of steam per hour. The circulating pumps will draw from the Missouri river about 60,000,000 gallons of water daily—or twice the amount of water used by the City of Omaha. These additions will cost approximately \$2,000,000.

ALL FOR A GROWING, THRIVING, BETTER OMAHA

To the Citizens of Omaha we wish a very happy and prosperous new year; may the close of 1924 show even a greater record for our city than that of 1923. It can! It will! LET OUR SLOGAN BE—

"Omaha Is A Great Place In Which To Live"

Nebraska Power Co.

We Take Pleasure in Announcing the Association of

Frank M. Pond

with this organization, who will take an active part in its affairs.

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