

# HIGHLAND PARK NEWS-LETTER

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## DOROTHY LEE

(Continued from last week)

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It seems but right to tell you, since you have honored me with this trust, that in spite of my deformity, I have the family failing of falling in love, and getting out of one entanglement only to go deeper into the next; but the feeling that I experience for Annis Birdsey (Nathan's sister) has a different meaning! I am in love, too, with Dorothy Lee; for she is none of your ordinary sort. Aye, if she had been other than she is—pure, true, and noble—she, with her bright mind and her clear wit, would have sifted my purpose in being here. She is a dainty, womanly little soul, and she is helpful and thrifty, and sweet; children cuddle close to her, and dogs follow her.

pathetic little delusion, as everybody else can see, that her affections are anchored for aye to the big dominie, who in sooth deserves her; but meanwhile until she finds out, she has set up an image that she calls William Leytown, and she is trying to worship it.

I shall not fail, you may be sure, to make hay while the sun of Dorothy's favor beams upon me, and I will entice her on, but always (I pray) at a safe distance; for she is more than charming, and I might keep my heart whole and yet lose my head!

And now let me speak to you of Annis—and my mention of her is as reverent as is the thought that I give to the memory of my mother, dead and gone. Days have come and passed away since I laid down my pen, and out of its secure hiding place I take my letter, not, I fear me, for your pleasure, as I have nothing new to set down concerning the enemy, but to pour out my great, great joy. Fancy a June morning; thousands of bees running riot in the "posy Inns," a narrow box-hedged walk, warm under foot, a parsonage garden, where there is a commingling of fruit, flowers and fragrant herbs. I can feel again, as I write it down, the delicate odor of the rosemary stealing through my nostrils—the rosemary, so famed in Sancho's time—I can see the rue, that old Burton in his book doth insist hath the power (if brewed in proper manner, and taken at certain hours of the day and night) "to expel the temptations of the Devil from afflicted souls." I recall how the dark green of the summer savory shaded itself into the paler coloring of its neighbor, the pempernell—the pempernell leaves, which we love to toss into a tankard of cool drink, for its delicate flavoring.

And the lavender seemed to have a human voice and to be crying out to me, "the maids strew me among the fresh linen;" and the sage, and the thyme to be insistent in proclaiming, "we are often tied into bopots, along with the piks and the ro-

If the posies do come crowding back to my me, clinging with a petulant toss of their dainty heads, set down in this letter of mine!

There was sweet cicily, that some call cheveril, or speedwell, and there was basil, and balm, and sweetwilliam, hollyhock and honeysuckle, johnny-jump-ups, and poppies, and twenty different kinds of roses!

And over all, this altar, set up on the green earth for man, to show him the goodness of God,—the black currant trees (like acholites) swung to and fro, their golden censers, filled to overflowing with spiced fragrance.

And I, upon a garden bench, drinking in all I heard, the night step coming across the greensward. I saw her pass through the bed of flowers, feeling sure that she had not touched to its hurt the lowliest bud or leaf.

And there she stood before me, in all her youth and loveliness, herself—an English blossom, blooming as bravely in this little far away hamlet and showing all the fineness of her unmixed birthright as though in sooth she had been born in the Motherland. I knew in that moment that she was my better self. I forgot for the first time in my conscious life that I was crippled. I felt all the strength of my sturdy race. She was my Madonna and my Queen. I read her love for me upon her silent lips, in the depths of her glorious eyes. I knew that she would offer tribute of love to none other while her life should last.

And thus it was that I asked Annis Birdsey to be my wife.

But, when the ecstasy was spent, when she had gone, and I was come down to earth again, I cursed my weakness and my madness, that had well nigh made me forget duty to my country.

I would gladly have killed the girl, for so nearly causing my undoing. Then little by little joy began to rout despair, for I saw that this love-making had been in reality an excellent move. It would serve as a blind, it would quiet all Nathan's suspicions and Dorothy Lee should plead our suit; it would be easy, I knew, for Annis to persuade Dorothy to break the matter to Nathan.

This is no ordinary letter, dear cousin, and not the sort of a missive that one writes to send with great secrecy and stealth through the enemy's lines. It has been penned at various times, and in varied moods. Often have I stood with it in my hand, ready to rend it in a thousand bits, but something stops the act, and I take up my pen and go on.

It is evening. Strange things have suddenly come to pass. The friendship of long years between Nathan and me is severed for aye. Thomas and I will pass this night at the Inn and on the morrow we must, through such aid as is known to us, make our way to our own people. I shall look back to this night, in afteryears, with a feeling of sadness;

but now, it is too strange a commingling to be food for either teare or smiles. All seemed to

have been arranged to my satisfaction, even to Thomas, who was to don his slippers and listen at the study door to all that should be said by Dorothy and Nathan.

The hour drew near, and I seated myself at the library table and took up a volume. I heard the voice of Annis (like some faint echo of a sweet song) as she read her grandmother to sleep in the room above me. I heard the rustle of petticoats, as Dorothy passed by to fulfil her mission for Annis and for me. I heard the stealthy step of Thomas, and I said to myself, all is well.

At last the sweet, expectant silence was broken, and Dorothy Lee came to me. She had never looked so beautiful. She had never been so close to me. I felt her breath upon my cheek. I was tempted to go far beyond the limits I had always before set myself in her company, and I fell, only escaping complete discovery by catching the sound of the opening of the study door.

Shall I ever forget the look in the little woman's face when I hurled her from my arms, pouring out as I did so a torrent of cruel words to keep my cowardly action company. She may never know (how should she) what I set down here; but just I must be to her on this page. Dorothy Lee has for some time believed that she loved me, while all the time I have known that it was but a tender womanly pity for my bodily infirmities, and an admiration for my cultured mentality.

A vain fellow, say you? But if you are honest, you will not fail to confess that I am no more vain than you, who read what I write. We deem it genteel to cover our self knowledge with cloaks, made out of a texture called humility or deception; but when we disrobe we make note of our proportions, and wonder greatly that our fellow creatures are so dull of appreciation as not to give us our real value, so I speak no lie when I say that Dorothy Lee did worship my mind, which is worthy of her admiration.

But in that moment when I scorned her, she read all my true nature, she knew me as one knows a well-conned book, from cover to cover.

When the first dramatic incidents following Nathan's appearance in our midst had been enacted, Dorothy made her exit and Nathan and I were left alone.

It was a trying time. I had to call to my aid all my powers to meet with seeming indifference this man whose kindness and hospitality I had used to further my own ends.

That Nathan Birdsey had been upon his knees I knew from the carpet lint that was clinging to his stockings. That his hands had been clasped tightly I saw, because of the marks deeply dented