

# HIGHLAND PARK NEWS-LETTER

Volume 17

HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS, APRIL 15, 1905

Number 20

## DOROTHY LEE

(Continued from last week)

WHAT I found seemed to be an unfinished space between my apartment and

By LAURA DAYTON FESSENDEN

Copyright, 1905, by Laura Dayton Fessenden

some other. As I became accustomed to my surroundings, I observed that lying not very far from where I stood was a bundle of some sort. I bent down and picked it up; it proved to be a long smock (or shirt) of coarse linen and it was covered with dark brownish splotches, and wrapped in it was a rusty knife; such an one as the farmers use to kill hogs and sheep with. I had on the usual costume worn by women of that day, consisting of a short gown and petticoat. I tucked the shirt under the waistband of my skirt at the back, until my overgown covered it; then I put the knife into the bosom of my dress and lifting up my candlestick, I passed to the opposite side of the space; and pressing my hands upon it, as I had done in my closet, it too yielded, and I was in a large bare room, with windows that were high up toward the ceiling, and iron barred! The floor was bare and the open hearth was fendered by an iron grating that seemed to be fastened into the wall. There were two beds in this room; a few wooden chairs and a rude table.

Beside the fireplace, squatting on the ground, and chained for all the world like a vicious dog, who springs upon and bites those who venture too near, was a man, and it came back to me, for the first time since the day dawn when I had swooned away at the sight of Nathan coming home, that this was the man who had kept the midnight vigil with me!

He was now dressed in a coarse, clean suit of homespun, but his hair and his beard were as ragged as ever, and his expression was, *if possible*, more *devilish*.

As I entered he strained at his chain and snarled in anger, because its length did not permit him to reach me!

Whatever else my father has been, or may be, he is always a gallant soldier, and a brave man! I thought of this as I stood there that day, and I felt his spirit of courage strong within me. Nathan should be saved! the fates of evil, and malice, were at *last* (in this eleventh hour) powerless! my prayer had been answered! I hurried back with all speed to my room, snatched a hood and a long cloak, then going to Annis' closet selected a skirt, hood and cloak from thence. I put my own hood and cloak on and carried those I had borrowed from Annis upon my arm.

Back I went into the room where the man was chained.

The creature growled and snarled as I re-entered. Looking in his eyes, I said slowly and distinctly:

"You and I are going to find Annis—the Annis that you love so well. I am come to take you to her."

At the mention of Annis' name the *devil* that possessed him fled and left him a piteously old and

gentle looking man.

I approached nearer, and still nearer, saying over and over again the word "*Annis*," as the snake charmer does his syllable or incantation; thus repeating, I unclasped the iron links that held his feet, and bidding him rise up, I clothed this grewsome being in Annis's skirt, and hood, and cloak, lastly, trying a veil over his face. No need to caution *silence!* no need to bid him to follow softly! for he was like a gentle shadow. The house was still! I doubt if a soul was left at home (what wonder when the whole country-side was thronging to hear Nathan proclaimed "*Guilty*"?)

(*Small wonder that we were going, too!* the mad man and I!)

We slipped out to the barn. It was empty save for Nathan's brown mare, a strong intelligent creature.

She whinnied me a welcome, and was quiet while I put on the saddle her master used and added to the saddle the pillion.

And when all was in readiness we two mounted to our places—I, astride (like a man), and the creature, woman fashion, on the pillion.

So we sped along like the wind to Litchfield, he clinging tightly to my waist, and gurgling out his joy at our flying pace—he who had for so long been shut out from the pure air and the sunshine!

When we passed on our way the spot near the Inn where the two roads met, and where they found the bodies of the murdered men, my companion broke into a shrill laugh and bent forward and whispered in my ear.

"I killed the servant first! I stabbed him so quickly in the back that he did not even cry out! But the other (the one that held my Annis in his arms, the crippled man) he fought like a tiger! He was a gallant gentleman, and as he died he cried '*Annis, Annis, I love you.*'"

How I spurred the good horse! How we flew through the hamlets and villages! How the wives and the children gazed after us! We must indeed have been a perplexing matter, and I doubt not that many a superstitious one said in her heart, "*the witches are again abroad.*"

We heeded no toll bridge! We looked neither to the right nor to the left, until we drew up before the Court House door.

How I dismounted, how I reached the court room, how I came at last to be standing before the judge? I do not know; but I recall that the silence was complete, and in it my voice sounded loud and clear.

"Your Honor," I said, "you can never charge the jury before you, as to what they shall or shall not consider in the case of Nathan Birdsey, for I bring you, Your Honor, the poor mad creature, who did the deed!"

And then, being sworn, I faithfully related all that I have in these pages set down concerning

this matter.

Long, long years have come and gone since that day in which I told the story that set Nathan Birdsey free.

So many years that we are well into a new century, and this journal begun in the springtime of my life shall close in its sunset. (I cannot say *winter* for *age* has no chill! I am *old only in years.*)

There have been fifty-five June times since the one in which William Leytown met his death, and I am sitting beside the window of my room and looking down upon the flower laden garden, through which, in the earliest light of that long ago sunrise, I saw Nathan Birdsey coming home.

To those that shall inherit this little book it would seem but just to tell so much of the past story as shall explain what, up to now, must appear an idle romance, and it is my duty and pleasure to unravel the tangled skein.

(To be continued next week)

### Election Notice

Notice is hereby given that on Tuesday, the 18th day of April, 1905, at the Fire Department building in the First ward, at the Library building in the Second ward, at the store of D. C. Purdy in the Third ward and at the store of Brand Brothers in the Fourth ward, all of said places being in the city of Highland Park in the county of Lake and state of Illinois, an election will be held for mayor, city clerk, city attorney, city treasurer, police magistrate, one alderman for the First ward, one alderman for the Second ward, one alderman for the Third ward and one alderman for the Fourth ward of said city, which election will be opened at 7 o'clock in the morning, and will continue open until 5 o'clock in the afternoon of the same day.

Given under my hand at Highland Park the 24th day of March, A. D. 1905. JOHN FINNEY, City Clerk.

Mr. Editor:- I am a voter but I am in a quandry. If a voter believes it is his duty as a citizen to vote at all elections when possible but is conscientiously opposed to the liquor traffic; what is he going to do when he finds himself under the necessity of choosing between two candidates if one of them traffics in liquors according to law and the other should do it contrary to law and that for the purpose of debauching our politics?

-P. B. P.