

Now First Published .- All Rights Reserved shall maintain its present high standard CHAPTER I.

What was called a union revival was in progress at the principal meeting house in Broomfield, an old and gullied village in the southwestern part of Missouri, and the exhorters, vigorous advocates of a change of heart and purpose, were warm in their work when the slight flutter of a counter excitement arose amid the congregation. Old Bill Afmes, strong among the exhorters, and who long had enjoyed the name of "Wheel Horse," looked toward the door and saw a strange youngwoman slowly and with long strides walking down the aisle. She was exceedingly tall and with a complexion that seemed to darken as she drew near, but she was not ungraceful and neither was her face wanting in attractiveness. Her tailor-made gown was a mark of ultra fashion in this out-of-the-way place; and her air, her swing of motion bespoke the forced independence of city life. She paid not the slightest heed to the gazes bent upon her, but with easy freedom took a seat and modestly turned her eyes toward the altar where the mourners in split and shivered accents were pitiably begging that the old Adam born within them might be cast out. into utter darkness. And now the whisper went round: "Who is she and where did she come from and what is she doing here?" Some of the children climbed upon the benches to stare at her, and old Bill Aimes, always a bold man, looked straight at her and shouted his exhortation as though he would have her believe that she had arrived just in time to escape the awful fury to come. But the woman sat there not the least disturbed; and when the services were brought to a close she got up without / looking about her and walked straightway to the tavern, a short distance down the street. It appeared that she had already engaged a room, for she walked upstairs without halting, and a few moments later a boy came down with a note in his hand. Bill Aimes was standing near the door of the hallway, and as the boy came down the old man called to him and told him to stop a moment. .

"Boy, what have you got there?" the old fellow asked. "A note, or something of the sort," he-

"What are you going to do with it?" "She told me to take it to the editor of

the Sentinel.'

"Well, let me see it." The boy hesitated. "Let me see it, I tell you. Ain't I the mayor of this town, you young rescal, and ain't it my business to know it if any underhand business goes on here? Give me

that thing:" The idlers who stood about applauded the mayor and the boy handed him the note. "Here, Alf," he said, speaking to a young fellow, "read this here thing. Left my buckskin at home and ain't got nothing to rub my glasses with. Read it." There was a titter among the idlers.



WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THERE?"

"What are you fellers gigglin' at? Think I can't read? Hah? Is that what you think? Why, I gad-Lord forgive me for the expression-I read the Declaration of Independence at a muster before either of you was born. What does that thing say, Alf?

Alf spelled and spluttered for a moment or two and then read the following:

"MY DEAR SIR: Meet me at once in the parlor at the hotel on important business. Re-POLLY LOPP," spectfully, ... The old man took the note, looked at it,

turned it over, looked at it again, folded it and returned it to the boy. "I don't understand it, but I reckon its's all right," he said. "Take it to him, and say, you, watch him when he reads it, and come back here and tell me how he looked."

It did not appear that the boy had more than reached the shauty where the paper was printed whed they saw the editor coming hastily toward the hotel. To him the prospect of an important, business' conference no doubt produced a strange sensation. Year after year he had "scrapped" for a living in that village, printing funeral tickets, horse bills, and through his sheet arging his party to organize and overthrow the political enemy of his country. The idlers about the door of the hall made way for him as he approached, but the mayor, showing a disposition to block his path, asked him to wait a moment. The editor gave him a look of strong reproof. "I have no time for gossip," he said. "I have important busi- name, ain't it?"

. The crowd stood about the door, waiting for him to come down, and when he did those who were best acquainted with his sad and careworn countenance agreed that he looked years younger. Now what could it all mean? The mystery was

ed after him. The editor faced about and said: "Well, what do you want?"

and we want to know what it is. You you?" male anarchist come here to blow up these ing at him. here American institutions."

since his defeat as a candidate for the legis- there's a bug on you? I have gener lature, "She's nothing of the sort," he commanded a good deal of respect ame Said. "To tell you the truth she has just women folks and you needn't laugh at m leased my paper for a year with the privi- any more than you can help, even if there's lege of buying, and she assures me that it a bug on you, but what I want to get a

of morality and integrity. She takes charge to-morrow and you have nothing to fear from her."

"But where is she from?" Aimes asked. "We don't want women comin' in here among our folks without we know where

they are from." "She came from Chicago."

"What, and you are sure she ain't an anarchist? Look here, colonel, you ought to have gone a little-slow in this matter, She might hoist the red flag at the head of your paper and then where would the country be?"

"No danger of that, I the editor laughed and off he walked, leaving old Aimes to stand and wonder whether or not he should call on the woman and get a few points from her. He decided that he would, and upstairs he went. He looked in at the parlor door and saw the young woman sitting on the sofa with a book in her hand. "Ahem, excuse me; but may I come in a

moment?" "Yes," the woman answered, putting aside the book. The old man entered, took a chair, moved it about and finally

settled down near her. "Putty hot," he ventured to remark.

"Yes, rather." "Hotter than it was yistidy, I believe," he observed.

"Yes, or day before yesterday, either," "I gad, I reckon you are right."

She slowly turned her head and looking straight at him said :

"You were exhorting in the church just

a short while ago, I believe?" "You are right. I always take an ac



"AHEM! EXCUSE ME; MAY I COME IN !! tive part in our revevals. But we hain't done much this time and the meetin' closed to-day."

"I thought you were the man, and I am therefore a little surprised to hear you say 'I gad' after hearing you so fervently urge people to turn from frivolous ways."

Old Aimes puffed and fanned himself with his straw hat. The woman took up her book and looked at it. "Miss, I knock under. You are right. But I don't mean no harm by usin' such words, and I want to say they are the strongest I eyer use. Bleeged to you for callin' my attention to 'em. But I have come to see you to ask you a few questions, and I hope you won't think them out-of place, or anything of that sort, for you see country people pride themselves on bein' more respectable than most any other folks are, and the truth is they have to be mighty particular and all that sort of thing, which I hope you will understand without any trouble, and the questions I want to ask you are simply these hers: How did you happen to come here and-"

"How did you happen to come here?" the woman broke in, raising her eyes from the book and mi'ly fixing them upon the old man. And she appeared to be making a study of him, his squint eyes, his purple cheeks, bushy eye-brows, fat nose; and she noticed that the bosom of his cotton shirt was unbuttoned at the top, revealing the grayish hairs on his chest. "But before you answer," she added, still looking at him, taking, it seemed, an enjeyable measurement of his discomfiture, "let me ask'you if you would mind buttoning your shirt."

'I gad, miss," the old man puffed, "you are somethin' of a Tarter, I reckon. I've "lived here all my life and have been mayor here for ten year and have worn my shirt this way every spell of hot weather, and you are the first one, to tell me to button it; but dinged-excuse the expression, for it's the strongest I use-I say dinged if I don't do it. Now, miss, the shirt's buttoned, so go, ahead with your rat killin', as the feller said."

"I have no rat killing to go on with. I merely asked you how you happened to

come here." "Miss, I tell you that I'm the mayor of this here town, but we'll let that pass, Would you mind tellin' me your name?" "My father's name was Lopp and in

remembrance of a great-aunt I was called "Ah, hah, I reckon it was all right to ricollect the old lady and all that sort of thing, but from what I can gather from the papers Lopp is a sort of anarchist

"I have never known an anarchist of that name," the young woman answered

"They may be, miss, but I don't like the name any too well, but we'll let that pass, as the feller said when he seed the wild cat." He was silent long enough to un-"button the top button of his shirt and them "Jest hold on a minute," old Aimes call- he went on: "We understand that you have leased the paper here, and we'd like to know why, for when a paper is leased "We want to know something that there is generally some sort of ax to be we've got a right to know," Aimes re- ground, so I would just like to ask you plied. "There's something goin' on here what sort of ax you have brought with

never saw that woman before, and why The woman threw down the book, laughshould you have important business with ed at the old man, and, clasping her hands her? We don't know but she's some fe- back of her head, leaned back, still laugh-

"Miss, you are as niuch tickled as I there The editor laughed, and for the first time was a bug on you. Hah, don't you thin

and I'm going to get at it mighty suddenis this here: Before we can allow you to associate with us we must know somethin' about you, and it is as little as you can do to tell us what we want to know."

"You have asked me for my confidence," she said, looking at him with demure mockery, "the precious confidence of an unprotected woman, and oh, how willingly would I give it you but for the fact that have not known you long enough. But I confess that you have invited my couffdence by seeking to unbosom yourself." She looked at the old man's shirt and he puffed and buttoned it.

"Miss, I'll be slathered-now that is really the strongest expression I use-if you don't sorter git away with me. But won't you tell me somethin' about your-

self?" "Why, yes, I will give you my tenderest

confidences." "Oh, now, here, don't chaw me. I am the mayor of this town, I tell you; and if you are goin' to run a paper here you had better keep in with me. The city council takes ten copies and I could have them cut off at any time."

CHAPTER I-CONTINUED. at his shirt to see if it were buttoned, showed his yellow teeth; and continued: tried to run a paper here once without reckon became of him?"

"Went to the legislature, I suppose." "Hah! Who told you? Dinged if he didn't go there, but he left his paper dead as a padlock."

"I haven't anything to hide," she said "and I don't mind telling you that, having grown very tired of city life, I have come types mixed together, but with the assisthere to rest awhile, but not being able to rest without work I have decided to lease this little paper and play with it." "Talk like a woman in a show, dinged

if you don't. Not being able to rest without work is a new one on me; but we will let that pass."

"Just as well, I suppose. Yes, it is my purpose to live here a year, and then if I like the place well enough I may remain permanently."

"Ah, haft;" said the old fellow, "that is to say, you mought git married and settle down here. Putty good plan; I reckon, for I hear 'em say that marriage is about played out in the cities. I have seed better lookin' women than you air, but then, I reckon, you mought do on a pinch, and you never can tell jest how soon a pinch is goin' to take place. My old women has been dead about two year and I'lowed after while that I mought pick up a chunk of a wife, may do so this fall if my corn down here on the creek turns out well." "Your shirt collar is unbuttoned again,"

she said. "Blast me if I don't go to the blacksmith-shop and git me a horseshoe natt jest to accomodate you. So you are goin'to run the newspaper. Never hearn of a woman runnin' a paper, but I have hearn of 'em ridin' straddle and I don't see why

a newspaper shouldn't come next." "By the way," she said, "I should like to find some pleasant place to board. I don't care to stay at this hotel."

"You are talkin' sense, now, miss. Let me see; I live about a quarter of a mile from here-just an easy walk-and if you don't mind you may board there. My daughter Nell lives with me, and you'd like her. Oh, she eats more books than a sheep do straw, always a chawin' 'em, and you'd git along well together. She's too smart for this town, and you and her could trot together right well. Well, I'll send her aver to see you. I reckon you are all right, leastwise you understand takin' care of yourself. Good day."

She arose and as he reached the door she called him.

"What is it, miss?"

"Nothing, only I hope that you will not forget to go by the blacksmith shop." The old man puffed and tramped heavily down the stairs, and at the bottom he found Alf and the other fellows waiting



"YOUR SHIRT COLLAR IS UNBUTTONED AGAIN.'

for him. "Don't put yourself to no uneasiness on her account, gentlemen," he said, "She can take care of herself," and if she can't; I gad, I can take care of her or come mighty blame nigh it; but I reckon that expression is a little too strong for a man that thinks as much of a revival as I do, and I ask the Lord to excuse me." "But hold on and tell us somethin' about

her," Alf insisted. "I don't know a blessed thing about her

except that she's all right, and that's all anybody need to know." Shortly afterward a young woman called

at the hotel, introduced herself to the stranger and said that following the advice of her father she had come to ask Miss Lopp to board with her. "We have a great, big old-fashioned house," she said, and you may have all the room you want, so don't say you won't. Will you please not say you won't?"-

The visitor had taken a seat on the piano stool and not ungracefully was slowly turning herself half round and then back. She was a comely girl and it was evident that she was the belle of the neighborhood; and it was also evident that she cared nothing for this distinction, that she had, studied and read herself beyond any companionship that the village might offer, and that simply to be admired, had long since grown tiresome to her. Miss Lopp never forgot that pleasing picture, the dark eyes half humorously pleading, tho abundant hair caught up here and there as if by graceful and yet careless dips, the pleasing face and yet a countenance bespeaking strength of will-physical vigor.

and grace. "You must not say you won't," the girl went on, giving Miss Lopp no time to an Lopp, swer, "until you know how much in need Not of a sensible companion I am. Fatherand let me request you not to pay any attention to his strong expressions for he is really the best man you ever saw-well, he does everything he can to lighten my loneliness, but he can't do so very much, you know, being only a man, and I am

actually hungry for some one to talk to." "I don't see how I can resist so strong an

appeal," Miss Lopp replied. There, I knew you couldn't say you wouldn't when you were brought to understand it all. And we'd better go now," she added, springing off the stool. You shall have a large front room, but it has a rag carpet, woven half sentimentally by a woman that lives not far from hereby half sentimentally I mean that she thought so much of me she wove it for half price. But you don't mind that, do

"What, the sentiment or the half price?" "Why, the rag carpet, of course. I did not know but you might expect velvet on the floor."

"My dear child," said Miss Lopp, "it was not the thought of a carpet that brought me into this neighborhood, and to tell-you the truth I don't care whether the floor is covered with a rag or with saw-

"Oh, I just know that I shall like you,, because you are not stupid with evenness of talk and kiln-dried manners. So come on and we'll go over right now,"

And so Miss Lopp was installed in a large room in an old-fashioned house. Her She raised her hands as if imploring him. two front windows commanded the drowsy not to cut them off, and he, looking down - village, the town cow that looked as though she had been patched, having so often been scalded by arate housewives; the "Yes, you better keep in with me. Man prowling hog, the sport of every dog that found himself without amusement, the keepin' in with me, and what do you hitching rack where farmers' nags squealed and bit at one another. But the two other windows looked upon a garden, rosetinted here and there, the dark shade lying between rows of high peas, a tangle of plum bushes a long slope and a creek.

The office of the newspaper was found in a jumbled state, with black and light



"MISS POLLY, WHAT DO IT MEAN?"

ance of a boy who had long been an apprentice, a decent order was brought about, and from the very first number the paper showed an improvement. The paragraphs were written with a vigor that made the villagers wink as though their eyes had lighted upon something too bright for them; and the editorials on national and international subjects were set forth with that dignity which the farmer demands that his editor shall observe. A show of frankness soon wins the confidence of a southern town, and Miss Lopp became so evident a favorite that within a month after her arrival her paper had picked up an additional circulation of fifty copies, a marvelous growth, a newspaper miracle in Broomfield,

Nell soon learned to pick up type, and was therefore Polly's closest and most valued companion. They were rarely-seen apart; they strolled in the woods like lovers, and together they begged contri-

butions to the mite society. One afternoon, as they were going home to enjoy the cool of the garden, Nell, swinging Polly's hand as they moved along, declared that she had never been so happy. "I feel that I am useful," she said: "I feel that I am the dearest friend of a woman who knows something. And do you know what I have been thinking of? I have been thinking that we ought to make a vow never to separate. I told father the other night that I should never marry, and if you will take up the same resolution why we will live together. There's the stage, and look, there are three passengers, men, and they are coming this way."

Polly made no reply, but, leaning for ward, looked eagerly at the men. They had been looking about them, but upon seeing her they came quickly forward, and as they approached one of them called: "Hello, Polly!" and then each one said: "Hello, Polly!"

Several of the townspeople were within hearing, and they loitered near to see what might follow. Polly spoke to the strangers, and then requested Nell to walk on, that she would overtake her. Nell hesitated. "Won't you please walk on?" Polly insisted. "I'll soon catch up with you."

Nell obeyed, though not without muttering an objection, and Polly stood in the road, talking to the strangers. What could it mean? Why were they so familiar with her and why should she desire to see them alone? They turned and slowly walked toward the stage coach, which was to go out again at once, to take passengers to the railway ten miles distant, and Polly talked to them in low tones and then they all nodded and smiled. Nell and the villagers were watching them, and so was old man Aimes, and just as the three men had seated themselves in the coach, the old man, commanding the driver to wait a moment, walked up to the door and said; "I am the mayor of this town."

"Sorry for you," one of the men replied. "Well, by Satan's hoofs, I like that, but excuse the expression for it's the strongest I ever did use; but what do you mean by sneakin' in here without lettin' anybody know you was comin' an' sneakin' out again without lettin' anybody know why you did come! Now what have you got to say?"

"Sput the door, old man. Tra loo," "Wait!" the old man commanded. "Who are you and what did you want with this young woman,?" "Go on, driver. So long, old top." And

off they went. "Miss Polly," said the old man, turning toward the editor, "what do it mean?"

"Your shirt collar is unbuttoned again," was all she said. CHAPTER II.

That evening in the house of old man Aimes there was a silent supper party. Nell's flowing friendship had been rudely checked and a sharp heel had been set upon the old man's dignity. And it looked as though a coolness must necessarily follow. The strangers had brought a mystery with them and had left it in the village, and in this mystery stood Polly Not a word had been speken. Polly

arose to leave the table. Nell looked up. and her countenance was sorrowful, not so much that there might be a compromising mystery, but that it was kept dark

from her. "Goin". Miss Polly?" Aimes asked.

Yes, I am through with my supper." "But wait a moment. Now there's no need of foolishness between us; we are your friends and you ought to speak out. Them men comin' here and bein' so familiar like with you will cause a scandar, and H's for me to determine as the mayor of, this town whether or not I can stand by you. But first you must tell me-never mind about my-shirt bein' unbuttoned and all that sort of thing-you must tell. me somethin' about them men. Now will

"Yes. They came and they went away. That is all you need to know."

"Not be a slatherin'-exense my strength -no, it ain't. Where did you know them?" "I might have met them in a city."

"Hah, what's that? Might have met them in a city, but why? That's what I want to know. Didn't you hear one of them refer to me as 'old top,' and I've been ten years mayor of this town? Hah, didn't you hear that? And why, then, should you have met them in a city, or anywhere

"When I probably met them years ago perhaps I was not aware that they were going to refer to you as 'old top.' "

Nell laughed, and the old man scratched his head. "Well, now, we'll say that you couldn't help meeting them," he went on, but we can't say that you had to become so well acquainted with them as to let them call you Polly. I gad, I don't call you Polly, and I'm the mayor of this town and have been for ten years this comin' July, I gad. Hope the Lord will in the meantime excuse both I gads. Hah, now answer me that, will you?"

"All that you need to know, Mr. Aimes, you shall know in time."

"Hah, in time? But what will the peophe of this town think when they come to me to find out and I put them off with your sayin' that they shall know in time? I gad, miss, when the people of this town want to know a thing there ain't no sich thing as time-the whole scheme is an eternity until they find out, and unless they find out before the next election I'm beaten as sure as a horn, and I've been mayor so long now that I can't quit. Set down here now and tell us, won't you?" "Not this evening. Nell, I'm going out

into the garden." Polly was sitting in the summer house when Nell joined her. They were silent for a time and then Nell said: "I am so" sorry that anything should have happened. I was as happy as I could be until then. Tell me, dear, what it all means, and I'll promise to stand by you, no matter what it is, for I do think so much of you. I do, Polly, I love you, in fact, and now it does grieve me so to have anything come be-

Polly took her hand and, holding it, replied: "There are many features of life in a city, and some of them might seem strange to you. That I should have become acquainted with those men was a happening; that they should have come to this place is another happening; and neither happening amounts to enough to cause any real uneasiness on the part of my friends. So I beg of you not to let it

worry you." "Oh, it doesn't worry me so far as I am concerned, but what will the people say?

Indeed, what won't they say?" "Nell, the view and the opinion of a village are necessarily narrow; here people are suspicious of strangers and are ever on the lookout for an opportunity to suspect one another, so it would be quite impossible for me to make an explanation that

would be satisfactory to them." "But, my dear Polly, you can make an explanation that will be satisfactory to me."

"Not now, my dear, but after awhile I will. Your father is calling you." The old man stood at the garden gate, whooping the name of his daughter, and when she had come to him, having left Polly sitting on a bench in the summer house, the old fellow said: "Nell, go into the house and stay there till I come, and when I doccome I may have some

mighty interestin' news for you." The girl passed on without replying, and the old man joined Polly in the summer house. He sat down on the bench near ner, lanning ninisen with his straw nat, and it was some time before he spoke. .

"Hotter'n it was last night," he said. "Hotter than it was night before last, I think," the woman replied. "I gad, I guess you're right. You al-

ways raise me one; must have played poker in your time." "But if I were to play poker I might not always raise; I might sometimes simply

"Gad, I believe you have played; but that ain't what I want to talk about. See this?" He touched his shirt collar and it was fastened with a horseshoe nail. "Been a threatenin' to git it for a long time and got it jest now in honor of you, don't you see? But it ain't nothin' to laugh at. Will you let me tell you somethin'?"

"Yes, I am going to sit here a few moments longer,"

"Don't exactly like the way you put it, but I reckon it's all right." He was silent, fumbling with the nail at his collar; he sighed deeply, threw his hat on the ground, thrust his hands into his pockets and leaned back against the vinewoven lattice work. And in the twilight she could see that his face was hard-set and his countenance eager. "What were you going to tell me?" she

asked.

"Somethin' powerful important to both of us, but you'll have to let me git at it in my own round-about way. By this time the whole town is discussin' the fact that three men, strange men at that, come here and called you Polly. And me' be in the mornin' they will tell you that you better git out. Then what?"

"I'll tell them to go to a place not on the school maps; but well located in spiritual geography." "I gad, that's the way to talk to avoid

strength, but it won't do to tell 'em no such a thing. There is a way by which the whole affair may be made smooth." "It is smooth enough now," she replied. "I'll be dinged if it is; it's as rough as a toad's back; but we can smooth it. Now

here," he leaned toward her. "I say now here, you marry me and the whole affair will be settled, for they won't dare to talk about the wife of the mayor of this town, Hah, what do you say? You see that I've got about the best place around here, and I was down the creek yesterday evenin' and that corn is goin' to turn out monstrous, hah? You can go right down to the store and trade out ten dollars' worth at a snort, hah? Then Nell can help you right along in the printing office and it shank cost you a cent. As I told you once before, you ain't so powerful good lookin'. Your face ain't got that saft look that it ought to have, but we can't expect everything of a woman from the city, you know. Oh, I know I'm gittin' old, but I bet a dollar that I can jump over that bean pole

right wander." (Continued on Page Seven), The question as to whether standard or solar time should govern the closing of barrooms has been raised at Hamilton,