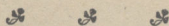


ALBERT E. IDELL



Centennial
Summer



NEW YORK

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

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Characters

JESSE ROGERS—Philadelphia Quaker who married “out of Meeting.”

AUGUSTINA ROGERS—Called “Gussie” by her husband and “Tina” by her sister. Daughter of an impecunious Italian nobleman, Count Borelli, who was a member of the entourage of Joseph Napoleon as “Mr. Repetto.”

TERESINA (ZENIE)	} their children
JULIA	
GEORGINA (Gene)	
HENRY	

TERESINA LASCALLES—Sister of Augustina, called “Aunt Zena” by everyone. The widow of a rich French merchant.

PHILIPPE LASCALLES—Her nephew, a son of her husband’s brother.

AUGUSTUS PALMER (Gus)—A medical student and suitor of Zenie Rogers.

HENRY LONGFELLOW NAYLOR (HARRY)—A young politician and suitor of Zenie Rogers.

AL, LIZZIE, AND CARRIE NAYLOR—His brother and sisters.

MR. AND MRS. SOLOMON PEALE AND ADA—Next-door neighbors of the Rogerses.

FATHER DUFFY—Priest of the parish.

MARY GALLAGHER—The Rogers' maid of all work.

MARTHA LEARY—The Rogers' cook.

LUCIUS—The Rogers' "boy."

DENISE AND CÉLESTE—Aunt Zena's maids.

MR. QUINBY—The finest horse in Kensington.

TOTAL ECLIPSE—Mr. Rogers' horse.

NELLIE—The Dalmatian.

MOODY AND SANKEY—Not the revivalists.

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P A R T - - - O N E



November and December



1875

“While the people retain their virtue and vigilance, no administration, by any extreme of wickedness or folly, can very seriously injure the government in the short space of four years.”

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Chapter 1

THE FRENCH clock struck the hour. It was a bronze figure of Venus on a pedestal of crystal and marble, with the clock face let into the lovely lady's middle. Mary counted the five tinkled notes. She shook her head and hurried to complete the setting of the table. From the buffet she took plates and cups and saucers. It was the French service decorated with roses, pink sprays alternating with pearly white ones; it was always used with the rose linen tablecloth. She put the heavy, cut-glass tumblers in place and set the matching water pitcher on a corner of the sideboard. Piece by piece she took the silver from a folded roll of cotton flannel and wiped each spoon and fork on her apron before placing it on the table. Cocking her head, she inspected the heavy steel knives, putting away one or two that showed marks of tarnish, blew on the others, and repolished them. From time to time she darted anxious eyes at the clock which seemed to move toward five-thirty with an inexorable speed.

A problem presented itself. She stopped in her hurried limping movements, thought a moment, then moved to the kitchen door. She listened for untoward sounds, but everything seemed quiet. Pushing the door slightly, she called through the crack:

"Clean napkins? D'ye want clean napkins, ma'am, or shall I use them that's in the rings, from yesterday?"

Mrs. Rogers kicked against the door from the other side

so violently that Mary was pushed backward. She would have fallen if she had not been able to clutch one of the high-backed dining-room chairs. Completely oblivious of the near-catastrophe, Mrs. Rogers glared at the old woman.

"Of course there will be clean napkins! With Henry home for the first time in months, would you ask us to welcome him with soiled napkins? My best linen tablecloth, the rose service, the solid silver Aunt Zena brought me from Paris, and soiled napkins! I never heard of such a thing! Mary, I'm surprised I keep you in the house with your sloppy Irish ways. Every time I open the front door I expect to see a pig in the parlor, and that's the truth." Mrs. Rogers drew herself up to a regal five feet two. "Of course there will be clean napkins!"

Mary answered sullenly, "I was just askin'. A body has got to ask, ain't they?"

She glanced with little gray eyes at the door closing on Mrs. Rogers' back, then turned to the buffet. Pulling open the linen drawer, she picked out a stack of clean napkins and dealt them on the upturned dinner plates as if they were huge cards, giving each square of folded linen a little spin that sent it fluttering to its place. She practically threw the last one at Mrs. Rogers' plate just as the master of the house came into the dining room.

"Hooray, Mary, a perfect shot!" Mr. Rogers applauded vigorously and threw up his hands in pretended amazement.

With his entrance the room became alive. The large, ornamented fleurs-de-lis which formed a funereal design on the wallpaper lost their drabness and became grotesque, grinning faces that welcomed him. From an oil portrait hanging over the mantelpiece, Grandfather Rogers smiled down on his son. On the sideboard, the circlet of little

goblets pendant from metal hooks on the large cut-glass punch bowl chimed and rattled as he shouted.

Mary peered up at him through puckered eyes, after making a gesture of trying to recapture the angrily thrown napkin, and he shook his head, judiciously.

"You will never do it better, Mary, though you can try it if you want to. I didn't know there was so much life in the old girl."

"Stop it, Mr. Rogers, quit blarneying me, now." Mary's eyes almost closed in a smile of pleasure.

Mr. Rogers felt her right arm carefully.

"Tremendous power, there," he judged, in mock seriousness.

"Be gone with you. You're worse than a flannel-mouthed Irishman, so you are." Mary hobbled from his reach and laughed.

Mr. Rogers also laughed, but suddenly he was serious. He looked at the fragile numerals on the French clock, with its hands pointing the half-hour, and his frown deepened. He seized the massive gold chain that spanned his vest. Taking the great links between thumb and all four fingers, he pulled the watch from its vest pocket like a seaman hauling on an anchor. He compared the time of the clock and that of his watch, and his voice boomed in protesting thunder.

"It's slow. That gilt gewgaw, that marble mausoleum of dead hours, that useless, dusty dirt-catcher is slow!" Walking over to the clock, he peered at it from different angles, to establish the greatest possible degree of inexactitude. "Mother!" he shouted. His voice boomed "Mother!" until the punch-bowl glasses rattled again, and the French clock all but stopped running entirely.

Mrs. Rogers came in from the kitchen, her black eyes sparkling with a deceptive look of surprise.

"Why, Father! You startled me!" She spoke gently to Mary. "Run and tell the children dinner is served. Hurry now, Mary, I know Father is hungry."

Mr. Rogers' face showed apoplectic above the line of his beard. He pointed accusingly at the offending clock. "That poor excuse for a timepiece is a fair symbol of the way this household is managed. No thought or regard for time. It's all of two minutes slow, and you look at me complacently. If our railroad . . ."

"Tell the children to hurry, Mary," Mrs. Rogers interrupted, "Father has been working hard all day, out in the air, and he's hungry."

The brass chains that supported the chandelier shook with his rejoinder. "I am not hungry. I am not hungry." He changed to a comparatively calm tone, as if anger was being controlled by a terrific display of will power. "I merely offer my feeble protest because that miserable clock is slow. A timepiece that has its center in a woman's navel is an abomination to art and science both. It has disrupted the calm of this household. It has allowed you to slip behind schedule. I demand promptness—I am a railroad man, and I must work on schedule."

His wife looked up at him pertly, like a sparrow unmindful of the lion's roar. "I know how hungry you must be, working in the air all day. Things will be ready in just a moment."

Mr. Rogers clenched his fists and beat them in the air in fury. His voice echoed and re-echoed in the narrow confines of the dining room.

"Mother, I am not hungry. I am never hungry. Understand that I do not allow the desires of the body to affect me." His voice lowered almost to a whisper, and he began to speak slowly, as if reasoning with a very small child. "I merely plead for a small measure of the exactitude to

which I have been trained. This family must be taught the value of time. If the trains of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad pulled out two minutes late on every trip, how long . . .”

Mrs. Rogers picked an imaginary thread from her husband's black coat. “Jesse, Jesse, how you do run on—and a thread on your coat. You men never will look out for your appearance.” She caught his arm with her fingers and skipped as she led him to the head of the table. In spite of her graying hair, as she pulled at his giant, broad-shouldered figure, she was like a plump, schoolgirlish hoyden. His great bulk, and the froth of brown beard that covered most of his face with luxuriant growth, made him appear to be much the older, but he joined in her play, skipping like a huge trained bear and roaring with laughter. In a moment he had forgotten completely the whole matter of the clock. Without waiting for the others, he seated himself ponderously in the armchair; Mrs. Rogers returned to the kitchen.

Julia was the first of the children to appear. She took her place unobtrusively at her father's left, and said, “Good evening, Papa.” Although she was too slender, her features were beautiful. She took after the Borellis, her mother's family, with perfect oval face, straight nose, and heavily shadowed dark-brown eyes. She had a clear, high forehead, thick brows like tiny bird wings, and glorious black hair that made one forget the meager curves of her figure. In her father's presence she lowered her eyes and turned over a plate, reading the pottery mark she had deciphered a hundred times before.

The twins raced in, Georgina flushed and happy. She ran and placed a little kiss on her father's cheek, above the edge of his whiskers. “You surprised us, Father dear—you must have sneaked in, we never heard you.”

Henry said, "Hello, Dad!" He swaggered down the length of the table and seated himself at the corner farthest from his father.

Mr. Rogers squeezed his napkin into a tight ball and threw the crumpled linen against his plate in anger.

"In this household I will be called 'Father.'" He leveled a forbidding glance at Julia, trembling at his side. "I want no daughter of mine mincing 'Good evening, Papa.'" In his deep, lusty voice he attempted an imitation of her reedy tones, "Good evening, Pa-pa," he mimicked.

Georgina laughed and clapped her hands. "That was wonderful, Father. Mother . . . Mother . . . you should hear Father! Do it again, do!"

Mr. Rogers beamed. "By Jove, it was a good imitation." He tried it again several times. "Good evening, Pa-pa." No, more like this, "G'd ev'ning, Pa-pa." It did sound like Julia, he thought. He glanced around at his family. Julia was hurt, her eyebrows drawn together in dismay. Georgina, his favorite daughter, and Henry were grinning at him. Then his voice almost blasted his son from his chair, and startled the others afresh. "And you, sir, shall also address me properly. That syllable you directed to me a moment or so ago, I hesitate to pronounce it, Dad. Dad! It is no term of respect for an indulgent father, but a flippant word. Not a word, a hideous noise, completely without meaning. Here in my house I demand a modicum of respect, at least a shred of dignity to cover such human weaknesses as we may have. By God, sir . . ."

Julia laid a slender, admonishing hand on her father's sleeve. "You mustn't. It's sacrilegious."

Mary came in, bearing soup in shallow wide-brimmed plates, but Mr. Rogers was not to be distracted by the

appearance of food. His voice drove the soup in waves against the plate rims.

"By the Lord Harry, I'll not be corrected by my own children! Leave your puerile cant behind when you sit at this table."

Julia shrank in her chair. Her smooth olive skin lost some of its color and the oval of her face seemed to lengthen, but she bent her head dutifully. She said a silent prayer for strength, as she had been taught at the convent.

Teresina peeped in at the door and speculated whether she could reach her seat while her father was distracted by Julia. She took a chance and won her goal, aided by a new diversion. Mary, who had been in the kitchen when Henry entered, noticed his presence as she served him. She placed her tray on the table and threw her arms around his neck. "Me darlin' boy. Me darlin' boy." The soup for Teresina and Mr. Rogers had not yet been served, but they waited the end of the exuberant greeting, Mr. Rogers impatiently, and Teresina with tolerant acceptance, because she was not yet sure her own lateness had passed unnoticed.

When Father's soup at last reached him, it was almost cold, but he seized his soup spoon. Holding his napkin over his beard with his left hand, he conveyed soup to his mouth as expeditiously as possible with the right hand.

Mrs. Rogers stood in the doorway between the dining room and kitchen until the room was quiet again. Well, he was eating at last. Things were safe for a while. She followed Mary into the kitchen, and as the door closed behind them, scolded Martha, the cook. "If you'd had dinner ready on time, he wouldn't have started on poor Julia."

The cook was enormously stout, one of those heavy

people who arrange their work to save every possible step, but once in the position they have selected, can move hands and arms with quick precision. Her station was directly in front of the large built-in range. Years of standing in the direct radiation of heat had given her face a permanent flush. Her fat acted as a cushion against Mrs. Rogers' frequent criticisms; the only sign that she had heard, and resented, the accusation was an increase in the tempo with which she moved utensils and handled condiments.

Mrs. Rogers turned toward Mary, busily filling the water pitcher from the pot of boiled water. "And you, lazy good-for-nothing!"

Mary escaped, pushing open the door in the middle of the tirade, which immediately ceased. She hurried into the turmoil of the dining room and Mrs. Rogers followed, smiling pleasantly and graciously, to take her seat by her husband. She picked up her soup spoon delicately, and held it to show her small jeweled hand to advantage. Mr. Rogers was on his third helping of soup. Henry was excitedly whispering to Georgina about school adventures. Teresina was eating slowly, with an air of abstraction. Mary hobbled about.

Dinner had begun quite auspiciously for the Rogers family.

2

The roast was a huge rib, lugged in triumphantly by Mary, whose nose was quivering at the smell. The meat was surrounded with a double bank of roasted potatoes, the whole done in Italian style, drenched in claret, which gave both roast and vegetables a purplish hue. Mr. Rogers stood up to carve. He examined the long blade of the knife and gave it several dexterous passes with the steel.

There was a regular order in the serving, according to the tastes of the family. Mrs. Rogers liked the brown crust, and received the first slab, all of a half-inch thick. Next came Julia, and then Teresina. That disposed of the well-done members of the family. Now the twins, who shared his own taste, received generous pink slices. Then a tremendous slice, fully an inch through, and practically raw in the center, for himself. Potatoes were served as lavishly, two or three to every plate. Mary brought in a large bowl filled with chicory salad, but this Mr. Rogers pushed aside contemptuously. "Who wants rabbit food? Meat and potatoes are good enough for me—for any human being—but if there are rabbits in our company, let them speak up!"

Everyone ignored the challenge, but in due course the two older girls and Mrs. Rogers helped themselves to the greens. Mrs. Rogers ate slowly, picking delicately at her beef and nibbling at minute pieces of potato. She acted the part of a great lady who never forgot her noble blood.

Mr. Rogers carved the rest of the roast into slices quite as large as those of the first serving, and all but Julia took the second helping. As Mary moved about with the refilled plates, Mrs. Rogers' eyes roamed quickly over the faces of her family. It seemed incredible, she told herself, that these children could be hers: Teresina twenty-one, though not yet married, Julia two years younger, and the twins fifteen; that she was married to this great bulk of a man who ate noisily from a fork piled high with food. Her husband disturbed her reverie. In the voice that carried across freight yards, he spoke to Henry:

"If you can spare a few of the confidences you are whispering to Gene, an interested father would like to share them. Of course, if they are secrets to which I have no right, forgive the interruption."